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ISSUE OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR, PALESTINE AND SYRIA -AN ANALYTICAL STUDY IN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: The foundation of Muslim brotherhood is based on faith which is the vigorous form of integration. Islam rejects the ideology of nationalism in favor of the concept of *Ummah*. Presently, Muslim countries have many internal issues like so-called terrorism, political instability and economic depression. In different parts of the world, Muslims are facing unprecedented problems especially in Jammu and Kashmir, Palestine and Syria etc. Indian aggression continues in Kashmir, while Israel continues to attack Palestine. In fact, the Jews seek to build a Greater Israel. Syria is facing a civil war. Muslims, in many non-Muslim countries like India, where they are in minority, are suffering from worst circumstances. Unity of Islamic world is imperative for the protection of oppressed Muslims. Strong integration would save Muslims from the threat of external pressure. United leaders of Muslim countries will be in a strong position to effectively defend the rights of Muslims on international forum and international platform. The purpose of this research paper is to describe the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, Palestine and Syria and lays emphasis on the importance of Muslim unity to save oppressed Muslims from further oppression. This research paper follows content analysis.

Key Words- Oppressed Muslim, Jammu and Kashmir, Palestine, Syria, Unity

At present, Muslim countries have a number of internal problems, for example civil war, oppression, so-called terrorism, political instability, and economic depression. Muslims in Palestine, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, Bosnia Herzegovina, Lebanon, Kosovo, Chechnya, Philippines, Egypt and Kashmir etc. are facing unprecedented problems.

Some Muslim countries are subjected to oppression and barbarism, such as Muslims from Kashmir and Palestine. In a few non-Muslim countries, where Muslims are in the minority, they are in miserable condition as in India. According to the New Yorker journalist, "Since Prime Minister Modi took power, he has launched an aggressive campaign against the two hundred million Muslims in India. Even prior to taking office, Modi's approach was aggressive toward Indian Muslims. During his period as a Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat. In 2002, he presided over a mass communal bloodletting. Nearly 2000 people were killed, whereas 150,000 persons were driven from their houses. Among the victims, many were Muslim."¹

It is also included in the objectives of the USA to exterminate any Muslim leader who fails to comply, and has the intention to struggle for the betterment of the oppressed Muslim community. President Saddam Hussain did become a victim of said policy.

The economic unity and strength of the Muslim countries is imperative to protect the oppressed Muslims from further oppression. Allah Almighty commands Muslims *Ummah* to be united as it is indicated in the Qur'ān: "Hold fast to the rope of Allah all together and be not divided. And remember, Allah's Favor about you, for you were enemies one to another, but tie joined your hearts together, so that, by His grace, you became brethren (in Islamic Faith), and you were on the brink of a pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus Allah makes His verses clear to you, that you may be guided."² Sayyid Abul 'Alā Mawdudī explains that rope of Allah means religion (Islam). It has been referred to a rope because on one hand, it establishes the relationship of the believers with Allah Almighty while on the other hand it unites the believers into a single community. Muslims should consider the importance of real religion. They should strive for the establishment of the religion and cooperate with each other to serve it. If they will deviate from the basic teachings of religion and determination of its establishment, concentrate on section and sub-sections, then certainly disunity and a disparity will arise among them.³The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) said that "Allah almighty is pleased with your three deeds, worship Him, do not make associates with Him and hold His rope together and don't be divided."⁴Islam preaches that a Muslim should strive for the welfare of humanity. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) said that "Indubitably religion means to be beneficial for others."⁵The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W) said: "Amongst the trees, there is a tree which doesn't shed its leaves. It is like a Muslim. He (S.A.W) asked his companions to tell him the

name of that tree. Then, he (S.A.W) explained that it is the date-palm tree.”⁶The meaning of Ḥadith *Nabavī* (S.A.W) is that a Muslim is always helpful to people and he does not hurt anyone.

The strong integration could save them from the threat of external pressure. Muslim states will be in a position to effectively communicate their views on international forums and platforms. In this context economic integration is also imperative as Abdul Rashid Naeem and Rabia Naz argue, “Economic integration complements other non-economic national goals. In doing so, they will strengthen their unified bargaining power on global issues and help avoid future exploitation. The perseverance of Muslim countries is prerequisite to create a dynamic economic incorporation movement.”⁷

The atrocities against Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir, Palestine and Syria are briefly discussed below.

1. JAMMU & KASHMIR

Kashmir dispute has a long history. India occupied almost all of the territory. Pakistan controls less than one-third and China controls the remainder. For decades, the Jammu and Kashmir valley has been devastated by war, bloodshed, rebellion and turmoil. At the time of the partition of the subcontinent, 95% of the total population of Kashmir consisted of Muslims who were to join Pakistan under the majority system. According to the United Nations report: “Maharaja Hari Singh was in favor of the independent state of Kashmir initially. Nevertheless, he (ignored the decision of the majority) and decided to join it with India on 26 October 1947. An armed conflict involving Indian and Pakistani forces followed. On 13 August 1948, India took this issue to the United Nations, so that it could act as a mediator between the two countries. The United Nations suggested holding a plebiscite to settle the question of whether the state would become part of India or Pakistan. But both countries were unable to accept a demilitarization of Kashmir before the referendum. By July 1949, India and Pakistan had signed an agreement to establish a cease-fire line in accordance with United Nations guidelines, and the region was divided.”⁸

The United Nations reported: “In 1990, India introduced the Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act (AFSPA) to manage the armed groups. It had emerged by the end of the 1980s over the objections to Indian control over Kashmir. India alleged that there were serious human rights violations. As a result, they deployed nearly 500,000 to 70,000 security forces to Jammu and Kashmir, making it one of the world's most militarized areas.”⁹ “In 2019, about 6.5 lakh armed forces were recorded. It included 1.3 lakh police forces.”¹⁰ “After the scrapping of Article 370, almost 9.5 lakh personnel from Special Forces, Indian Air Force, Army and paramilitary were present in that location. At the same time, the majority of the Indian army was based in the Valley and the Centre. By July 2019, the Indian Government had

deployed additional personnel over 1.75 lakh, an unprecedented event in the history of this valley.”¹¹

The killing of persons, the disappearance of persons, the murder of missing persons, the physical torture of persons, the rape and the physical torture of women by the Indian armed forces, became a routine in the valley of Jammu and Kashmir. The Government of India reported, “In pro-independence violence, more than 47000 persons had been killed from 1989 to 2008.”¹² One report states, “A total of 4,427 people were killed between 2008 and 2019.”¹³

However, some human rights groups and non-governmental organizations report higher mortality rates. The Jammu Kashmir Coalition Civil Society (JKCCS) documented, “Nearly eighteen persons with mental disabilities were killed by Indian forces between 2003 and 2019.”¹⁴ “Over 8,000 people have gone missing. Their families are also suffering because they have been denied any relief by the government. However, no investigation or policy has been developed to track the victims of enforced disappearances.”¹⁵ Most cadavers of missing persons have torture marks. These have been traced, or located from several places nearby to their native areas.¹⁶ “Indian Armed forces arrest boys and young men illegally. Due to the torture by the armed forces the orifices of their body are dilated. They do not dare to express their misery in front of the magistrate because of the terror of torture and harassment of family members. Even medical records do not reflect the injuries. A lawyer in Kulgam stated that 90% of the arrested boys and young men are violated.”¹⁷ Men from the Indian Armed Forces also sexually abused women and girls. If they resist, then they have to bear physical torture.¹⁸ 11.6% of those interviewed have been subjected to sexual violence since 1989.¹⁹

Children also suffer victimization in Jammu and Kashmir. “In 2019, eight children died in several incidents of violence. Armed force had oppressed children through illegal and unjust detention, torture and ill-treatment.”²⁰ Child killings have been estimated to account for 8% of all citizen killings over the past two decades.²¹

Religious gatherings of Muslims communities are also banned.²² The United Nations Human Rights Office (UNHCR) noted “Jammu and Kashmir has a high unemployment rate. There is also a denial of peoples' right to self-determination.”²³

On 5 August 2019, the government of India abolished the special status of the occupied Kashmir under Article 370. According to BBC News, “Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Hindu Nationalist Party Bharatiya Janata (BJP) have long opposed Article 370. The revocation of that article was added to the party's 2019 election manifesto. In the April-May general election, after

a massive return to office, the government quickly followed through on its commitment.”²⁴

Now, an unexpected change was created by India to the status of Kashmir that generated more apprehension. “Article 370, a clause in India's Constitution that provides Kashmir with remarkable autonomy. As a separate flag, its own constitution and freedom in all matters, with the exception of defense, communications and foreign affairs.”²⁵ Article 35 A, is a part of Article 370. “It defines the permanent residential status of Jammu and Kashmir’s people. It indicates that the resident lives under the separate set of laws such as property ownership, right to scholarships and other public aid and jobs under the state government.”²⁶ “As a consequence of this provision, the permanent residents have the right to own and purchase property within the state.”²⁷ The removal of this article allows the legal massive migration and settlement of Hindus in the Valley. “Before the Indian government declared its decision to abolish the special status of Jammu Kashmir under Article 370, it confined the region.”²⁸

“The Indian government flooded the valley with troops. The citizens had been ordered to remain inside their houses, or they would be shot. During the lockdown, people were unable to access the hospital. They could not connect with their loved ones, nor could they go to school or work. Day-to-day activities had become paralyzed. Almost eight million persons remained in a punishing blockade. Sporadic protests broke out. Security forces fired weapons and tear gas on masse. Many of the protestors had been seriously wounded. Most people were afraid to go to the hospital for fear of being arrested. They stumbled into nearby mosques with bloody faces and trembling bodies. Friendly volunteers wiped the blood and dressed their wounds. The Indian security officers had arrested thousands of citizens. Approximately Jammu and Kashmir’s whole leadership class, such as democratically elected representatives, prominent merchants, intellectuals, teachers, and students were detained.”²⁹ As of August 5, 2019, approximately 5,161 people have been detained.³⁰ The Indian government has affirmed that these measures are indispensable for peace in Kashmir. However, these actions by the Government of India have led to unrest in the Jammu and Kashmir region.

Indian armed forces are wiping out the Kashmiri’s right to self-determination. They are fighting for their freedom. Owing to Muslims majority, they have strong bonds with Pakistan. The Kashmiri martyrs are buried wrapped in the Pakistani flag. They celebrate religious events like Eid-ul-Fitr with the people of Pakistan. However, the Government of Pakistan is not taking definitive and firm measures for the liberty of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. They face serious human rights violations at the hands of the Indian armed forces, including sexual violence, kidnappings, targeted murders and attacks on citizens. It is the need of the hour that not only Pakistan, but

also the governments of other Muslim countries must play a vital role in restoring the sovereignty of Jammu and Kashmir.

2. PALESTINE

The State of Israel was set up with the great efforts of the United Kingdom, the United States and Russia. The “Balfour Declaration” is of remarkable importance in establishing the Jewish state. According to the editor of the Encyclopedia of Britannica, “the symbol of this proclamation is regarded as a letter. British Foreign Office, Arthur James Balfour (Britain's then-Foreign Secretary) had written a letter to a leader of the British Zionist movement Baron Rothschild in 2 November 1917, of which Britain assured the Zionists that they extend full and practical support to the establishment of a Jewish state in the land of Palestine. The letter also stated that the agreement had been ratified by a secret meeting of the British Cabinet on 31st October 1917.”³¹ This declaration gave birth to the State of Israel. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War was also one of the reasons for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestinian territory. “The Western powers had exerted pressure under the aegis of the Zionist movement to assist the Jews to migrate massively to the land of Palestine and to claim the land. The Jews' land purchases for Zionist colonization drove tens of thousands of Palestinians out of their homes. The British were supportive of the entire process. The principal objective of the Zionist movement is to remove the Palestinians from their lands. Plans for ethnic cleansing of Palestine had also been finalized.”³²

The State of Israel was founded in 1948. The Arabs of Palestine did not accept this and an instant war broke out between the Arabs (Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon and Egypt) and the Jews of the region. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was set up in 1964. Yasser Arafat remained the Chairman of PLO from 1969 to 2004. He was a renowned leader, Palestine continued their struggle for liberty under his leadership. By 1967, Israel had invaded Syria, Egypt and Jordanian. Following the six-day war (June 5-10), Israel seized control of the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and the Sinai Peninsula. This war deepened the decades-long struggle between the Arabs and Israel. Many Jews remain settled in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. “The Israeli population in Palestine has stood between 400,000 and 771,000 since 1967, a population deemed illegal by the United Nations.”³³ Several international rights groups consider these settlements illegal because the borders are not clearly defined. Hamas won Palestine's legislative elections in 2006. Hamas and Israel faced one another in many bloody wars. The Palestinian liberation struggle continued.

Israeli forces are particularly targeting the residents of Gaza. As 98% of the population, they were Muslims. The Israeli military invaded Gaza from July 8 to August 26, 2014. Israel had shelled governmental offices, schools,

hospitals and mosques. They even destroyed UN storage facilities. Israel has inflicted heavy shelling and bombardment on innocent Muslim Palestinians. The human organs were dispersed back and forth. "The total number of deaths associated with the conflict in Palestine was recorded between 8166 until 2014. There are 1011 Israelis (13%) and 7065 (87%) are Palestinians. It indicates that for every 15 people killed, 13 are Palestinians and two are Israelis."³⁴ "Since 1949, over 700,000 people from Palestine have become refugees and over 13,000 have been killed by Israel's armed forces."³⁵

According to the UNICEF report, "In 2018, more than half of the population (2.5 million people), including more than a million children, was in need of humanitarian assistance. Close to one-third of Palestinian families live under the poverty line. Their monthly earnings are below US\$640. The overall unemployment rate for the Gaza Strip is 32.4 per cent and 53.7 per cent. This is one of the highest rates on the planet. Unemployment is as high as 60% among young people in the Gaza Strip, where 80% of the population depends on humanitarian aid."³⁶ "In 2018 and early 2019, Gaza's poverty rate reached 53 percent."³⁷

According to the UNICEF report: "Children in Gaza have been living in a terrible environment for several years. It is imperative to protect the minors foremost. Children should not be exposed to violence or be the target of violence. In the Gaza Strip, people have been running with less than five hours of electricity a day for approximately a year. Only ten percent of families have direct access to safe drinking water. As a result of past trauma, one in four children (250,000) require psychosocial support. More than half of all children depend on any assistance for their daily survival."³⁸

The United Nations is a silent observer in the resolution of the issue of Kashmir and Palestine. It is the responsibility of people of Muslim nations to strive for their repose. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) said: "Muslims are like a single body. If the headaches, the whole body suffers this pain and fever."³⁹ "A true Muslim is like a building for other true Muslim whose one part strengthens the other."⁴⁰

Peace is essential for economic prosperity. As Hazrat Ibrahim (A.S.) prayed for peace and prosperity of Makkah. "And (remember) when Ibrahim (Abraham) said, My Lord, make this city (Makkah) a place of security' and provide its people with fruits, such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day. He (Allah) answered: As for him who disbelieves. I shall leave him in contentment for a while, then I shall compel him to the torment of the Fire? and worst indeed is that destination!"⁴¹ Jihad is indispensable to the liberty of Muslim countries. As Allah Almighty commands: "And what is wrong with you that you fight not in the Cause of Allah for those oppressed among men, women, and children, whose cry is; Our Lord! Rescue us from this town

whose people are oppressors: and raise for us from You one who will protect, and raise for us from You one who will help.”⁴²

Islam dislikes the anarchy. However, if Muslims are overrun, then they are directed to fight in defense and eradicate unbelievers. Similarly, if a Muslim country is invaded then it is obligatory for the Muslim *Ummah* to help the oppressed one as they are like one unit in accordance with the teachings of Islam. “Permission to fight (against disbelievers) is given to those (believers) who are fought against, because they have been wronged; and surely, Allah is able to give them (believers) victory, those who have been expelled from their homes unjustly only because they said: Our Lord is Allah.”⁴³ Sayyid Abu'l'A'la Mawdudī said: “Man has been guided in one of two ways: death or honor. He is not directed towards the third way; that is a disgraceful life. The unfortunate followers of Islam have chosen this course because of the weakness of faith and low spirit. Allah Almighty calls such life, a life of humiliation. It causes the wrath of Allah Almighty. To take this humiliating life is to oppress oneself.”⁴⁴ The Qur'ān states that Muslims are worthy and sovereign over other people. “So do not become weak (against your enemy), nor be sad, and you will be superior (in victory) if you are indeed (true) believers.”⁴⁵ “And never wills Allah grant to the disbelievers a way (to triumph) over the believers.”⁴⁶

Many leaders of Muslim countries have denounced the operation of Indian forces and violence against Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir. As President Tayyip Erdogan said about the current situation: This approach, which makes the current situation even worse... rights of the Kashmiri people, brings no advantage to anybody... Turkey would continue to stand on the side of justice, peace and resolution through dialogue on the conflict in Kashmir.”⁴⁷ President Tayyip Erdogan is the only Muslim leader to raise his voice on behalf of Palestine. He said, “Turkey declared that the Haram Al-Sharif would not be left to the mercy of the occupation of the Israeli administration by saying “Jerusalem is our red line”.”⁴⁸ All sovereigns in Muslim countries need the spirit such as President Tayyip Erdogan. Nevertheless, practical measures are required such as Jihad.

3. SYRIA

In 2000, Bashar al-Assad took office after his father Hafez al-Asad died. “Even prior to the start of the civil war, many Syrians were complaining about unemployment, corruption and political sanctions imposed by President Assad's government. In March 2011, pro-democracy events broke out in the southern city of Deraa, inspired by the “Arab Spring” in neighboring countries. The government used deadly force to suppress resistance. Protests calling for the resignation of President Assad sparked nationwide. The conflict spread and the suppression intensified. Opposition supporters took up arms, initially to defend themselves and later to free their regions from security forces. Bashar al-Assad called the protests as “foreign-supported terrorism” and

pledged to continue to crush them. Violence spread and the country fell victim to civil war. Shortly the war did not remain limited to Bashar al-Assad and his adversaries. Many organizations and countries participated, each having its own agenda. There is a religious war, where the Sunni majority is fighting against the Shiite Alawi sect of President Assad. The Kurdish people of Syria are not fighting against Mr. Assad's forces, but they are demanding the right of self-government. They brought another dimension into the conflict. The primary proponents of the government are Russia and Iran. While Turkey, the Western powers and a number of Arab Gulf States supported the other. Thousands of armed Shiite Muslim militia, trained and funded by Iran (mainly Lebanese Hezbollah), Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen, also fought alongside the Syrian army. In the meanwhile, Israel remained concerned with 'military entrenchment' of Iran in Syria and also about the shipment of Iranian arms to Hezbollah. This concern made Israel carry out its air strikes to make Iran turn from Syria and Hezbollah."⁴⁹

In the current civil war in Syria, Western countries are supporting the parties in pursuit of their strategic objectives while Bashar al-Assad has the support of Russia. "Bashar al-Assad's government has often used chemical weapons frequently since the end of 2012. However, in August 2013, they made massive use of sarin gas in the suburbs of Damascus, Ghouta. It caused the death of more than 1,400 people. Sarin gas has been used frequently. It causes unconsciousness, paralysis of the respiratory organs, muscle contractures and eventually death through asphyxiation. The government has also used neurotoxic agents, such as sarin, smothering agents, such as weaponized chlorine, and vesicular agents, such as Sulphur mustard."⁵⁰

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has documented "the death of people, across Syria from 15 March 2011 to 14 March 2020. It reported the deaths of 384,000 souls, including 22,075 children under the age of eighteen and 13,704 women over the age of eighteen."⁵¹

According to the UNHCR, "6.2 million people, including 2.5 million children, are displaced inside the country. It is the largest internally displaced population worldwide. The pace of displacement remains relentless. More than 1.8 million persons were displaced in 2017, many of them for the second or third time."⁵²

"The civil war affected the permanent disabilities of 1.5 million people, including 86,000 Syrian who had lost their limbs. An estimated 6.2 million people are internally displaced and 5.7 million have fled abroad. Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, are hosting 93% of them."⁵³

On 27 May 2020, militias fighting alongside the President Al-Assad destroyed the graves of the Caliph Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz (A.S.), his wife and his servant. They not only damaged the tombs, but also dug up and disappeared the contents. Umar ibn Abdul Aziz (A.S.) is highly respected for

Muslims because he reigned justly, for two years and five months during the eighth century. However, such an event did not take place the first time as before they exhumed graves after conquering territories.⁵⁴ The desecration of the graves is forbidden under Islam. Even Islam disallows saying anything improper about the dead. Holy Prophet (S.A.W) said, “Never abuse those who are dead for they have reaped what they sowed.”⁵⁵

No Muslim country would face the situation of civil war if its society truly follows the precepts of Islam. “Holy Prophet (S.A.W) forbade the Muslims from the vices like jealousy, betrayal, grudge, and enmity towards each other. He advised Muslims, servants of Allah, to be as brothers. A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim. He oppresses him not, neither humbles him, nor despises him. To scorn one's Muslim brother is an evil. Allah has sanctified the Muslims, their blood, wealth and honor.”⁵⁶

Allah Almighty ordains reconciliation between the Muslim groups that are victims of the civil war. “And if two parties or groups among the believers get into fighting, then make peace between them both. But if one of them outrages against the other, then fight you (all) against the one which outrages till it obeys with the Command of Allah. Then if it complies, then make reconciliation between them justly, and be equitable, Verily, Allah loves those who are the equitable. The believers are nothing else than brothers (in Islamic religion). So make reconciliation between your brothers, and fear Allah, that you may receive mercy”⁵⁷

Amīn Ahsan, Islāhī said: “The practical involvement of Muslim countries in the civil war to reconcile depends on situation. If circumstances permit, force will be used to unjustly render before righteous. Should there be a risk of international complications, this will be avoided. Nonetheless, the struggles for reconciliation will not be prevented. However, if Muslims do something that causes bloodshed among Muslims or they cause bloodshed in a way that is fair to the national, tribal, regional or political interest, then bear in mind that Muslims will not be able to escape the wrath of Allah Almighty. Only those who foster fraternity will be regarded as worthy of the mercy of Allah.”⁵⁸

Dr. Israr Ahmed is of the opinion, “If two groups of the Muslims are fighting, the rest of Muslim community cannot remain mute witnesses. For if there is no reconciliation between them, a breach in the unity and power of the Muslim *Ummah* will be generated. In addition, it will eventually undermine the strength of Muslims and their struggles for religious domination. Thus, it is the religious obligation of the rest of the Muslims to resolve the mutual quarrel of the Muslims of any country and region. After the settlement, if one of them is still not peacemaking, then it is the responsibility of the entire Muslim community to unite with the legitimate group and use all force against the transgressors.”⁵⁹ As Holy Prophet (S.A.W) said: “Help your brother, whether

he is oppressive or oppressed. People asked, Messenger of Allah! We can help the one being oppressed. But how do we help the oppressor. The Holy Prophet replied by preventing him to oppress others.”⁶⁰

CONCLUSION:

Muslims are subjected to persecution all over the world. World powers like Britain, USA and Israel are united and engage Muslims in a civil war or to subdue the leaders of Muslim countries in the name of financial aid and loans. The budgets of many Muslim countries are also prepared according to the guidance of the international financial powers. As financial budget of Pakistan was prepared through guidance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The reason Muslims are oppressed is that leaders of Muslim countries are silent. Yet, people in nearly every Muslim country are heartbroken by the oppression of Muslims. Currently, in addition to unity, the concept of Jihad should be emphasized in order to rescue Muslims from oppression. Allah's help shall be available to those who place their total trust in Allah Almighty. To bring peace and tranquility there is a need to eradicate racial and sectarian prejudice. Because the Muslim *Ummah* has weakened and the conspiracies of the enemies are succeeding. The promotion of unity amongst Muslims is imperative. Muslim countries must stand together for the economic development, peace and security of Muslims. The harmony and integration of Muslims would open up new and dynamic ways for the peace, progress and prosperity of Muslim countries.

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