

Yes indeed, non-Muslims are welcome in mosques
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COMMENT In a suburb of Sydney, Australia, a small yet quite beautiful Turkish-style mosque has been built, following the model of the Sulaimaniye in Istanbul, that is, with library, school rooms, public clinic, canteen, social hall, and so on. There is a big banner in front of the mosque, "Open to All! Please Visit".

NONE We need to be vigilant and maximise our outreach. Therefore, when a Chinese non-Muslim addressed Muslims in their mosque in Serdang, she should not have been invited cordially in without giving her a list of rules and dress regulations and other aspects of the etiquette as the basic minimum.

Her hair was exposed, while her legs and arms were covered. She should have been advised to dress modestly, which is the basic requirement for entering a mosque or any other place of worship for that matter.

And under no circumstances should she or any other non-Muslim visitor be attacked for having broken this or that Muslim rule or regulation.

As an example, let us recall an incident from the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when a Bedouin man urinated in the mosque. When other Muslims saw this, they became very angry and wanted to rebuke him harshly. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) on the other hand, stopped them and told the man gently what he was doing was incorrect.

That story is a classic exemplar of the contrast between the attitude of some well-intentioned Muslims who want to correct the wrong immediately and by any means and the approach of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) of kindness, gentleness, persuasion and wisdom.

Curiosity about what goes on in mosques

We will have more and more inquiries and visits from the non-Muslims as they feel curiosity about what goes on inside our gem-like houses of worship. Are our visitors' facilities at Masjid Negara or Masjid Shah Alam really adequate and sensitive to the importance of the visitors, including non-Muslims' first exposure to Muslims praying and resting inside their mosques?

islamic state Our visitors will make mistakes of etiquette, even Muslims make such mistakes. We cannot teach them all those details the first time they visit, or we will lose any further contact. Even one divorce we know of took place because the convert wife could not stand all the "rules and regulations" imposed upon her by her new Muslim husband. Many of us have indeed lost patience and wisdom in dealing with situations such as this.

A friendly American entered an Arab-built mosque in Phoenix, Arizona, inquiring how one might become Muslim. The Arab brothers in that place told him the first thing he had to do was close his interest-bearing bank accounts and give up his credit cards. He politely turned around and went out, lost to Islam forever. This is the importance of guest relations in our mosques, about which very little has been systematised or implemented.

Of course there is nothing wrong in listening to the ideas of non-Muslim political leaders! Of

course we must make them feel warmly accepted when visiting us and telling us where they stand, no matter whom they are. So why have some of us taken such a paranoid reaction to the event in the Serdang mosque? How even do ignorant politicians without a proper understanding of Islam manage to be offended by this event?

Opening up to the rest of the world

Allah help us if we cannot open up to the rest of the world in a caring and warm-hearted manner. The producers of the TV programme Jejak Rasul recently made a three-part series attempting to open up to the Jews of Israel in this manner, and the results were astonishing. As a matter of fact, Jews are NOT Zionists, and it is the Zionists who have imposed security barriers around Al Aqsa Mosque and obstructed our right to worship there in so many ways.

NONEThe Jews interviewed and filmed in this series were reluctant to receive the Malay crew, yet finally did and the atmosphere was of total mutual respect. All Muslims should view this unprecedented series, and our compliments to the Jejak Rasul crew who conceived of this project.

We are commanded in the Al Qur'an to "make common cause" with the People of the Book, i.e., Jews and Christians. There is no ambiguity about this, as long as those non-Muslims do not engage in nefarious schemes with each other against us, as do some Christians with the Zionists in Israel. With them, we are ordered in the Al Qur'an not to associate.

The world awaits for the Islamic community to continue to showcase its real contribution to human civilisation so far, its real contribution to the formation of western society, and as the only ideology remaining to check the atheism of the communists or the capital gluttony of so many in the world trade community, otherwise known as human greed.

Non-Muslims being among the visitors to our mosques may be only one small step, yet also may be seen as one great leap for humankind.

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