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## **“Peacebuilding: A Collection of Stories and Anecdotes from the Prophet Muhammad’s Life”**

### **1. Determining the notions violence, conflict sensitivity, and apply the “do not harm» principle.”**

#### **Violence prevention and non-violence**

- Prophet Muhammad (s) said, "Never aspire for confronting your enemies (in a fight). Pray to God to be among those who seek living peacefully with others. But if ever you confront them (in a fight) be patient and know that Heaven is as close to you as the shades of the swords."

[Narrated by *Al Bukhari, Muslim and Abu Dawoud- authorities on Sunna & hadith*]

- In the legal text of the Medina Charter, which is described as the first constitution of the City of Medina's government which was founded by the Prophet in the first year of the Migration, he laid down this principle: **"Pious believers will oppose any aggressor or anyone who intentionally plans an unjust action or crime or a violation of rights or anyone who has intention to create conflict among the believers. Even if this person is one of their children, all their hands will be raised against him."**

#### **Prophet Muhammad Demonstrated Patience and Tolerance to Negative Reactions:**

- During the first thirteen years of Prophet Muhammad’s prophetic mission in Mecca (610-622 AD), Mecca’s wealthy elite vehemently opposed the his monotheistic message and unleashed a heavy toll of physical and economic persecution upon Islam’s weakest followers. Nevertheless, Prophet Muhammad unconditionally forbade retaliation and enjoined a complete and patient commitment to nonviolence. When persecution became intolerable, he and the early Muslims migrated to Medina, where he established a sovereign state in 622 AD.
- When the Prophet Muhammad finally returned to the city of Mecca with victory, he came in with a powerful army of 10,000 strong. If he wanted, he could have taken revenge and massacred the Makkans fro their plotting and treachery. Instead he came to them and said, “I say as my brother Joseph said: ‘No blame will there be upon you today. Allah will forgive you,

and He is the most Merciful of the merciful.” Then the Prophet told the people of Makkah, “Go back to your homes for you are all free.”

- Prophet Muhammad's wife Aisha asked him if he had ever lived through a more difficult day than that of the Battle of Uhud. He answered as follows: **"Yes, I have experienced much oppression from your tribe. The worst of this was what they did to me on the day of Akabe (in Taif). I wanted to seek shelter with Ibn Abdulyalil in Taif, but he refused (to help me). He turned me away and I was walking away in deep sorrow. By the time I had arrived at Karnussealib I still had not recovered. When I lifted my head there I saw a cloud shadowing me. When I looked closely I saw Angel Gabriel in the cloud. Gabriel called to me: "Allah has heard what you said to the tribe and how they have refused you. He has sent you the Angel of the Mountain.' Then the Angel of the Mountain called to me and greeted me. Then he said 'O Muhammad! Allah heard what the tribe has done. I am the Angel of the Mountain. What do you want me to do? If you wish I can bring these two mountains down on their heads.' Then I said 'No, I only wish from Allah that they will worship Allah and not see anything as partners to Him.'"** (27)

### **Patience is better than Retaliation**

"And if you take your turn, then retaliate with the like of that with which you were afflicted; but if you are patient, it will certainly be best for those who are patient." (Qur'an, 16:126) Whereupon Muhammad (saw) said: "I shall exhibit patience over this calamity."

- “An Abyssinian slave, who killed Hamza, Muhammad’s uncle, in the battle of Uhud, and after the victory of Makkah embraced Islam and came to him, was forgiven. The wife of Abu Sufyan had cut the chest of Hamza and torn his liver and heart into pieces in the battle of Uhud, She quietly came to the Prophet and accepted Islam, He recognised her but did not say anything, She was so impressed by his character and stature that she said, **“O God’s Messenger, no tent was more deserted in my eyes than yours; but today no tent is more lovely in my eyes than yours”**
- In the battle of Uhud when the polytheists cracked the Prophet’s jaw and split open his blessed face, the companions asked him to call upon Allah to damn them. He responded, “I was not sent to damn people, but as a mercy unto them.”<sup>4</sup> According to another narration he then supplicated, “O God, guide my people for they know not what they do.”
- The story of a woman who threw garbage on Prophet Muhammad explains the Prophet's patience and tolerance:

One old woman made a habit of throwing rubbish on the Prophet Muhammad whenever he passed from her house on the way to the Mosque. Even when the old woman threw rubbish on him, he would pass silently without showing any anger or annoyance. This was a regular, daily

event. One day when the Holy Prophet was passing by the old woman was not there to throw the rubbish.

He stopped and asked the neighbor about her well-being. The neighbor informed the Prophet that the old woman was sick in bed. The Prophet politely asked permission to visit the old woman. When allowed he entered the house, the old woman thought that he had come there to take his revenge when she was unable to defend herself because of sickness. But the Prophet assured her that he had come to her, not to take any revenge, but to see her and to look after her needs, as it was the command of Almighty Allah that if any one is sick, a Muslim should visit him and should help him if his help is needed.

The Prophet said: **'Whoever suffers an injury done to him and forgives (the person responsible), Allah will raise his status to a higher degree and remove one of his sins.'**  
(Al-Tirmidhi)

- Anas , a close Companion of Prophet Muhammad reported, "A Jewish woman brought a poisoned lamb to the Prophet and he ate of it. When the woman was brought to him, people suggested, 'Shall we kill her?' The Prophet said, 'No.' I have recognized the effects of that poisoning in the Prophet's throat ever since." (Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood, Ahmad, and others).

In the light of the foregoing, the Prophet's tendency to forgive that woman, which was manifested in his immediate reaction to the suggestion of his Companions that they should kill her, is highly significant. He always forgave even the most hardened of his enemies.

- Habir ibn al-Aswad was another vicious enemy of Muhammad and of Islam, He had inflicted a grievous injury to Zainab, daughter of the Holy Prophet, She was pregnant and was emigrating to Medinah, The polytheists of Makkah obstructed her and Habbar bin al-Aswad intentionally threw her down from the camel, She was badly hurt and had a miscarriage, He had committed many other crimes as well, He wanted to run away to Persia but then he came to Muhammad, who forgave him.

## 2. Conflict gender analysis

**The Prophet considered how women and other vulnerable groups in society were affected by conflict:**

- The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) once saw the corpse of a woman who had been killed in a military action, and he disapproved of it and forbade the killing of women and children.

Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad and his successor as head of the Muslim community, advised one of his military commanders: **"Do not kill women or children or an aged, infirm person. Do not cut down fruit-bearing trees. Do not destroy an inhabited place."** [Al-Muwatta]

- **Women should be equally included and participate in peacebuilding efforts:**

### 3. Instruments of conflict analysis

#### Prophet Muhammad always gathered the facts from all sides to understand the conflict:

During Muhammad's time a cottage was built on a piece of land belonging to two brothers. The heirs disputed regarding which brother the cottage belonged to. They went to the Prophet to resolve the issue. He assigned Huzayfa b. Yemin to handle the case. Huzayfa went to the cottage for discovery and investigation, took statements from various people, applied to witnesses and presented his decision to the Prophet for his approval. He considered the decision and approved it. In the institution of justice established by the Prophet, the judge makes a decision according to evidence; thus, a wrong cannot be made right with his decision. For this reason, false witnessing and the presentation of unfounded evidence were emphatically forbidden. Gains made by deceiving a judge and getting a positive decision although it is not one's right is referred to as "*A piece of fire*" by the Prophet. (10)

#### The Prophet Muhammad was always neutral when trying to understand and resolve conflicts:

He decided the cases even of his enemies with strict justice and fairness. His enemies brought their suits to him without any fear or hesitation for they knew that they would get justice only from him. The Holy Prophet did not distinguish between a friend and foe in matters of justice: "O You who believe! Stand out firmly for God as witnesses to justice, and let not the enmity of others incite you to act contrary to justice. Be always just, that is next to piety. Be mindful of your duty to God." It is surely an act of merit to do justice among friends and in a favorable or neutral atmosphere, but real greatness lies in doing justice to people who are one's open enemies. The Holy Prophet, as head of the Muslim state of Medinah, always treated his enemies, including Jews and unbelievers, with justice and equity.

The Commentators explain this passage with reference to the case of Ta'ima ibn Ubairaq, who was nominally a Muslim but really a Hypocrite, and given to all sorts of wicked deeds. He was suspected of having stolen a set of armor, and when the trial was hot, he planted the stolen property into the house of a Jew, where it was found. The Jew denied the charge and accused Taima, but the sympathies of the Muslim community were with Tai'ma on account of his nominal profession of Islam. The case was brought to the Prophet, who acquitted the Jew according to the strict principle of justice, as "guided by Allah." Attempts were made to prejudice him and deceive him into using his authority to favor Ta'ima. When Ta'ima realized that his punishment was imminent he fled and turned apostate.

### 4. Skills of effective communication

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was someone who understood the importance of communicating with people; he did not converse or embrace only believers. Rather he saw all people, irrespective of religion, language, race, sex, social status or role as possessing value and thus he established good communication with all of them. Prophet Muhammad brought the divine message into a form that people could perceive, hear and feel, about which they could read, talk and write; he set examples that could be brought to life and practiced. As a prophet, Muhammad's mission and goal was to establish a good dialogue with people and to communicate; to do this he not only used the various means of communication that belonged to his era, he also took into account the psychological peculiarities of the individual and society in order to present the message in the best and most effective way.

### **Prophet Muhammad's Communication was Sensitive to the Characteristics of the Individual:**

Prophet Muhammad was careful about individual differences when conversing with people. For example, he had a conversation with a Bedouin, whose wife had given birth to a black child; the Bedouin denied that the child was his. "My wife gave birth to a black child. I want to reject this child" the Bedouin said. Prophet Muhammad asked: *"Do you have camels?"* "Yes" *"What color are those camels?"* "Red" *"Are there any white, black or grey camels among these?"* "Yes, of course. There are grey camels among them." *"Well, where do you think these grey camels came from?"* "O Prophet, that is in their blood; they take after the ancestors." *"Perhaps this boy has taken after someone in his ancestry (he resembles them)."* The Prophet did not merely say, relying on his authority as prophet: "No, I tell you as the Prophet of Allah that this is your child." Rather he spoke in a way that the Bedouin could understand, taking care to use an example that related to the Bedouin's life, and thus, by benefiting from the experiences of the addressee he was able to solve a problem in a convincing manner by having the Bedouin come up with the solution himself.

### **Prophet Muhammad Took into Account the Characteristics of the Society:**

Prophet Muhammad was able to understand the social psychology, as well as the individual characteristics of the people who made up the society, and thus used different methods of communication. For example, he acted according to the conditions of the region he was in when eating, drinking or dressing. Again, when speaking or delivering a speech, he constantly observed the abilities of the addressees who listened to him, and the examples he used were chosen from a world in which the addressees lived and which they understood well. From animals, the most common examples he would use would be camels and from plants he would use the date. Some of the people around him were from the city while others were Bedouins (living in the desert). For this reason, Prophet Muhammad, while forwarding a message that was to cover all ages and all people, acted wisely in the difficult task of establishing communication with the first addressees; he chose methods that were in accordance with their concepts and thoughts, their perceptions and abilities.

### **Patience and Good Conduct in Communication**

The Prophet showed endless patience while conveying the message of Islam to the non-Muslims. He never tired of speaking to people and sharing with them the monotheistic belief which is the essence of the religion. He was always sincere in his relationships and he abstained from useless polemics or quarrels. As is stated in the Holy Qur'an, the Prophet always treated people well; he used kind words and avoided rude and aggressive behavior. As a matter of fact, despite the rude behavior of some of the communities he encountered while spreading the religion, the Prophet curbed his anger and asked Allah for salvation for them. For instance, when Prophet Muhammad went to Ta'if with Zayd ibn Haritha in search of a freer environment in which to convey the message of Islam due to the increasing pressure in Mecca, the leading figures in Ta'if treated him rudely and ordered the people to stone him and drive him out of the city. In response to this sad experience, Prophet Muhammad prayed that the people of Ta'if would be granted deliverance.

## 5. Negotiations

### How Prophet Muhammad negotiated treaties:

The Prophet (pbuh) always honored the treaties signed in the Age of Ignorance to assure peace and concord. He stated that Islam would reinforce those treaties and asserted that he could join treaties regarding this issue. As a matter of fact, Prophet Muhammad signed treaties with the neighboring tribes in accordance with the context of the “If enemies incline to peace, incline you also to it, and trust in Allah” verse.

The treaties made by Prophet Muhammad were signed at the tribe to which the agreement was to be contracted or in Medina before the delegate of the other party. Before the agreements were written, the conditions were mutually debated, and as the parties reached an agreement over the articles of the treaty, the issuing phase was put into effect. If a written proposition was brought, the articles were examined, and the sections that needed to be modified were edited after the parties approved them.

The Prophet would dictate the text of the treaty to his clerks given that he knew not how to read or write. Generally Ali performed this duty. The treaty would be prepared in two copies: one copy for Prophet Muhammad and one copy for the other party. During the debate and writing of the treaty, the witnesses of the parties would attend and their names were also written at the end of the treaty. As a matter of fact, on the Hudaibiyah treaty, the witnesses from the Muslims were Abu Bakr, Abdurrahman bin Avf and others, and the witnesses of the mushriks were Mikraz bin Hafs and others. Furthermore, the treaty would be embossed with the seal of the head of the parties.

To ensure adherence to the treaties, the Prophet used expressions like “until there still remains a drop in the sea enough to wet a feather” or “as long as Mount Uhud exist”.

### Treaties for Peacemaking

Establishing security and unity in Medina and getting acceptance of his sovereignty, Prophet Muhammad began political relations with tribes outside of Medina. He made agreements with surrounding tribes via detachments of troops or delegations he sent to them. In the second year of the migration he made agreements with several tribes between Medina and Mecca. Similar expressions are used in all these agreements: they guarantee that the parties will not attack each other, and that they will remain neutral or when one of the parties is attacked, they will help each other.

### The Medina Charter

An example is the Medina Charter, which was established by the Prophet Muhammad in Medina soon after the early Muslims’ migration from Mecca to Medina. The Charter was negotiated between the Muslims, led by the Prophet, and the Jewish communities and non-Muslim Arab tribes who already resided in Medina; the purpose of the pact was to maintain peace and security by protecting the life and property of all inhabitants and by guarding against injustice and aggression regardless of tribal or religious affiliations. The Charter is notable in that it does not declare the state religion to be Islam; it

protects freedom for the whole community, regardless of religious or tribal identity. “But if the enemy inclines toward peace, you also incline towards peace, and trust in God: for he is the one that hears and knows” (8:61).

Co-existence is one of the finest examples of the Medina pact. A pact signed between Muhammad as the administrator of the City State of Medina and the Jews, Muslims, Christians and other tribes as the communities (Ummah) subscribing to the pact. The pact guaranteed the right to assemble, right to free speech and freedom to practice their faith.

### Peace Treaty of Hudaibiyah with the Quraishis

The Prophet set out for Mecca with his *ashab* (companions) of 1,400-1,500 people and 70 sacrificial animals in the lunar month Dhu al-Qa'dah in the sixth year of Hijrah. His purpose was to remove the hostility between them and the Quraishis, forget events of the past and maintain good relations and perform umrah pilgrimage. However, when Prophet Muhammad came within the reach of Mecca, they came across Busr bin Sufyan. When they learned from him that the people of Mecca were planning to treat the Muslims with hostility, Prophet Muhammad took his followers to Hudaibiyah. Because of the fact that the Prophet had the intention to make peace with them when he approached Mecca, he did not retaliate against the Quraishis for preventing the Muslims access to Mecca. His sole purpose was to make a treaty and leave if not perform umrah pilgrimage. He tried to achieve this by diplomatic means. As result of the bilateral diplomatic relations, the Quraishis sent Suhayl bin Amr to make a treaty.

After having debated and signed this treaty, the Prophet had accepted it under very difficult conditions and terms. This was because they were not going to be able to visit Kaaba, the restitution of those taking refuge in Mecca was not going to be possible despite the restitution of those taking refuge in Medina, and not a single person from Mecca was going to be allowed to enter Medina. As it can be understood, all the articles of the treaty were to the disadvantage of Muslims. At the signing of the treaty, some of the most prominent Muslim leaders began to question the Prophet's motivation, even his claim to divine inspiration. Muhammad's diplomacy was seen as selling out his followers, who had sacrificed everything in support of the Prophet's vision.

However, despite all these negativities, the Prophet signed a ten-year truce with his greatest enemy, the Quraish. This treaty consequently left the Muslims feeling hopeless. Yet, after revelations were received and some incidents occurred, it was understood that this was in fact a victory for the Muslims.

- Zuhri explains clearly why the Hudaibiyah peace was a conquest: “There could be no greater conquest than this in Islam. Previously people (pagans and believers) would fight when they came face to face. When peace was signed, war was left aside and people were sure of each other. When they met face to face, they talked and debated. Some became Muslim when Islam was explained to them. Within two years after this peace, the number of new Muslims was greater than the previous number of Muslims.”

## 6. Mediation

### Skills in Mediation

Prophet Muhammad was always an unbiased arbitrator and leader who acted justly to defend the middle ground. His ability to arbitrate was recognized not only by the Muslims, but also by the non-Muslims. Probably for this reason, the non-Muslims asked him to arbitrate in the conflicts that occurred with the Muslims from time to time and in the problems they had amongst themselves. For some of the legal problems that occurred among the Jews, the Prophet ruled according to Jewish law. His commitment to justice and his reliable character were well-known long before he became a prophet. For example, he arbitrated in a disagreement among the Quraishis in Mecca regarding who should replace the al-Hajar al-Aswad (the Black Stone, considered holy even before the advent of Islam, as it is said to have descended from heaven) in the walls of the Ka'ba after renovations had been completed on the building. By finding a way for the tribes to cooperate equally in the task, he prevented a tense situation from escalating into war.

### Prophet Muhammad Used Sympathy to Affect the Person Being Addressed:

Allah introduced His Prophet as *"Let it be sworn that such a prophet has come among you that any troubles you have will be troublesome for him; he is fond of you, he is tender, merciful to the believers."* (10) The expression in the Qur'an: *"Now hath come unto you an Apostle from amongst Yourselves"* (11) focuses on the empathetic attitude of the Prophet. In a hadith the Prophet wanted to try to have the believers understand one another and to understand what each other were feeling: *"....when a servant does not want for his neighbor or brother what he wants for himself then he does not fully believe."* (12)

### The Ka'ba Arbitration

The Prophet Muhammad's arbitration between the major clans of the Quraysh tribe when the sacred black corner stone, called Aswad, fell off the wall of the Kaaba carries great importance. He was trusted by all the tribes, even those at odds with each other, they could count on him to always be truthful. No clan chief wanted to relinquish this great honor of reinserting the Black Stone to any other. There were even those who suggested fighting for the right. The infighting among the tribes began as to who would be privileged to place the stone back in its place, as the conflict grew, they called upon Muhammad (the truthful and just) to find the solution. Muhammad was inherently a peace maker, and strove for peace among the communities. The future Prophet of Islam spread his mantle on a piece of cloth on the ground and, placing the Black Stone on it, invited the chiefs of the four major clans entrusted with repairing the Ka'ba to each take one corner of the cloth. When they raised the Black Stone to the spot where it was to be inserted, the Prophet took it and inserted it firmly in its position. As a result, potential clan war among the Quraysh was prevented. Muhammad wanted us to understand that Fairness and Justice sustains peace longer than any other thing.



## 7. Possible actions on intervention in the conflict

### An example for promoting inter-ethnic harmony:

#### Prophet Muhammad always promoted tolerance and inter-communal harmony

- The framework of the Medina agreement with the non-Muslims shortly after the arrival in Medina is the perfect example that shows that Prophet Muhammad was searching for good relationships with these different groups and it makes clear his intentions. In this agreement not only was there freedom of religion and conscience, but it was also based on the fundamentals of good reciprocal relations. In the treaties that were drawn up one can see the special care given to the rights of life, property and religion. Despite the hostile attitude demonstrated against the Muslims, including assassination attempts against Prophet Muhammad, until the situation became clearly one of war there were no armed struggles on the part of the Muslims. Before battle, during the battle and afterwards there was no hostile attitude displayed against holy objects. After the battles the Muslims behaved justly and they were reminded that it was forbidden to abuse any property of those with whom they had agreements.
- In daily life, Prophet Muhammad continued to have socio-economic relations with the non-Muslims; from time to time he gave and took loans from non-Muslims. There is a very interesting account of how the Prophet pawned his armor to a non-Muslim in return for a sum of money. According to Aisha, the Prophet passed away while his armor was still in the possession of a Jew (Bukhari, Jihad 89, Maghazi 86; Muslim, Musaqat 124-126). Also, within the scope of the good relationships he had established with other people, the Prophet always accepted invitations from non-Muslims and listened to them. In fact, once he accepted an invitation from a Jewish man who then tried to assassinate him.
- The Prophet would sometimes discuss the problems the Jews were encountering and visit them in the Beytu'l Midras where the Torah was being read. (48) He stood up when a Jewish funeral passed in front of him, and he recommended that the other Muslims do the same. (49) He made a Jewish boy happy by frequently visiting the boy when he was ill. (50) Prophet Muhammad expressed the priority given to close neighbors, saying "*Even if your neighbor is a Jew, they have prior rights.*" (51) Prophet Muhammad entered into trade relations with the Jews. In fact, Prophet Muhammad purchased some provisions a Jewish trader, and left his armor as collateral. (52) When Prophet Muhammad died it is reported that his armor was in the possession of a Jew in lieu of payment. (53) Some of the Companions entered into debt trading with Jews and requested help Prophet Muhammad on this matter. (54)

#### Constructiveness and respect of diversity

- The Prophet was always constructive in his relationships with people, whether they were believers or not. In particular, he maintained good relations, particularly in the Medinan period, with the Jewish tribes and the Arab polytheists with whom he lived as long as they did not show hostility towards the Muslims and did not violate any mutual treaties. Prophet Muhammad saw no harm in different communities living together, with each community contributing something useful to society. For instance, Muslims and non-Muslims were able to live together in peace in Medina under the agreement known as "The Medina Document", which was signed by the

different groups living there in the early Medinan period. The different communities undertook common responsibilities to form a society; this situation could continue as long as the provisions of the agreement were not violated. The Prophet even worked with Arab polytheists who had been prisoners of war. For instance, after the Battle of Badr, the Muslims benefited from the ability to read and write that some of the idolaters and prisoners had: in return for their release, they taught the Muslims how to read and write.

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