

Advocacy and Advancing Access to Care Khutbah Guide

*Helping Individuals & Communities
Engage in Activities to Improve the
Health and Wellness of all Americans*

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INTRODUCTION

At American Muslim Health Professionals (AMHP), it is our mission to bring together and strengthen the impact of Muslim health professionals to improve the health and wellness of all Americans. An important aspect of that work includes advocating on behalf of the underserved and underrepresented segments of our population. AMHP builds and strengthens alliances through its advocacy activities, particularly in areas that impact access to affordable and quality health insurance coverage. Through its work and dedication towards ensuring that Americans are aware of and connected to health insurance coverage under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), AMHP has become an invaluable leader in advocating for healthy communities. As demonstrated in the talking points included in this Advocacy Khutbah Guide, our advocacy work is supported by our Islamic faith and Prophetic example.

As Muslims, faith is the foundation of our lives. Muslims should be at the forefront of creating positive change in the communities and institutions they serve by sharing their views, opinions and personal stories and raising their voices about issues that impact their well-being. As a diverse and multi-faceted segment of American society, it is important that we participate in advocacy efforts and speak up on behalf of marginalized communities. Khateeb, those who deliver sermons, can take a critical role in ensuring that their congregants are informed and encouraged - both socially and spiritually - to engage in advocacy efforts. Our civic participation will ensure that our voices are heard and that our narratives are represented among decision makers. In the Quran, we are commanded to stand firm in justice as indicated in the following verse:

O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted. [Quran, 4:135]

The khutbah, or weekly Friday sermon, is an important opportunity for congregants to learn about how they can put their faith into practice and therefore provides an ideal venue for delivering a call to action around advocacy. This Advocacy Khutbah Guide is a compilation of talking points, hadeeth, and Quranic verses to encourage American Muslim congregants to speak up about issues that impact public health and access to healthcare. Examples of public health issues include but are not limited to the opioid epidemic, health disparities, gun violence, and healthcare reform. This Guide should be used by Muslim leaders delivering lectures, talks, or khutbahs (Friday sermons). This Guide contains topic areas for three Khutbahs with corresponding subtopics and talking points. We encourage you to refer to these points while planning your “Advocacy Khutbah” but do not feel limited to these points alone.

This Advocacy Khutbah Guide contains guidance for three khutbahs (two subtopics per khutbah).

1. Khutbah 1: The Islamic Imperative to Participate in Advocacy (pages 4-6)
2. Khutbah 2: Health Care as an Islamically Integrated Practice (pages 7-8)
3. Khutbah 3: Advocating on Behalf of Underserved and Marginalized Communities (pages 9-10)



KHUTBAH 1: THE ISLAMIC IMPERATIVE TO PARTICIPATE IN ADVOCACY

Subtopic 1: Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as an Agent of Positive Social Change

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was not only a Prophet who taught rituals and forms of worship but was also an agent of positive social change. He worked towards the betterment of society by changing social structures and customs in place that subjugated the poor and oppressed women. His life was an exemplar of the power of advocacy to change social norms and to contribute towards the progress of society as a whole. A few critical issues that he advocated for and that had widespread and serious impact included:

- **Female infanticide:** a significant part of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) legacy was to end infanticide. During the time of his birth, it was not uncommon for female infants to be buried alive. The Quran condemned this practice in the verses below:
 - ◊ And when the girl [who was] buried alive is asked. For what sin she was killed [Quran, 81: 9-10]
- **Women's rights:** Women in 7th century Arabia had few if any rights. The numerous reforms that the Prophet (PBUH) instituted included the end of 'honor' killings, the right of a woman's approval in her marriage and to seek unilateral divorce if the husband is abusive and the right to own private property.
 - ◊ It was narrated from Jaabir that the Prophet (PBUH) said in his Farewell Sermon: "Fear Allah concerning women! Verily you have taken them on the security of Allah" and that "Their rights upon you are that you should provide them with food and clothing in a fitting manner." [1]
- **Provision of wealth:** The Prophet (PBUH) taught that a husband is supposed to provide for his wife but the wife is under no obligation to share her wealth or property with the husband. Islam grants women divinely sanctioned inheritance, property, social and marital rights.
 - ◊ The scholars of Islam are in agreement that it is obligatory for husbands to spend on their wives with regards to food and accommodation on the condition that the wife make herself available to her husband. She has the rights to this provision even if she is wealthy as scholars have interpreted verse 233 from Surah Baqarah to mean "the father of the child shall bear the cost of the mother's food and clothing on a reasonable basis" [Quran, 2:233]
 - ◊ It was narrated that Aisha said: "Hind bint 'Utbah, the wife of Abu Sufyaan, entered upon the Prophet (PBUH) and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, Abu Sufyaan is a stingy man who does not spend enough on me and my children, except for what I take from his wealth without his knowledge. Is there any sin on me for doing that?' The Prophet (PBUH) said, 'Take from his wealth on a reasonable basis, only what is sufficient for you and your children.'" [2, 3]



KHUTBAH 1: THE ISLAMIC IMPERATIVE TO PARTICIPATE IN ADVOCACY

- **Abandoning ignorant traditions and customs:** The Prophet (PBUH) forbade the killing of innocent lives, stealing and adultery. He forbade the involvement in behavior that would threaten the security of property, honor and ation of individuals.
 - ◊ The preservation of life is an Islamic obligation. Islam forbids the killing of innocent lives as indicated in the verse, “whoever kills a person [unjustly]...it is as though he has killed all mankind. And whoever saves a life, it is as though he had saved all mankind” [Qur’an, 5:32]. The Prophet (PBUH) - through his values, actions and way of life - serves as a role model that all Muslims should strive to emulate. When he saw injustices occurring in society, he was the first to speak up about them and as a result, he was able to change many of the social norms that governed Arabian society at that time. When we see policies that negatively impact the health and wellbeing of underrepresented communities, we should reflect on the example of our beloved Prophet (PBUH) and speak up against them.

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KHUTBAH 1: THE ISLAMIC IMPERATIVE TO PARTICIPATE IN ADVOCACY

Subtopic 2: The Value of Coalition-Building in the Life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

The value of creating alliances can be demonstrated in the life of the Prophet (PBUH) during the Hilf-al-Fudool agreement (“Hilf” means alliance, and “Fudool” means people with virtue). Hilf-al-Fudool was a pre-Islamic pact of justice made by the people of Mecca in which “they pledged to support an oppressed person no matter what tribe he was from.” [5] A few lessons can be taken away from this incident:

- **Cooperation with all of humanity - regardless of race or religion - for justice and the betterment of society:** The Prophet (PBUH) spoke highly of the agreement and “made it clear that he would support any similar pact with non-Muslims after the advent of Islam.”
- **Civic engagement and activism at a young age:** Despite his young age of 20 years, the Prophet (PBUH) joined the pact which comprised of the elderly and his uncles and contributed his vote. You can be a positive agent of social change at any age.
- **The Prophet (PBUH) helped to establish security and social order for all of humanity.** The following articles were agreed upon during the pact:
 - ◊ No person will be subjected to persecution, regardless of whether he/she is a native of Mecca or an outsider.
 - ◊ From now on, there will be no opportunities for cruelty to occur. An oppressor’s cruelty will not be overlooked and there will be no further opportunities for oppression to be inflicted.
 - ◊ We will push for the rights of the downtrodden until they are obtained. [6]

The Hilf-al-Fudool pact demonstrates that when there is an opportunity to speak out against injustice or oppression, we should be the first to participate in such efforts. In the area of healthcare advocacy, the **provision of health care has a direct impact on the social welfare of a society. By extension, the policies - particularly those related to the affordability and access to healthcare can dramatically impact the lives of people.** Therefore, any work for and/or against certain policies that impact the health and wellbeing of individuals can be a demonstration of our faith in its highest form and a service towards society.



KHUTBAH 2: HEALTH CARE AS AN ISLAMICALLY INTEGRATED PRACTICE

Subtopic 1: The Commandment to Take Care of One's Health

The Prophet (PBUH) said, **“make use of medical treatment, for Allah has not made a disease without appointing a remedy for it, with the exception of one disease, namely old age.”** [7] Access to affordable and quality health insurance coverage is instrumental to receiving medical treatment in a timely and regular basis. Individuals who are uninsured or do not have access to quality or adequate healthcare coverage are in a state of constant need and are unable to follow the advice set for by our Prophet (PBUH).

- **Being uninsured means going without care when it is needed.**
 - ◊ Minor illnesses can become major ones when needed care is delayed. And a delayed visit or procedure can turn into an exacerbated health issue if left undiagnosed and untreated. Moreover, chronic illnesses are significantly more prevalent among low-income communities and the impact of these illnesses is more severe among the uninsured. [8]
- Many studies have demonstrated that Americans living in poverty are more likely to experience poor health and are less likely to have healthcare coverage. [9]
- Studies repeatedly demonstrate that the uninsured are less likely than those with insurance to receive preventive care and services for major health conditions and chronic diseases. [10]

As Muslims, we should be concerned about these issues and work towards and advocating on behalf of the uninsured and underinsured members of our communities. As our beloved Prophet (PBUH) said: “The believers, in their mutual mercy, love and compassion, are like a (single) body; if one part of it feels pain, the rest of the body will join it in staying awake and suffering fever.” [11]



KHUTBAH 2: HEALTH CARE AS AN ISLAMICALLY INTEGRATED PRACTICE

Subtopic 2: The Religious Obligations to Adhere to the Laws of the Land (Including the Acquisition of Health Insurance)

Scholars have stated that those who enter non-Muslim countries have to adhere to their respective laws and regulations, and they have no excuse for breaking those laws, since they were entrusted to abide by those laws upon entry into those countries. Therefore, as Muslims living in America, it is incumbent upon us to enroll in health coverage.

- Millions of Americans have obtained health insurance coverage as a result of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) which mandated that every citizen or legal permanent resident obtain some type of coverage or pay a federal penalty. The ACA is currently under serious threat and its repeal will mean the loss of coverage for many individuals and families.
 - ◊ The ACA led to historic gains in health insurance coverage by extending Medicaid coverage to many low-income individuals and providing subsidies for individuals below the poverty line. As a result of the ACA, the number of uninsured nonelderly Americans decreased from 44 million in 2013 (the year before the major coverage provisions went into effect) to less than 28 million as of the end of 2016.
 - ◊ Additional benefits of the ACA include coverage for preventive care and coverage cannot be denied based on pre-existing conditions. These are crucial elements of the ACA that need to be safeguarded.
 - ◊ Recent efforts to repeal the ACA or fundamentally change the structure of Medicaid will undermine these important gains by threatening the coverage options for the most vulnerable members of our population. [12]

Engaging in advocacy and voicing opposition to policies that undermine access to health coverage could reverse some of these trends. There are many activities that you can participate in to voice your opposition or support of a healthcare proposal. For example, you can write an Op-Ed, contact your legislative official and schedule a visit or start a petition. Any work for and/or against certain policies that impact the health and wellbeing of individuals can be a demonstration of our faith in its highest form and a service towards society.



KHUTBAH 3: ADVOCATING ON BEHALF OF UNDERSERVED AND MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

Subtopic 1: Protecting the Vulnerable in Society

Advocating for health care for all members of society protects the health and well-being of the most vulnerable members of our society. Individuals who are uninsured or do not have access to quality or adequate healthcare coverage are in a state of constant need.

- Many studies have demonstrated that Americans living in poverty are more likely to experience poor health and are less likely to have healthcare coverage. [9]
- Allah (SWT) calls us to protect the vulnerable, both in our own families and beyond and to seek health, well-being and good for all of creation.
 - ◊ “They ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever wealth you spend, it is for the parents and the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer, and whatever good you do, God surely knows it” [Quran 2:215].
- Lack of health insurance is not just a problem for the unemployed. Access to health coverage may change as a person’s employment status changes but not all individuals who are employed have access to coverage through their job.
 - ◊ In 2016, 74% of nonelderly uninsured workers worked for an employer that did not offer health benefits to the worker. In addition, nine out of ten uninsured workers reported to have declined coverage due to the high costs associated with their employer-sponsored coverage. [12]
 - ◊ These individuals cannot afford private health insurance on their own and are not eligible for public programs. Those lacking health care coverage live anxious lives even when in good health, always fearing illness in the family.
- **There are significant threats to Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) that will impact the most underserved members of our communities including our children.**
 - ◊ Nearly 36 million children are enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP. Medicaid covers 76 percent of poor children and 48 percent of children with special health needs. [13]

As we gather in remembrance of Allah, **there may be parents who are worried about how to protect their children from childhood illnesses when they do not have the fees for regular doctor visits.** These parents may live in fear and concern about injury and may forego checkups or other needed care or preventive care.



KHUTBAH 3: ADVOCATING ON BEHALF OF UNDERSERVED AND MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

Subtopic 2: Advocating for Accessible and Affordable Healthcare Coverage

Engaging in advocacy and voicing opposition to policies that undermine access to health coverage could reverse some of the trends stated above. There are many activities that you can participate in to voice your opposition or support of a healthcare proposal. For example, you can write an Op-Ed, contact your legislative official and schedule a visit or start a petition. These actions will lead to positive changes in our communities and can be considered a form of worship and adherence to the model set forth by the Prophet (PBUH).

- On the authority of Abu Sa'eed al-Khudree (RA) who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (SWT) say, "Whosoever of you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand; and if he is not able to do so, then [let him change it] with his tongue; and if he is not able to do so, then with his heart - and that is the weakest of faith." [14]



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