



Muslim Resources for the Children's Sabbath

In this section you will find:

- Suggested activities to engage your mosque, Islamic center, school, or group in the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® celebration
- "Care for the Children of America: An Islamic Perspective" by Dr. Ahmed Nezar Kobeisy, Ph.D.
- Materials for khutbahs and discussions, including:
 - Passages from the holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.); and
 - A sample Friday sermon/khutbah by Syed Shakeel, Islamic Shura Council of Southern California
- Two duas

Suggested Activities

- 1. A Friday sermon on the vulnerability of children and the urgent need to care for them.** Material provided here in addition to other materials from the Qur'an, Sunnah, Islamic law and biography of early Muslim generations can be used to illustrate the care given to children. One great story is that of the second great rightly guided caliph Omar when he declared that infants and children must be given allowances like adults in order to allow their parents to provide adequate care for them.
- 2. An evening or weekend congregational event** where parents and children who lack proper care, adequate education, or health insurance can speak to the community in order to raise awareness among members of the Muslim community.
- 3. A public and community-wide forum organized by the Islamic center or the Muslim community** in which experts on child poverty, childhood hunger, housing and homelessness, health care, health insurance, and school districts, and public officials can attend to provide information on existing resources and, at the same time, direct the public on productive ways of activism to change existing public policies and commit themselves to helping in these noble tasks.
- 4. A gathering of various ethnic and religious groups to raise awareness and commit themselves to producing the necessary and desirable change.** The Muslim representative can read the Islamicly based public prayer written by Dr. Ahmed Nezar Kobeisy included in this section.

Care for the Children of America: An Islamic Perspective

By Dr. Ahmed Nezar Kobeisy, Islamic Society of Central New York

Generally speaking, children are the most precious, yet vulnerable, most innocent, yet fragile, of all age groups. The future of any nation depends greatly on how that nation educates, treats, and nurtures its children. Due to the unique position and role of the United States in the world as the sole superpower, not only the future of the United States but also that of the world will be greatly affected by the way American children are educated, nurtured, and treated today. Although the United States is the most advanced in the world industrially, scientifically, and militarily, among other things, statistics on children are not encouraging. A great percentage of American children are left in poverty, in harmful environments, and without adequate nourishment, health care, or education.

To illustrate:

In poverty:

- Every 33 seconds a child is born into poverty.
- Today, there are 1.7 million more children living in poverty than there were in 2000, an increase of 15 percent.
- Children under the age of five remain more likely to be poor than older children.
- Every year that 13 million children live in poverty costs the nation \$500 billion in lost productivity.

In health care:

- There are nine million uninsured children in America.
- Every day more than 2,200 children are born without health insurance.
- Every two minutes a baby is born at low birthweight.

In education:

- Every 10 seconds during the school year a student drops out.
- Only 14 percent of Black, 17 percent of Latino, and 42 percent of White 4th graders are reading at grade level.
- States spend on average almost three times as much per prisoner (\$22,650 a year) as per public school student.

In harmful environments:

- Every 35 seconds a child is confirmed abused or neglected.
- Every three hours a child or teen is killed by a firearm.
- In 2007, the United States' inmate population of more than 2,300,000 exceeded China's, whose general population is more than four times as large.
- On any given night, 200,000 children are homeless.

Muslim Resources for the Children's Sabbath

The Qur'an describes children's condition as that of vulnerability, weakness, and need.

The Qur'an states:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ يُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوا أَشُدَّكُمْ ثُمَّ لِتَكُونُوا شُيُوخًا وَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُتَوَقَّى مِنْ قَبْلٍ وَلِيَتَّبِعُوا أَجَالَ مُمْسَىٰ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

Which translates to:

It is He who has created you from dust then from a sperm drop, then from a leech-like clot; then does he get you out (into the light) as a child: then lets you (grow and) reach your age of full strength; then lets you become old—though of you there are some who die before—and lets you reach a Term appointed; in order that ye may learn wisdom. (Qur'an 40:67)

Islam commands mercy when dealing with children and considers the way children are treated as the measure of mercy. In an authentic narration, while a man was sitting with the Prophet (peace be upon him), a child came to the Prophet, so the Prophet held and kissed him. The man asked: "Do you kiss your children? I have ten children but I've never kissed any of them." The Prophet replied: "What help I can offer to you if Allah has deprived your heart of mercy?"

This narration explains the great attention that the Qur'an gives to the care for orphans and the reward promised for treating them like one's own children.

The Qur'an states:

﴿٨﴾ وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا

Which translates to:

And they feed, for the love of Allah, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive. (Qur'an 76:8)

The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) states that which means: "I and the one who cares for the orphan in Paradise are as near as these two fingers" (while holding the index and the middle fingers).

The Qur'an forbids mistreatment of orphan children:

﴿٩﴾ فَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرْ

Which translates to:

Therefore, treat not the orphan with harshness. (Qur'an 93:9)

In Islam, children who are not orphans but weak, vulnerable, and deprived should be no different. The Orphan in Islam refers to the child who lost his/her father (i.e., the breadwinner for the family). There are many children whose parents are both alive but who still can be described as "orphans" due to the lack of adequate care in various aspects of life from negligence, ignorance, or inability in the face of difficult circumstances. They are weak and vulnerable without an adequate family income, or food, or health care, or housing, or safe and nurturing care.

A Muslim poet states what could be translated to the following:

The true orphan is not the one whose father or mother has passed away and left him behind.

The true orphan is the one whose mother has become negligent or whose father has become inattentive.

Of course, many parents are trying to do the best they can for their children, yet face insurmountable challenges of unaffordable housing or health care, unavailable child care and jobs that pay a living wage, lack of job training and transportation, and all kinds of other obstacles. Despite their best efforts, these circumstances leave their children as vulnerable as the orphans we are instructed to protect, and to them, too, we must offer our care and concern.

It is the duty of every Muslim, male and female, young and old, to change the unfair and unhealthy circumstances of children of our societies and consequently of our nation. Muslims are urged to display the mercy of Islam for the vulnerable and the care for the future of our nation and for that of the world by working hard to bring this issue to the attention of the public and to the public policy makers, by raising the awareness among Muslims of the plight of children in the United States and of the need to change such conditions, and by collaborating with their fellow citizens of various religious and non-religious groups to change such oppressive and unhealthy conditions of children.

Materials for the Sermons and Discussions

Passages from the holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.):

Use verses that assert the honor and dignity which Allah assigned to the human race, equality among all people, the essentiality of justice and standing for justice, the obligation to cooperate with everyone—Muslim or non-Muslim—on issues of justice and mutual good, the mercy of Islam and the kind treatment Muslims are required to give to the vulnerable and weak. Some illustrations are included below. Muslim leaders are encouraged to utilize the abundant sources in the Qur'an and Prophetic tradition to support the activities related to this program.

a. The nobility and honor bestowed on human beings

﴿وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَىٰ كَثِيرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا﴾^(٧٥)

We have honored the children of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favors, above a great part of Our creation.

(Qur'an 17:70)

b. Justice

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَتَانُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ آلا تَعْدِلُوا أَعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ﴾^(٨)

O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to justice, and let not the hatred of others to you make swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety: and fear Allah. For Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

(Qur'an 5:8)

c. The Islamic obligation to support just causes regardless of religious affiliation

﴿لَا يَنْهَىٰكُمْ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُواكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُواكُمْ مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ﴾^(٨)

Allah forbids you not, with regards to those who fight you not for your faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loveth those who are just.

(Qur'an 60:8)

d. The mercy of Islam and kind treatment required

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَايِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ﴾^(١٠)

Allah truly enjoins justice and Ihsan (kind and excellent treatment). Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) states that which means: "The creatures of Allah (i.e., humans) are the children (i.e., liability and responsibility) of Allah, and the most beloved to Allah are those who show kind and excellent treatment to His children."

Suggested Sample Friday Sermon (Khutba)

By Shakeel Syed, Islamic Shura Council of Southern California

O our Lord! Grant our spouses and offspring that are joy to our eyes, and help us to be a model among those who are conscious of You." (25:74)

It is God alone who has made for you from among yourselves pairs, male and female. And He has made for you from your mates, children and grandchildren. He has provided you, moreover, with all that is wholesome in life. Then is it in falsehood they shall believe, while in the blessings of God they disbelieve? (16:72)

These two verses reflect on the priceless gifts that the Most Compassionate God Almighty has bestowed upon us the gift of children and grandchildren.

Our most grateful response toward this awesome gift of children and grandchildren ought to be:

- In our gratefulness to God Almighty for His awesome gifts;
- In our absolute commitment to take care of these gifts by protecting and sheltering them;
- By being a source of comfort and means to their needs;
- By helping them reach their full potential;
- And, most importantly, making our lives revolve around their well-being.

Brothers and Sisters – as people of faith and people of conscience, we most regrettably are living in a society that seems to have misplaced our priorities, almost completely.

Children seem to have become the last and not the first priority of our society.

This is best demonstrated by virtue of our dismal record in protecting them:

- Records indicate that a child is killed by gunfire about every three hours.
- Data reveals that more than 13 million of our children are poor; nine million of them are without health insurance; close to one million of them are victims of abuse and neglect; more than 10 million of them live on subsistence levels receiving food stamps, and we spend on average approximately \$8,000 to educate each child but have the audacity to spend more than \$22,000 on each prisoner...and the list goes on.

As people of faith and people of conscience, brothers and sisters, we have a responsibility, and an urgent one, toward this most awesome gift from the Most Compassionate God Almighty.

We are reminded by Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) that the "best of you are those who are best to your family."

The questions we ought to ask ourselves are: Am I the parent who is best to my family? Am I the citizen who cares for my own and other children? Is the community and society that I live in the one who takes care of "all" the families and not just "some"? Have we abdicated our responsibilities or embraced our obligations?

These important and urgent questions are the need of the day, my dear brothers and sisters.

As a nation we have spent hundreds of billions of dollars for death and destruction in Iraq and Afghanistan but did not have enough to provide shelter, health care and education to our own children affected by Katrina.

As a nation we chose to remain blind to the hundreds of millions of tax dollars as bonuses to Wall Street while voiceless children and their helpless parents are being asked to remain silent.

As a nation that claims to be the "richest" and "most powerful" of the planet, how can we possibly reconcile the disparity in our priorities?

A nation that cannot take care of the most vulnerable ought to be ashamed of itself rather than boasting as a leader of the world – we have become the immoral cheerleaders of a corrupt system and a society that we lead.

Brothers and Sisters – as people of faith and conscience, we ought to uphold **"the God granted dignity and right of every child born to Adam"** (*"laqad karramna bani Adam"*) – and not only some.

Brothers and Sisters – as tax-paying citizens of this country, we ought to hold responsible the perpetrators of the crimes of highest magnitude by their neglect of our children.

Brothers and Sisters – as members of a human society, we ought not to ask whose child it is but rather embrace each one of them, with a name or no name, with a parent or none, as ours.

Muslim Resources for the Children's Sabbath

Let us remember what Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) reminded us, that those **“who take care of the orphans will accompany him just as twin fingers in the best of heavens in the eternal life hereafter.”**

Let us remember that it is most noble to give before we are asked for it...

Let us remember that our gratefulness to God's awesome gifts is to protect them...

Let us remember that children are a mighty and priceless blessing to us and not a curse...

Let us remember as parents and guardians our imperative to be a source of comfort to them...

Let us remember that we'll be remembered by our care and concern for the voiceless...

Let us remember that our joy is in giving rather than in receiving...

Let us remember that in God, we seek refuge and find strength in reclaiming and restoring the lost rights of His most awesome creation and gift to us—our children.

In closing, my dear brothers and sisters, I would like you all to dedicate a day a month, if not more, to nothing else but to find ways to be a source of comfort and joy to children. I invite you to join me and Islamic Shura Council and the Children's Defense Fund to engage in this noble struggle to defend those who are defenseless, to give voice to those who are voiceless, and to be a reason for smiles and joy to those who are full of tears and without hope. Their voiceless cries must be heard because in it is our salvation and in them is our present and future!

Amen.

Two Duas

A Dua by Dr. Ahmed Nezar Kobeisy, Ph.D., Islamic Society of Central New York

Our Creator, The Lord of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad,

Our beloved God and Our Loving God,

We know Our Lord, Most Wise, that You Created humans purposely to proliferate on Earth, to reproduce and have children and for their children, when they mature and become responsible, to have children, and it is Your Grace which has allowed us to draw from this... an immense joy.

But, we also know that along with the pleasure you have graciously planted in our hearts, Our Lord, Most Just, You have placed on our shoulders a hefty responsibility. Deeply embedded in Your Divine Purpose, is our obligation to defend all that is weak, to nurture all that is vulnerable, to protect all that is innocent, to safeguard all that is fragile and to cherish all that is precious.

And who should know better than You, O' Lord, Who is Most Cognizant, that our children are all of these things?

So graciously, O' Lord, assist us in fulfilling our duties towards them so that they can grow up to be whoever they wish to become and we hope them to be.

Please shape us into the perfect examples for them to follow as they inevitably become the adults of tomorrow.

Our Lord, Most Forgiving, we are horribly ashamed of the way in which we failed You by failing our children.

Alarming statistics of hunger, deprivation, lack of adequate health care, and closed doors of opportunities deprive us of our humanity and civilization.

Daily images of children being abducted from their homes, raped, killed, and brutally mutilated rob us all of any sense of accomplishment.

Other children indicted and convicted as adults pass the conviction to all of our societal institutions.

We have foolishly let our greed, arrogance, and apathy get the best of us by letting these vices cloud our judgment and darken our hearts and souls.

So we ask You, Mighty Lord, to turn the eagerness of our greed into a spirit of selflessness so that we may give back to our children the innocence we so voraciously took.

Please turn our arrogance and false pride into humility and servitude so that we may rightfully nurture them the way they so deserve.

And Lord, Most Gracious, please turn our apathy and inertia into empathy and compassion so that we may change the tears we so wrongfully caused into smiles our children so direly need, and the cries we so unjustly provoked into giggles and laughter carried by the gentle breeze.

After all, until our children succeed and prosper, our hearts will know no peace... and torment will continue to replace the joy that once was.

Our Lord, help us learn the lessons from all that goes on around us.

Grant our members, religious leaders, city officials, public policy makers, and national caretakers the will, strength, resolve and wisdom to nurture, educate and support our children towards excellence in life, health, the opportunity to learn and virtue in values.

Guide our society members, officials, educators, and parents to join hands in preparing the children of today to become the peacemakers of tomorrow.

Help us make the world a safer place for them.

Muslim Resources for the Children's Sabbath

A Dua by Afeefa Syeed

Our Prayer for Children: A Muslim Call to Justice

I begin with the name of God. The God of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. The God whose everlasting compassion and never ending mercy are the saving grace of all humanity. God who is the source of Peace and Perfection. God who is the Protector.

Our nation has been blessed with abundance. At this moment, Dear God, help us to remember and reflect on Your words:

*There will be a time We will test you with affluence—
avoid arrogance and practice justice and equality.*

Oh Lord, Oh God! To every life afflicted with senseless, mean acts, grant your everlasting Mercy. We are comforted in the thought that innocent children whose lives were ended are safe now in Your embrace.

Your Prophet, Muhammad, said,

The best community will be known because of its kindness to children.

In this time of such suffering of the children, help us to remember that our children are a trust from You. We are their guardians and You will be the judge of how we guide and protect them. Guide us to teach them how to be better than we.

Help us to teach our children that a true believer's success is how close he is to God, how relevant and beneficial he is to mankind. The more pain we inflict on fellow human beings the more distance we put between us and God.

As parents in this nation, Lord, help us to sense and know that our children are born in a state of purity and innocence. They are gifts from You.

Remind us, oh Lord, of the story when a man came to Your prophet, Muhammad, and asked "Do you kiss your children? I have ten and have never kissed them." The Prophet replied with a sorrowful tone and a clenched jaw, "That shows you have no mercy or tenderness at all. Those who do not show mercy to others will not have God's mercy on them."

Our Prophet drew great joy and happiness even in times of despair and loss at the sight of children. His supplication should be our supplication:

I commend you, oh children of this world, to the protection of God's perfect words from every evil.

Help us to raise children who are gentle and polite, not timid, afraid, or cowed down. Help us to raise children who are helpful and considerate, not arrogant and loud.

Help us teach our children to know Your prophet's words:

*The strong person is not the one who is best at wrestling;
but the one who controls himself in anger.*

Help us as parents to be tolerant, kind, understanding, truthful, reverent so our children will be tolerant, kind, understanding, truthful, reverent. Help us, Oh Lord, to utter often the verse from the Qur'an:

God truly enjoins justice and kind and excellent treatment.

Oh Lord, those of us who carry Your trust now in our wombs pray to you. Help us to dedicate our offspring to the founding of justice. Let us take the example of Hanna, mother of Mary, who beseeched her Lord to protect and guide her child who was not yet born. Make us conscientious and steadfast parents, not accidental or incidental ones.

Lord, help us to know that Justice is Your Attribute. Justice is a balance. Most importantly, we know from Your words, Justice is a call to action.

Oh Lord, as children of this country, help us to grow as citizens who work for the betterment of our brothers and sisters—no matter how small the action.

As children of this country, guide us to be leaders who will not be blinded to the injustices of this world.

As children of this country, grant us the wisdom to know what our country must do to seek Your Pleasure.

Our nation is great. Our nation is vast. America is beautiful. Guide us, Oh Lord, to know that justice for all is not a luxury or a choice. Help us to remember You give all children the right to a good name, shelter, good health, and an education. We will work for these rights for those who are without—help us be passionate and proactive in the preservation and practice of justice.

Our children are the future, Lord. Do not let us forsake our future by harming the trust You have bestowed on us. We are ready as children and as parents of this country, as Americans all, to pass this test together.



Oh Lord! Guard our children with Your never slumbering eyes. Hold them fast with your embrace of mercy. Shower them wherever they go with love from Your bottomless well of compassion.

Let us remember the mission of all Your prophets from Adam, to Jesus, Moses, and through to Muhammad who said:

If any of you witness an injustice, he should change it with his hand, and if he is not able, then with his tongue, and if he is not able, then detest it with his heart. But that shows the weakest of faith.

Finally, we remember Your words to us:

Oh ye who believe! Seek help with patient perseverance and prayer. For God is with those who patiently persevere.

Amen.