

Gratitude, Freedom, and Our Responsibility as Muslims

Introduction

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. We praise Him, seek His help and forgiveness, and ask Him to shower His peace and blessings upon our beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, his family, his Companions, and all those who follow his guidance until the Day of Judgment.

This week, the United States commemorates a historic milestone: the 250th anniversary of American Independence. Two hundred and fifty years ago, a nation was founded upon ideals of liberty, justice, and the belief that every human being possesses God-given rights and dignity. Throughout its history, America has continued to develop as a nation where people from every race, religion, and background have the opportunity to live, contribute, and pursue a better future. As Muslims living in this country, this occasion gives us an opportunity to reflect through the lens of our faith on the blessings Allah has bestowed upon us.

Islam teaches us to recognize blessings, express gratitude, fulfill our responsibilities, and become a source of goodness wherever Allah places us. Rather than viewing Independence Day merely as a national holiday, we should see it as an opportunity to thank Allah for the freedoms we enjoy, appreciate the country that protects those freedoms, and renew our commitment to being faithful Muslims, responsible citizens, and ambassadors of peace, justice, and compassion.

1. Freedom Is One of Allah's Greatest Blessings

Allah has blessed every one of us with countless favors. Some blessings are visible while others often go unnoticed. We thank Allah for our families, children, health, wealth, education, and above all, the blessing of faith.

Allah says:

وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ لَا تَحْصُوهَا

"If you were to count the favors of Allah, you would never be able to enumerate them." (Ibrahim 14:34)

Among these countless blessings is one that many people overlook: the freedom to worship Allah openly and live with dignity.

Millions of people around the world wake up every day under fear. Some fear war. Others fear persecution. Others fear imprisonment simply because of their religious beliefs. Yet we live in a country where our Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion. We build mosques without seeking permission from a king. We establish Islamic schools. We call the Adhan inside our mosques. We organize Islamic conferences, youth camps, Qur'an classes, and charitable organizations. We teach our children Islam without fear of government persecution.

These blessings should never become ordinary in our eyes.

Allah reminds us:

لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ

"If you are grateful, I will surely increase you." (Ibrahim 14:7)

Gratitude is not simply saying *Alhamdulillah*. Real gratitude means recognizing blessings, protecting them, and using them in ways that please Allah.

2. Appreciating the Freedom, We Enjoy

Sometimes we only appreciate a blessing after comparing it with those who do not have it.

Across many parts of the world, Muslims face serious challenges in practicing their religion.

In some countries, restrictive laws make religious conversion extremely difficult or even criminalized. In other places, Muslims face limitations on public expressions of their faith, including restrictions on religious gatherings or practices. In several regions, political instability, conflict, or insecurity affects the daily lives of millions of Muslims.

In parts of the Arab world, political systems often impose significant restrictions on freedom of speech and political participation. In some countries, religious leaders are required to follow government-approved sermons, and independent public criticism of state policies may carry serious consequences. Long-term residents may spend decades contributing to society without obtaining citizenship or equal civic rights.

These realities remind us that freedom should never be taken for granted.

3. The Blessings Muslims Enjoy in America

Today, nearly four million Muslims call America home.

We have approximately 3,000 mosques, hundreds of Islamic centers, thousands of nonprofit organizations, numerous Islamic schools, and universities where Muslim students openly practice their faith.

We establish charitable organizations.

We publish Islamic literature.

We invite people to Islam.

We hold conferences.

We organize youth programs.

We engage in interfaith dialogue.

We speak publicly about our beliefs.

America knows Islam is among the fastest-growing religions in the country, yet people remain free to embrace Islam without government prohibition.

Likewise, citizens enjoy the constitutional right to express opinions, peacefully protest, petition government, and challenge public policies through lawful democratic processes.

These are tremendous blessings. The Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ لَا يَشْكُرُ النَّاسَ لَا يَشْكُرُ اللَّهَ

"Whoever does not thank people has not thanked Allah."(Abu Dawud)

Therefore, our religion teaches us first to thank Allah, the Giver of every blessing, and also to appreciate those through whom Allah provides peace, security, and opportunity.

Expressing appreciation for the country that protects our rights does not diminish our loyalty to Islam. Rather, it reflects the prophetic character of gratitude.

4. Islam and the Value of Freedom

Freedom is not a modern invention. It is a divine gift. Allah says:

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا

"Indeed, We guided him to the way, whether he be grateful or ungrateful." (Al-Insan 76:3)

Allah created human beings with intellect, choice, and moral responsibility.

The mission of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was to liberate humanity from every form of oppression. He freed people from the worship of idols, from submission to tyrants, from tribal injustice, and from slavery to worldly desires, directing them instead to the worship of Allah alone.

Islam also protects freedom of conscience. Allah says:

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ

"There is no compulsion in religion." (Al-Baqarah 2:256)

Freedom, however, is never a license for sin or selfishness. It is a trust that must be used to worship Allah, serve humanity, and establish justice.

5. Civic Responsibility and Patriotism

Along with rights come responsibilities.

Islam teaches Muslims to honor their agreements, obey just laws, fulfill trusts, and contribute positively to the society in which they live.

The Prophet ﷺ deeply loved Makkah. When forced to leave, he said:

وَاللّٰهُ اِنَّكَ لَـٰخَيْرُ اَرْضِ اللّٰهِ، وَاَحَبُّ اَرْضِ اللّٰهِ اِلَيَّ، وَلَوْلَا اَنِّيْ اُخْرِجْتُ مِنْكَ مَا خَرَجْتُ

"By Allah, you are the best land of Allah and the most beloved land to me. Had I not been driven out from you, I would never have left." (Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, An-Nasa'i)

Love for one's homeland is natural.

As American Muslims, our patriotism is demonstrated through honesty, integrity, paying our taxes, respecting the law, serving our communities, protecting public safety, voting responsibly where eligible, and contributing positively to our nation.

When our faith inspires us to become better citizens, patriotism and Islam work together.

6. Unity and Peaceful Coexistence

Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا

"O mankind, We created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another." (Al-Hujurat 49:13)

Notice that Allah addresses all humanity, not only Muslims.

Diversity is part of Allah's wisdom.

The Prophet ﷺ established the Charter of Madinah, creating a society where Muslims, Jews, and other communities lived together under justice, mutual protection, and shared civic responsibility.

America is also a diverse nation. Our responsibility is not to deepen division but to strengthen understanding.

We must become bridge-builders rather than wall-builders, promoting dialogue instead of hostility, respect instead of hatred, and cooperation instead of conflict.

Our neighbors should recognize Islam through our honesty, compassion, generosity, and good character.

7. Celebrating Independence with Islamic Values

As Muslims, we may commemorate Independence Day in ways consistent with our faith.

Beyond gatherings and celebrations, let it become a day of gratitude, reflection, and service.

Teach your children the value of freedom.

Explain that liberty brings responsibility.

Visit your neighbors.

Serve your community.

Pray for America.

Thank Allah for the opportunities He has granted you.

Use your freedom to strengthen your relationship with Allah and benefit His creation.

When freedom produces righteousness, service, justice, and compassion, it fulfills its highest purpose.

Conclusion

Brothers and sisters, as our nation marks 250 years of independence, let us remember that every blessing ultimately comes from Allah. Freedom, security, opportunity, and religious liberty are among His greatest gifts. The proper response to these blessings is sincere gratitude, righteous conduct, and responsible citizenship. Let us never become complacent or take these favors for granted. Instead, let us use them to strengthen our faith, educate our children, build our communities, and serve humanity.

Let us also remember that Islam calls us to be a source of goodness wherever we live. Our loyalty to Allah requires us to uphold justice, honesty, mercy, and peace. Our presence in America should enrich this nation through our character, our service, and our contributions. Let us continue building strong families, vibrant mosques, successful schools, charitable institutions, and meaningful relationships with our neighbors. By doing so, we fulfill both our religious responsibilities and our civic duties.

We ask Allah to continue blessing the United States with peace, security, justice, and prosperity. O Allah, protect this nation from hatred, violence, division, and injustice. Grant wisdom and integrity to its leaders, strengthen its institutions, and guide all its people toward what is good and just. O Allah, make us grateful for Your blessings, sincere in our worship, beneficial to our communities, and among those who spread peace, compassion, and hope wherever we live. Ameen.