

Islamic Society of Augusta

Statement on Racial Justice

Minneapolis police officers marked Memorial Day by suffocating to death an utterly subdued black man named George Floyd as he pleaded for the right to breathe. They snuffed out his life with a knee on his neck. They killed him in broad daylight. They killed him while contemptuously mocking helpless bystanders pleading for mercy. Several Muslim organizations have their condemnation of the racial injustice plaguing our country. The Islamic Society of Augusta (ISA), on behalf of our members and Muslims in the CSRA, utterly condemn this blatant act of murder. We call for the swift prosecution of the four officers who participated in the murder.

Of course, Floyd's murder is just another one of a long series – after the killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland, Breonna Taylor, Freddie Gray, Marcus Golden, Jamar Clark, Philando Castile (the last three all by Minnesota police) – a list that sadly runs on – for years, decades, yes, centuries.

We express our heartfelt condolences to the family and loved ones of George Floyd and all the bereaved and beloved of the growing number of African Americans killed by law enforcement and vigilantes in our country.

It is to this egregious, legacy of the persecution of African Americans that the ISA calls attention to a quote from Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah upon him): “Help your brother be he the oppressor or the oppressed.” Those present responded, “We see how we should help him if he is oppressed. How can we help him if he is an oppressor?” The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah upon him) replied, “Prevent him from his oppression.” In the Quran (2:191): “Persecution is far more grievous than killing.”

Unwarranted Killing is a grave heinous cardinal sin in Islam as in all other religions. Yet in this specific case, we can no longer look away from the discriminatory socio-political condition that underlies the slaughter of innocent African Americans, especially males, in our country.

Until we, as a nation, acknowledge this political reality and debunk its prejudicial concepts – concepts that (1) misrepresent the teachings of Heavenly religion that all humanity has descended from a single soul (Adam), and (2) decry God's observable divine wisdom expressed in the Quran that He has made us into nations, tribes, and peoples of varied colors and different languages that we may know one another, not to hate one another. – we will not be able to say that America is a nation where “all men are created equal.” The solution lies not in merely editing the old, failed illusory social contract that denies its injustice. We must bring about a new social contract as a prescription for true human justice and peace in our society.

In the interim, we at ISA call for two immediate actions:

1. City and county councils, and state and federal, representative bodies, should formally affirm the sanctity of human life over and above that of all other earthly valuables, specifically including property. While we firmly believe in the sanctity of private property – and especially the sanctity of homes, houses of worship, and places of cultural importance – it does not compare to the level of sanctity of all human life, for all.

All laws, regulations, as well as police and prosecutor policies and training, must be modified, as necessary, to explicitly state and reflect this priority on protecting human life.

2. We support the peaceful protests as expression of freedom of speech enshrined in the Constitution. At the same time we condemn rioting and looting that happens alongside these protests.

Elected and appointed officials must prohibit any/all law enforcement personnel under their authority from confronting unarmed peaceful protesters.

The police and officials have no legitimate justification for their provocative presence and actions. The shameful action of police coming out in phalanxes with full riot gear— firing potentially deadly rubber bullets and choking teargas into crowds of unarmed protesters, violently chasing them down – is absolutely unacceptable.

We stand with the African American community under their burden of discrimination that is often deadly, whether at the hands of police, or vigilantes, or the result of deficient health care so vividly demonstrated in the current Covid-19 pandemic– and we do so acknowledging the sanctity of their lives. Their lives do matter, like every other God-given one.

We stand, as well, and offer our prayers and support to all the other diverse U.S. communities, including the indigenous American, Latino, immigrant, and rural communities – each one suffering loss, strain, and human devaluation.

Finally, we pray that all elected officials and all law enforcement can thoughtfully absorb the message of these turbulent days, leading them to adopt the strategies and tactics that lead us to the country promised by our Founding Fathers: a country with "Liberty and justice for all."

Visit our website VisitISA.com and contact us at info@visitisa.com.