FAITH STATEMENTS ON WILDLIFE TRADE FROM SUB-SAHARA AFRICAN FAITH LEADERS

The Qur’an
Allah has made known through the Qur’an and via the Prophet Mohammed) in the Hadith that He is the creator of all life on Earth and indeed in the Universe (Sura 36:81; 21:19) and that when He intends a thing, it is only that he says to it “be and it is” (Sura 36:82). We also know from the Qur’an that Allah has placed humanity in the role of Khalifas - Vice Regent on Earth (Sura 2:30; 6:165). We know that on the Day of Judgement we will have to answer before Allah as to how well we conducted ourselves as Khalifas for life on Earth (Sura 6:73). We know also from the Qur’an that all creatures live in community (Sura 6:38).

Hadith
We know from the Hadith, where the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) stopped people tormenting a mother bird by taking her young that Allah forbids the infliction of unnecessary pain and suffering on other living creatures. And we know of a woman who was punished for tying a cat until it died of hunger (Imam Muslim), also of an adulteress woman who was forgiven of the act because she drew water from the well for a very thirsty dog (Imam al Bukhari) yet it was also reported from the Prophet to have said: Verily there are heavenly rewards for any act of kindness to a live animal (Imam Malik). Truly As Khalifas we have the right to use nature but not to abuse it.

When we look with eyes of faith at the wonders of all that God has created: at the strength of the lion, the beauty of the gazelle, the swirling patterns of the birds of the air and the fish in the waters. When we see the colours and smell the sweet scents flowers of the field we should rejoice that God has placed us in the midst of such a glorious world. Therefore, when we see this glory diminished by our sin, greed and unreasonableness, we should be horrified and speak out against this wanton destruction of the wonder that God has created. We should both repent and seek to do all in our power to protect all that God has created and placed within our care.

In the light shed by the Qur’an and by the Hadith we call upon all the Ulamma of the faithful to remember that on the Dreadful Day of Judgement, we must answer for any wasteful use of creation, any destruction of a part of nature that was not necessary.

We therefore ask all the faithful to protect those species in our own lands that are most threatened, such as the elephant, gorilla and rhinoceros, and to assist in the prevention of poaching and the illegal wildlife trade in order that on the Dreadful Day of Judgement, when the community of creatures stand before Allah, we will not be condemned by their words.

The richness of this world is a gift and a blessing from Allah. May we in turn be a blessing to all that Allah has made and given to our care.

Signed. SHEIKH HUSSEIN RAJAB KAKOOZA
DIRECTOR SHARIA / IMAM NATIONAL MOSQUE

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P. O. Box 1146, Kampala - Uganda. Mobile: 0772 409 826 / 0772 628 331 / 0772 462 955