

# **Black Lives Matter: A Call of Jāhiliyyah**

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فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

**“So whoever hopes for the Meeting with his Lord,  
let him work righteousness and associate none  
as a partner in the worship of his Lord.”**

The Noble Qur.aan - Soorah al-Kahf, Aayah 110

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

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*Islām taught humanity that oppression – every type of oppression – causes darkness on the Day of Resurrection.*

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Injustice, discrimination and oppression are major sins in Islām. This extends to every innocent human - Muslim and non-Muslim; in fact, it extends to every creation, human or otherwise.

Every soul in Islām is sacred, so much so that the Prophet ﷺ said regarding the killing of a non-Muslim, **“Whoever kills a Mu’āhad<sup>1</sup>, shall not smell the fragrance of Paradise, even though its fragrance can be smelt at a distance of forty years [of traveling].”<sup>2</sup>**

Islām taught humanity that oppression – every type of oppression – causes darkness on the Day of Resurrection. The Prophet ﷺ said, **“Oppression is darkness on the Day of Resurrection.”<sup>3</sup>**

In line with the above principle, Muslims do not need to adopt ambiguous statements or slogans that often contain a mixture of truth and falsehood; slogans which have been initiated by those who reject the teachings of Islām, or are being utilised by non-Islamic movements with their own ulterior objectives.

Such slogans are known as *“Da’wa jāhiliyyah”* lit. *slogans of pre-Islamic ignorance*.

### The definition of Da’wa Jāhiliyyah

The principle of *“Da’wa jāhiliyyah”* was defined by Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah as: *“anything that contradicts or contains a contradiction to the basic principles of Islām, regardless of whether it is a call to promote a particular heritage, country, nationality, sect, or way of life.”<sup>4</sup>*

If a particular group of people are being oppressed because of the colour of their skin, ethnicity or nationality, we should aid and assist them because because Allāh orders us to establish justice and

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1 Mu’āhad: a non-Muslim living under the protection of the Muslims.

2 Narrated by ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Amr; Collected by al-Bukhārī

3 Narrated by Ibn ‘Umar; Collected by Muslim.

4 As-Siyāsah ash-Shar’iyya by Ibn Taymiyyah, p.84.

fight oppression - not because we share their skin colour, race, or ethnicity. This is the essence of Tawḥīd and Ikh̄lās, and the essence of our loyalty and devotion to our creator, the Lord of all people - black and white.

**{Say, “Verily, my prayer, my sacrifice, my living, and my dying are for Allāh, the Lord of the worlds. He has no partner, and of this I have been commanded, and I am the first of the Muslims”}**  
[06:162 - 163]

### Black Lives Matter and Da’wa Jāhiliyyah

An example of “*da’wa jāhiliyyah*” which carries particular significance today is the “Black Lives Matter” movement.

Its mission is “*to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes.*”<sup>5</sup>

Although the statement on the face of it seems noble, however the inspiration and philosophy upon which the movement is built, its avenues to achieve the aims and the convictions of its founders, influencers and sister-movements oppose the core teachings of Islam.

The BLM movement “*drew inspiration from the 1960s civil rights/black power movement, the 1980s black feminist/womanist movement, the 1980s anti-apartheid/Pan African movement, the late-1980s political hip-hop movement, the 2000s LGBT movement, and the 2011 Occupy Wall Street movement.*”<sup>6</sup>

The BLM slogan is therefore intrinsically connected to unIslamic philosophies and practices such as hip hop culture, LGBTQ social movements, Pan Africanism and feminism.

Referring back to the statement of Ibn Taymiyyah, he explained Da’wah Jahiliyyah as: “*anything that contradicts or contains a*

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5 <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>

6 Ruffin II, Herbert G. (August 23, 2015). “Black Lives Matter: The Growth of a New Social Justice Movement”. BlackPast.org. Retrieved December 18, 2016

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*contradiction to the basic principles of Islām, regardless of whether it is a call to promote a particular heritage, country, nationality, sect, or way of life...*

Based on the above, the contradictions of the BLM movement to the basic principles of Islām is clear, and thus there should be no doubt that this slogan is from Da'wa Jāhiliyyah.

## The Unislamic values and objectives of BLM movement

In addition to the above, one of the BLM engagements was to incorporate those *“on margins of traditional black freedom movements, including women, the working poor, the disabled, undocumented immigrants, atheists and agnostics, and those who identify as queer and transgender.”*<sup>7</sup>

The aim of this engagement is to involve such people and give them prominent roles so much so that they become the face of the movement. The end result was that *“these marginalized black people played visible and central roles in the formation of Black Lives Matter and in their ongoing community organizing and protests.”*<sup>8</sup>

The BLM movement has also expanded its focus area; it no longer restricts itself to black rights, rather it stands for every form of inequality, *“by calling for a united focus on issues of race, class, gender, nationality, sexuality, disability, and state-sponsored violence. It argues that to prioritize one social issue over another issue will ultimately lead to failure in the global struggle for civil and human rights.”*<sup>9</sup>

One of the aims of the BLM movement is to promote sexual inclusivity. Their stated aim is: *“Black liberation movements in this country have created room, space, and leadership mostly for Black heterosexual, cisgender men — leaving women, queer and transgender people, and others either out of the movement or in the background to move the work forward with little or no recognition. As a network, we have*

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7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

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*always recognized the need to center the leadership of women and queer and trans people.”<sup>10</sup>*

It is also important to note that the three founders<sup>11</sup> of the BLM movement were influenced by – or themselves have influenced - black queer, cultural, political and socialist movements.<sup>12</sup>

## Da'wa Islāmiyyah vs Da'wa Jāhiliyyah

The principle of adhering to and promoting “*da'wa islāmiyyah*” is the direct opposite to “*da'wa jāhiliyyah*”.

“*Da'wa islāmiyyah*” is to use and promote Islamic terminologies, labels and slogans such as Islām and Muslim; Imān and Mu'min; 'Ibādah, Sunnah etc. Throughout the history of Islām, these have been the labels and slogans adopted by Muslims. These labels have been a source of guidance and strength through turbulent times, our righteous predecessors experienced many forms of oppression and destruction. They never resorted to adopting foreign slogans or “*da'wa jāhiliyyah*” to seek justice, because this would imply that the answer to this oppression is not found in Islam.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “**And I command you with five that Allāh commanded me: Listening and obeying, Jihād, Hijrah, and the Jamā'ah. For indeed whoever departs from the Jamā'ah the measure of a hand-span, has cast off the yoke of Islām from his neck, unless he returns. And whoever calls and invites to “da'wa jāhiliyyah”, he is from the coals of the Fire.**”

A man said: “O Messenger of Allāh, even if he performs Ṣalāh and fasts?”

He replied, “[Yes,] even if he performs Ṣalāh and fasts. So, call with the call that Allāh named you with: Muslims, Mu'min, worshippers of

“

*It is also important to note that the three founders of the BLM movement were influenced by – or themselves have influenced - black queer, cultural, political and socialist movements.*

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<sup>10</sup> <https://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/>

<sup>11</sup> The founders of the BLM movement are three Black women: Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi. In addition to being feminists and activists, two of the three founders identify as queer, and the first of the three has described herself as a trained Marxist.

<sup>12</sup> <https://medium.com/national-center-for-institutional-diversity/hearing-the-queer-roots-of-black-lives-matter-2e69834a65cd>

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Allāh.”<sup>13</sup>

The above Ḥadīth clearly outlines the impermissibility of ascribing to a label that contradicts “*da’wa islāmiyyah*.” Even if on the face of it, that slogan invites to a cause such as repelling an injustice. It is important to note that the Ḥadīth mentions a severe warning against the person who adopts and calls to “*dawa al-jāhiliyyah*”, this person’s prayer or fasting will not save him.

The labels and slogans of Jāhiliyyah existed in the time of the Prophet ﷺ but Islām abolished these labels and replaced them. Tribalism, nationalism, colourism, and other social inequalities existed in the Arabian Peninsula when the Qur’ān and Sunnah were being revealed, however our noble Prophet ﷺ rectified the people through divine guidance, and the Ṣaḥābah never saw the need to create their own labels to fight Injustices.

The rights of Bilāl the Abyssinian, Suhayb the Roman, Salmān the Persian and countless other minorities, slaves, women and children were safeguarded by Islām and they saw no need to create their own movement.

Jābir Ibn ‘Abdullah reported, “We were going with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ for an expedition, when a person from amongst the Muhājirūn struck the back of a person from the Anṣār. The Anṣārī said, “O, [rise up for the] Anṣār!” And the Muhājir said: “O [rise up for the] Muhājirūn!”

Thereupon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “**What are these proclamations of the Jāhiliyyah?**”

They said: O Messenger of Allāh, a person from the Muhājirūn struck the back of an Anṣārī.”

The Prophet ﷺ replied, “**Abandon this, for It is something disgusting.**”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Narrated by al-Ḥārith al-Ash’arī; Collected by Aḥmad, at-Tirmidhī and others.

<sup>14</sup> Narrated by Jābir Ibn Abdillāh; Collected by Muslim.



## Social Justice in Islām

Islām is therefore a religion that promotes justice for everyone, without discrimination. This is regardless of race, colour, or ethnicity. In Islām, no one person is better than any other person; there is no distinction for a white person over a black person or vice versa; nor an Arab over a non-Arab or vice versa - except by the virtue of piety and righteousness. This is the very wording of the Prophet of Islām; when he stood addressing people in the farewell sermon wherein, he set laws forbidding discrimination and racism.

He said, **“O people, verily your Lord is One and your father is one. Verily there is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab over an Arab; there is no superiority of a white man over a black man, nor a black man over a white man, except in terms of Taqwa. Have I conveyed the message?”**

The people replied: **“The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ has conveyed the message.”** <sup>15</sup>

Our society needs the above teachings to be reinforced; without doubt we live in an era of ignorance and as such, ignorance breeds social illness; the worst being racial inequality.

## Racism and nationalism in Muslim communities

Unfortunately, many Muslim communities have been blighted with the scourge of racism, nationalism, caste-systems and other forms of bigotry. As Muslims we must do our part to stamp out and tackle this racism, and to cast a spotlight on anti-black racism, and other forms of discrimination, within Muslim communities.

This begins with the people of authority and influence, from the scholars, leaders and students of knowledge; the drive must involve mosques and Islamic institutions.

The scholars have also written and spoken on this subject, we refer the reader back to two contemporary treatise:

1. *“Al-Aḥādīth an-Nabawiyyah fi dhamm al-‘unṣuriyyah al-Jāhiliyyah”*,

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15 Narrated by Abu Nadrah; Collected by Aḥmad.

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*Islām is therefore a religion that promotes justice for everyone, without discrimination. This is regardless of race, colour, or ethnicity.*

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by AbdusSalām al-Burjiss. <sup>16</sup>

2. “*Naqd al-Qawmiyyah*” by Ibn Bāz. <sup>17</sup>

The solution for Muslims living under racial injustice is firstly to return back to Allāh, establish their rights through legislated means, and to seek solace, strength, and comfort from their wider Muslim brothers and sisters, as one Ummah. White, Arab, Asian and Black Muslims must remain united to help the oppressed through legal and legislative means.

Importantly, any support and assistance we offer to oppressed non-Muslims must conform to Islām, and remain within the boundaries of the Sharī’ah. We must not fall prey to emotions and cultural norms by adopting destructive methodologies such as engaging in riots, violent protests, looting and misleading statements in the name of helping the oppressed. The ends do not justify the means, nor is one form of oppression rectified through other forms of oppression, or worse still Bid’ah or sinning.

#### The correct methodology in societal rectification

As Muslims, whenever we find our societies in a state of disillusion and conflict, it is imperative to draw guidance from the Qur’ān and Sunnah, in line with the understanding of the great scholars of Islām. We find within these two sources, the tools required to reform society and cure it of its social illnesses including racism.

This has always been the methodology of the people of the Sunnah in such situations.

**{And when there comes to them something about [public] security or fear, they spread it around. But if they had referred it back to the Messenger or to those of authority among them, then the ones who [can] draw correct conclusions from it would have known about it. And if not for the favour of Allāh upon you and His mercy, you would have followed Satan, except for a few} [04:83]**

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<sup>16</sup> Lit. “Prophetic Narrations in the Dispraise of Jāhiliyyah Racism.”

<sup>17</sup> Lit. “A critique of nationalism.”

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## Conclusion

From what has preceded, it is clear that the BLM slogan and movement stands for more than racial equality. The founders, aims, philosophical context and strategies all point towards a message which contradicts Islām.

As Muslims, we must distinguish between affirming black lives do indeed matter, and between the “Black Lives Matter” movement. We should not fall prey to such movements, which gain prominence due to popular social culture, celebrity promotions, political interests and thrive off public sentiment and emotions. These very movements would also be the first voice against the laws of Islām.

Stand up for the rights of the oppressed, but in line with the guidance of Islām. Endorsing the BLM movement and shouting its slogan, is also endorsing its aims and principles and this is the essence of ‘*da’wa jāhiliyyah*’.

A clear distinction must be made here, rejecting the BLM movement because of the above issues is not a denial racial inequality, or a belittlement of seeking rights.

**{O you who have believed, stand firm for Allāh, witnesses upon justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allāh; indeed, Allāh is [fully] Aware of what you do} [05:08]**

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