

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً وَتَخُنْ لَهُ عَابِدُونَ.

وَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ:

مِنْ حُسْنِ إِسْلَامِ الْمَرْءِ تَرْكُهُ مَا لَا يَغْنِيهِ.

OUR IDENTITY IS OUR FUTURE

Honorable Muslims!

Every society possesses its own distinctive identity. Nations take their place in history through this identity. Through this identity, they preserve their national and spiritual values. It is through this identity that they become families, and through it that they shape their art and architecture, their cities, and their civilizations. Through this identity, they sustain their future.

Dear Believers!

One of the elements that defines who we are, that makes us a nation, and that enables us to live together in unity and solidarity as brothers and sisters is our Muslim identity. This identity draws its essence from the following Qur'anic verse: **"This is the 'natural' Way of Allah. And who is better than Allah in ordaining a way? And we worship 'none but' Him."**¹ At the heart of this identity are wellsprings of compassion nourished by the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. At the foundation of this identity lies an Islamic moral framework that does not change with time or circumstance. In the construction of this identity lies a commitment to compassion and mercy, justice and goodness.

Dear Muslims!

Nations that have vanished from the stage of history first fell under the influence of foreign cultures and then became estranged from their own identity. In the end, they lost both their civilizations and their future. Today, humanity is confronted with moral decay. Through forms of entertainment pursued without restraint, there are attempts to corrupt the innate human nature in which people were created pure. A perception is being cultivated that people can be happy only to the

extent that they consume their time and resources. There are deliberate efforts to produce rootless generations, stripped of identity and alienated from their own essence and culture. Our Lord Almighty describes those who cause such corruption on earth to us as follows: **"And when they leave 'you', they strive throughout the land to spread mischief in it and destroy crops and cattle. Allah does not like mischief."**²

Dear Muslims!

Each page we tear from the calendar is, in truth, a silent witness to a day taken from our lives. Next week, we will enter a new year in the Gregorian calendar, leaving yet another year behind on the ledger of our lives. These days should not be ones in which we squander our lives on forms of entertainment that are incompatible with our values and our identity. These days should not be turned into an atmosphere in which homes, workplaces and streets are adorned with symbols that have no place in our faith or our culture. These days should not be turned into a period marked by the consumption of alcohol that harms both body and soul. These days should not be turned into a time devoted to gambling, lotteries or games of chance—whatever their name—forms of gain devoid of honest labor and from which no charity can be spared. In one of his hadiths, our Prophet (saw) says: **"One of the signs of a person's being a good Muslim is that they abandon what is of no benefit and refrain from pointless pursuits."**³

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

Let us regard every moment of the gift of life as a treasure beyond measure. Let us heed the warning of our Almighty Lord: **"The time of people's judgment has drawn near, yet they are heedlessly turning away."**⁴ As we reflect on how we have lived up to this day, let us shape our present condition and our future in light of the Hereafter, our eternal home. Let us not forget that death and the reckoning we imagine to be distant are, in fact, very close to us.

¹ Baqarah, 2/138.

² Baqarah, 2/205.

³ Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 11.

⁴ Anbiya, 21/1.

