

# The Reminder

“Remind For Surely Reminding Benefits The Believers” (51:55)

## Domestic Abuse in our community

The greatest killer of women in this country, killing two women per week is not cancer but domestic violence at the hands of men they know. It is a sad fact that domestic abuse is a major problem with 1 in 4 women experiencing domestic violence in their lifetime and between 1 in 8 to 1 in 10 women experiencing it annually. In fact in the UK the Police are contacted every minute with a domestic violence call. In Scotland alone there were over 45,000 cases in 2005/06.

Unfortunately the Muslim community is not immune from this problem. The local statistics are no better. According to Police statistics on ethnic minorities from an Indian, Pakistani or South Asian background, there were almost two domestic incidents reported everyday during 2006/07 in the Strathclyde Police area (this area covers much of the west of Scotland).

As disgraceful as these statistics are the true extent of the problem is a lot worse. Research has shown that women on average suffer 35 domestic assaults before they call on the police for the first time and the majority of domestic violence is not reported to the police at all. Although figures for ethnic minorities are not higher than the average, the fact that women from an ethnic minority background are even less likely to access help due to cultural issues (such as not wanting to tell outsiders of

abuse taking place or feeling that the honour of the family will be damaged if they seek help from the authorities etc...) means that the number of actual cases of domestic abuse amongst ethnic minorities will be much higher than the figures tell us.

**No Muslim who has any form of faith (Iman) in Islam can accept this behaviour.**

### THE AFFECT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON ITS VICTIMS

Domestic abuse has horrific effects on its victims who are normally women. This includes the following:

- Abused women are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, psychosomatic disorders, eating problems and sexual dysfunction. Violence may also affect their reproductive health (World Health Organisation, 2000).
- 76% of separated women reported suffering post-separation violence (Routes to Safety study). The majority of these women were subjected to continued verbal and emotional abuse.
- Children are also affected by domestic violence and as a result may feel angry, guilty, insecure, alone, frightened, powerless or confused.

## THE CONCEPT OF HARM IN ISLAM

One of the most important established principles in Islamic law is that *“harm should be eliminated”*. This is due to the fact that harming is oppression and oppression is unlawful in Islam. The Quran states:

*“the curse of Allah is upon the oppressors” (11:18)*

Furthermore, another hadith states *“Do not oppress one another”* (Muslim)

Not only does Islam forbid harming people it is also forbids harming animals or the environment .

The Quran states :

*“And when he comes to power he tries his utmost to spread mischief in the land and to destroy crops and human lives; and verily Allah by no means approves mischief” (2:205)*

Needless to say that where harm is unlawful against animals then the sin is greater where the victim is human, the Quran states:

*“And verily we have honoured the children of Adam” (17:70)*

## THE EXAMPLE OF THE PROPHET (peace and blessings be upon him)

The Quran states:

*“Surely you have an excellent example for your guidance in (the life of) the messenger of Allah” (33:21)*

The Quran teaches all Muslims to try to follow the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in every aspect of their lives. Therefore every Muslim should know how the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) behaved with his wives.

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) has said *“The best people from among you are those who are best to their wives”* (Tirmizi). He (peace and blessings be upon him) also said *“Keep to my advice about women, that you should treat them fairly.”* (Tirmizi)

## PHYSICAL ABUSE

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) never hit any of his wives. Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) narrates the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) never hit any of his wives nor any of his servants (Muslim).

The one instance in the life of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) where there was serious marital disagreement he moved away from them for a period of one month and offered them the choice to accept his manner of living and remain his wives or to release them from the marriage and to separate gracefully. (see Quran 33:28-29)

Such was the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) hatred of violence against women that when he heard that some of his companions (may Allah be pleased with them) had beaten their wives, he said to them in a scolding manner *"How can one of you beat his wife like the beating of a slave, and then lie with her in the evening?"* (Bukhari)

## EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Domestic abuse is not always physical it can also be emotional in nature.

The Quran addresses emotional abuse directly:

*"Oh you who believe! Let not one party of men laugh at the other party – maybe they are better than those who laugh at them, and let not some of women laugh at other women – maybe they are better than those who laugh at them. And do not defame one another nor call one another by nicknames...O you who believe! Avoid most suspicion, surely suspicion in some certain cases is a sin and spy not on one another nor backbite one another. (49:11–12)*

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) did not only address physical abuse he also dealt with non-physical abuse. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said *"Insulting another Muslim is a grave sin"* (Bukhari and Muslim) and He (peace and blessings be upon him) also said *"A believer does not curse others."* (Tirmizi)

## OUR DUTY

Islam does not condone domestic abuse or violence against women or anyone else. Islamic law takes abuse and violence very seriously and does not tolerate it. Many Muslims may feel that they do not want to interfere with other peoples domestic affairs and therefore they do nothing to help a victim of abuse (even though they may know the abuser very well eg. it is his/her brother, uncle, relative, friend, neighbour etc..). This attitude is wrong! Due to the established principle that "harm should be eliminated", it is the Islamic duty of everyone who knows of abuse taking place to prevent it if they are able to do so as indicated in the following hadith:

***"Whoever amongst you sees an evil, he must change it with his hand; if he is unable to do so, then with his tongue; and if he is unable to do so, then with his heart; and that is the weakest form of faith" (Muslim)***

Families, relatives, friends of victims of abuse ( whether that victim is Muslim or not) and the community as a whole must take this very important responsibility very seriously, if they fail to do so they will be sinful in the sight of Allah ( the All-Mighty) and will be accountable in the hereafter for their lack of action. Victims of abuse need not suffer in silence they should prevent the harm directed at them by seeking help from family, friends, religious leaders, the police etc.

The Muslim community of Scotland can not stand by and let such oppression go on. We must send a strong message to everyone that Muslims do not and will not tolerate abuse against anyone, especially where it is against our mothers, daughters and sisters. How else are we supposed to eliminate the false negative stereotype that Islam suppresses women and treats them like second class citizens. Our failure to help Muslim and indeed non-Muslim women from domestic abuse will only reinforce negative stereotypes of Islam.

## HOW WILL YOU RESPOND?

*Anything useful I have written is by the grace of Allah (the All-Mighty) and all mistakes are my own and Allah (the All-Mighty) knows best.*

*I would like to thank Strathclyde Police for supporting this initiative and for their interest in issues affecting the Muslim community.*

*For further information see the booklet "What Islam Really Says About Domestic Abuse" by Shaykh Amer Jamil.*

*For comments, feedback, suggestions on future community issues you would like dealt with, sponsoring future reminders etc. please email: amer@shaykhamer.com*

BY SHAYKH AMER JAMIL

### About the author:

After graduating from Strathclyde University with an LLB (Bachelor in Law), Shaykh Amer spent eight years studying the Arabic language and Islamic Sciences. During this period he obtained a BA (Hons) in Islamic studies from the University of Wales and spent four years studying in the Middle East.



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