Position Papers

The Islamic Concept of News

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Introduction

The Islamic canons on news are deeply rooted in divine inspiration, whereas Western or Western-influenced laws and regulations are usually products of human organizations and individuals. Sandman, Rubin, and Sachsman classified the restrictions controlling news under: self-control, internal control, monopoly control, advertiser control, source control, and government or public control.[1]

Islamic guidelines are derived specifically from the divine revelation received by the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (PBUH), fourteen centuries ago. Muslims believe that the Creator knows best about human nature. Therefore only He can provide His creatures with the most appropriate guidance to attain felicity both in this life and the next.[2] Since the Prophet Muhammad is the seal of the divine messengers,[3] however, one may wonder how guidance revealed fourteen centuries ago could survive all the changes occuring since its revelation.

In fact, although the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah cover all aspects of life, they are not confined to rigid details nor, except in a few areas, do they prohibit interpretation. These matters are generally regarded, from the Islamic viewpoint, as critical decisions for the welfare of human beings regardless of where or when they live. Examples of these matters are capital punishment, adultery, and theft. Even in these cases, the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah do not lay out detailed jurisdictional prescriptions for implementation. Jurisdiction and procedure are left to the judge, whose responsibility is to

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[1] Peter M. Sandman, D. M. Rubin and D. B., Sachsman, *Media and Introductory Analysis of American Mass Communication* 2nd ed., (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1976), pp. 77-273.

[2] S. Abdul A'la Maududi, *Islamic Way of Life*, 8th ed. (Lahore: Islamic Publications Ltd., 1975), pp. 1-22

[3] Holy Qur'an, 33:40

enforce the law only when all tests of innocence fail and the crime is proven to have been committed by the accused.[4]

Another basic and guiding concept is that the Holy Qur'an and the authenticated body of Sunnah should outweigh human logic whenever it contradicts their clearly manifested meaning.[5]

Since the question at issue is guidance on acceptable news coverage, one wonders if the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah deal with the subject at all. If they do, in what way? in detail, partially in detail, or in general?

I. General Constraints on News Circulation

Islamic teachings do provide Muslims with basic guidelines to help them react properly to the news reports received. They must verify the reports and know what to circulate, what not to circulate, and the conditions for each.

The Holy Qur'an warns Muslims against circulating false accusations[6] and threatens those who malign others.[7] This is found clearly in the Hadith also.[8]

Since the final judgement against those who circulate false news and falsely accuse others is horrible, Islamic teachings deter unverified news and idle entertainment. The Qur'an commands:

> And pursue not that of which you have no sufficient knowledge,
> for every act of seeing or (feeling) in the heart will be accounted for.[9]

The Prophet, Muhammad (PBUH), was reported to say:

> To tell everything a person hears is sufficient to make him a liar.[10]

In another Hadith he was reported to affirm that, "Allah detests uncritical dissemination of everything that one comes to hear or know."[11]

From the Islamic perspective, any idle talk or communication designed merely to entertain is discouraged, because the Holy Qur'an describes the best believers as those who honorably avoid futility and vain talk.[12]

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[4] *Ibid* , 4:58; Commentary from Al-Sabuni, M. A. *Mukhtasar Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 1 (West Germany: Darul Quran Al-Karim, 1976), p. 405.

[5] *Ibid* , 49:15.

[6] *Ibid* , 24:19.

[7] *Ibid* , 33:58.

[8] Muhammad F. Abdul Baqi, *Sahiih Muslim*, Vol. 4 (Dar Ihiya Al-Kutubil A'rabiyah, 1955), p. 1997.

[9] Holy Qur'an, 17:36; See the commentary of this verse.

[10] Abdul Baquii, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 10

[11] Subhii as Salih, *Manhalul Wardin Sharhu Riyadhis Salhin*, Vol. 1 (Beirut: Darul Ilm Lil Malayin, 1970), p. 260.

[12] Holy Qur'an, 23:3; 25:72.

Especially condemned under this prohibition of uncritical dissemination is "name-calling," which is considered to be *"fisq"* or a great sin.[13] Spreading any negative information about others is discouraged, whether it is true (the sin of detraction) or false (the worse sin of slander), and whether it is intentionally and maliciously libelous or not. The Hadith also confirms this teaching.[15]

There are cases, however, where circulation of information, including both factual and evaluative news, is indispensable.

II. Objectives of Communication and Specific Constraints

Schramm summarizes the main objectives of communication in four categories: to inform, to teach, to propose or persuade, and to please.[16] Islam encourages all four of these, but with some restrictions in order to secure the desired outcome and to secure the community's safety and welfare as well as the rights of the individual.

A. Critical Evaluation

The duty to inform includes sometimes a duty to evaluate an individual, in which case permission is granted to reveal both the negative and the positive sides of a specific person's life. This need for critical evaluation arises when one's judgement is needed so that one person will not unwisely rely on another, for example, in a prospective marriage or business undertaking or political alliance when one or both of the parties has some public responsibility or influence.

This case in Islam, however, is the exception to the rule and is governed by other basic rules. For example, when we cannot avoid critically evaluating a person, we should confine ourselves to what is indispensibly related information. When the question is the credibility of a person or his knowledge, we should not reveal his physical deformities, and when the question is physical capability or skill, then the moral shortcomings should not be disclosed unless they have a tangible effect on job performance. And the entire evaluation should be based on verified facts.

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[13] *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 860
[14] Holy Qur'an, 4:148.
[15] As Salih, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 197.
[16] W. Schramm, *The Nature of Communication Between Humans*. In Schramm and D. F. Roberts, eds., *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), pp. 2-53.

The fundamental rule in this regard is to refrain from publicizing what others may want to keep private. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) completely prohibited this.[17] For example, describing the secret beauties of a woman to men is considered a violation.[18]

Concealing others' shortcomings and mistakes is strongly recommended.[19] Even disclosing one's own sins is prohibited.[20]

B. Teaching and Persuading

Islam emphasizes that every community has a collective responsibility to teach what is useful and to persuade people to do good and avoid whatever is morally objectionable.[21] Even during wartime, when human resources are mobilized to defend Islam, the duty to learn and teach continues.[22]

There are, however, guidelines of etiquette for those who teach and exhort. They should treat people with wisdom and kindness.[23] This requires avoidance of whatever might challenge others[24] or provoke hostility.[25] Other principles of etiquette are to introduce the instructions gradually,[26] and choose the appropriate time[27] and frequency.[28]

Sometimes one cannot avoid criticizing during the process of teaching or persuading, but the criticism should be directed to the deeds not to the doer.[29] Criticism is one thing and injuring the other's reputation is another.

The Qur'an has extensive critiques in its treatment of history, reminding us that "in history. . . there is instruction for men endowed with understanding,"[30] and encourages us to travel to see for ourselves.[31] As Siddiqui has commented, "history is not a collection of empty stories."[32] The Holy Qur'an makes

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[17] As Sahih.*op. cit.*, Vol. 2, pp. 831-842. See also Sayyid Sabiq, *Fiqhas Sunnah* Vol. 1, (Beirut: Darul Fikr, 1977), p. 471; Khan, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 270.

[18] As Sahih, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 445.

[19] *Ibid*., Vol. 2, p. 830. Abdul Hamid Siddiqii, trans, *Sahih Muslim*, Vol. 4, by Imam Muslim (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1976) p. 1369.

[20] *Ibid*., Vol. 4, p. 1539.

[21] *Ibid*., 3:104.

[22] *Ibid*., 9:122.

[23] *Ibid*., 16:125.

[24] *Ibid*., 6:108.

[25] *Ibid*., 20:43-44.

[26] As Salih, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 194.

[27] *Ibid*, Vol. 1, pp. 453-454.

[28] M.M. Khan, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, Vol. 1 (Ankara: Hilal Yayinlari, 1976), p. 60.

[29] Yusuf M. Gasim, *Dhawabitul I'Lam Fish Shari'atil Islamiyah Wa Anzimatil Mamlakatil Arabiyah As Saudiyah* (Riyadh: Department of Library Affairs, 1979), p. 34.

[30] Holy Qur'an, 12:111

[31] *Ibid*., 30:9

[32] Kazim Al-Jawadi, *Tafsirut Tarikh*, (trans. by Abdul Hamid Sidiqii) (Kuwait: Darul Qalam,

it evident that the historical reports are not meant to pass judgement on the people who have already passed away.[33]

As exception to this general rule is the critique of those categories of people whom Allah or His Prophet have cursed. This is because Allah and His Messenger know who deserve it and who do not. Furthermore, what was reported of this nature is limited and is usually confined to certain categories of people; they generally do not single out specific groups of people or persons. There are cases, however, when one cannot avoid specific names.[34]

III. Methods of Verification

The Holy Qur'an commands the believers:

> O you who believe, if a wicked person comes to you with any news, verify it lest you harm people unwittingly and afterwards regret what you have done.[35]

It could be argued that this verse refers specifically to wicked persons, but once we consider the context of its revelation we find that the wicked person could be any person about whom we know little. To ascertain the truth is not an easy task and to set detailed rules to distinguish between what is truthful or false is also impossible. Islamic teachings, however, equip Muslims with some basic tools in this regard.

One way to verify incoming reports is to refer to the Prophet (PBUH) and those with experience. The Holy Qur'an says:

> When there comes to them some matters touching (public) safety or fear, they divulge it. If they had only referred it to the Apostle, or to those charged with authority among them, the proper investigators would have known the fact or investigated it.[36]

During the lifetime of the Prophet (PBUH), the Muslims could refer a matter to him directly, but what about today? Today they can refer to the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah, which the Prophet has left for them. Muslims also have the learned authorities who are acquainted with the appropriate methods to discriminate truth from falsehood with varying degrees of certainty.

In historical analysis, one can consult the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah to match the content of an account with the pertinent facts mentioned in them.

1980), p. 146.
[33] Holy Qur'an, 2:134, 141.
[34] Khan, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 270.
[35] Holy Qur'an, 49:6.
[36] *Ibid.*, 4:83.

For example, if some historians come with stories about a people which contradict the accounts of the same people in the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah, or even the writings of a majority of the reliable biographers, Muslims can assuredly reject the historians' stories. Theories negated by the Holy Qur'an or the Sunnah also deserve the same fate.

If an account or theory is not directly covered in the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah, they can still provide Muslims with some techniques to determine the truth. Among these are the following five:

A. Documentation and Testimony[37]

This evidence can take the form of writings such as articles, press releases, or any kind of publication by the person in dispute or by participants in an event. It can also take the form or oral statements. If such first-hand documentation and testimony is not available, however, or is denied, then secondary witnesses are necessary.

B. Witnesses[38]

The greater the number of witnesses and the greater their credibility, the stronger is the evidence.[39] This method, which was developed by the Hadith scientists to verify the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), was very helpful in refining historical reports and can serve as a model in modern scholarship and communications.[40] The techniques were called the science of Isnad (the narrators). Numerous biographies were compiled about the narrators of Hadith to help in verifying their reliability, neutrality, ideological orientation, and degree of commitment to Islam.

Some historians, just like many contemporary newsmen, unfortunately have chosen the easy way and neglected this tool in assembling their facts. Hence they have become gullible propagators of many falsified stories.[41] Some of the original compilers of Islamic history compiled all sorts of stories related to a single event or personage without sorting them out. On the other hand, they were careful to report the names of the narrators or their chains of transmit-

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[37] *Ibid.*, 2:180, 282.

[38] *Ibid.*, 2:282; 24:4.

[39] Muhammad M. Azami, *Students in Hadith Methodology and Literature* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publication, 1977).

[40] Ibnul Arabii, Al-Qadii A., commentary by M. Al-Khatiib, *Al-Awasim Minal Gawasim Fi Tahqiq Mawaqifis Sahabah Ba'da Wafatin Nabi* (Al Maktabul Islami, p. 53; At-Tahan, Mahmuud, *Usulat Takhrij Wa Dirasatil Asanid* (Beirut: Darul Quranil Karim, 1979); Abu Lubanah, Husain, *Al-Jarh Wat Ta'dil* (Riyadh: Darulli Wa Lin Nashr Wat Tawzi', 1974).

[41] *Ibid.*

tal.⁴² Nevertheless, careless later historians and biographers not only neglected the technique of Isnad, but depended on secondary sources very often bearing insufficient references or no references at all.

The end result of this negligence was a vicious circle of secondary sources. A number of historians reported the same wrong version of the historical event which could be traced back to a single original source. Some later writers either did not dig into the original sources or else depended on sources without proper references and therefore took this repetition as a sign of consensus. Other biographers, though they consulted the original sources, did not pay attention to the credibility of the narrator or chain of narrators of each version but chose what they thought best fit their own account. So they compiled many false stories to support their admiration for a particular historical person but simultaneously disgraced another highly respectable person whose reputation is beyond the reach of such false stories. A story accepted in one book was often rejected in another book by the same author. In other words, they treated each of their works independently from the others to the point of contradiction. Very often they contradicted themselves in the same volume. Among the valuable works that criticized such carelessness or prejudice in reporting Islamic history are *Minhājus Sunnah*⁴³ and *Al'Awaṣim Minal Qawāṣim*⁴⁴ and *'Abāqīl*.⁴⁵

A tangible example is what was reported about the fourth rightly guided Caliph, 'Ali (RAA), his son, Al-Husain (RAA), and some of his descendants. Many careless writers packed their works unwittingly with false Hadiths and stories which contradicted well established facts supported by the Holy Qur'an, the Hadith, and even simple common sense. Shi'ism, nationalsim, tribalism, and self-interest all worked hand in hand to distort Islamic history.⁴⁶

This is why Muslims should not take any historical report as sufficient evidence to declare a person guilty of whatever charge. Ibn Taymiyah, citing Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, affirmed that, without Isnad, any books of Tafsir (commentaries on the Qur'an), reports of statements of the Prophet (PBUH),

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⁴² *Ibid*, pp. 128-129. Al Khatiib in these pages classified the Islamic historians into three groups:
    a) those who used to beg contemporary rulers by disgracing the conquered rulers,
    b) those who were completely committed to certain deviant ideologies, and
    c) those who were fair, such as Tabari, Ibn 'Asakir, Ibn Athiir, and Ibn Kathiir, who compiled the different versions of the historical reports but refered to the names of the narrators.

⁴³ Ibn Taymiyah, Ahmad, *Minhajus Sunnah An Nabawiyah Fi Naqsh Kalamish Shi'ah Wal Qadariyah* (four volumes) (Riyadh: Maktabatur Riyadh Al-Hadithah).

⁴⁴ Ibn al 'Arabii, *op. cit*.

⁴⁵ Ibrahim A. Sha'uut, *Abatil*, 4th ed. (Cairo: Darut Talif, 1976).

⁴⁶ Saeed Ismael, *The Difference between the Shii and the Majority of Muslim Scholars* (Carbondale: A Muslim Group, 1983), pp. 2-3.

and other historical reports are not dependable sources for the derivation of legal opinion.[47] This contrasts with the Holy Qur'an and the reliable Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH), which are thoroughly authenticated.

We can declare certain actions to be wrong, based on Islamic legal opinion, but not a particular person guilty. This is true because reports about controversial events or figures normally are beset with uncertainty. No person, alive or deceased, can be declared guilty without proper court proceedings and after meeting evidentiary requirements. Without such evidence, as the Prophet (PBUH) asserted, it is safer to pronounce a person innocent than to take the risk of pronouncing him guilty.[48]

Even when we are sure that a person has committed a wrong act, we cannot be certain about the real motivation or whether there were compelling circumstances. When it is apparently impossible for both parties to a dispute to be right, we should not exclude the possibility that both were sincere in arriving at a correct decision and did their best. We may say, to the best of our judgement and knowledge of Islam, the decision of one party was wrong but we cannot say this or that party was guilty and deserves punishment.

In reaching any such decision, we should be aware of our own judgement by Allah. Thus al Bukhari and Muslim reported that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> When a ruler gives a decision, having tried his best to decide correctly and is right, there are two rewards for him; and if he gave judgement after having tried his best (to arrive at a correct decision) but erred, there is one reward for him.[49]

C. Internal Validity

In addition to the use of documentation, testimony, and witnesses, another technique has been utilized in Islam. This technique depends on the other techniques but rests more on reasoning or internal validity, "Aql," than on transmission, "Naql."[50]

This technique is derived basically from two Hadiths. The first

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[47] Muhammad A. Al Julainid, *Daqaequt Tafsir* (Cairo: Darul Ansar, 1978), p. 57.

[48] Izuddiin, Baliiq, *Minhajus Salihin Min Ahadithi Wa Sunnati Khalamil Anbiya Wal Mursalin* (Beirut: Darul Fat-h Lit Tiba'atiwan Nashr, 1978), pp. 578.

[49] Abdul Hamid Siddiqui, op. cit. Vol. 3, p. 930.

[50] "Aql", as an Islamic term, refers to using reasoning to discriminate truth from falsehood, and "Naql" refers to dependence on what was authentically transmitted from the source. To some extent "Aql" is closer to internal validity and "Naql" to external validity.

distinguishes the occasional act from the chronic characteristic or habit.[51] The second Hadith requires judgement on the existence of a habit or character trait to be decided by a consensus of the witnesses.[52] This technique, universally used by historians, is based on two elements:

1) Numerous stories indicating that a particular person is good or bad.

2) Various narrators (indirect sources) or reporters (original sources) who judge a person's general character and thereby bear witness that a particular person is likely to be good or bad.

The issue in dispute is to tested against the preponderance of both elements. If both are negative, guilt is rejected. If the action in dispute is consistent with the general tendency, it is accepted.

Since pardoning the guilty is better than punishing the innocent, it seems appropriate to depend on this technique more than on heresay witnesses to a particular act, especially to defend the innocence of a deceased person.

There are, however, two exceptions to this rule, namely, the credibility of a religious teacher and of a narrator; for example, a scholar who was credible most of his life but was reported later to have lost his memory, and a narrator who was reliable most of the time but was reported on occasion to lie intentionally. In both of these cases, caution must be used and any negative testimony about a person's orthodoxy should be countered by unchallengable testimony in the affirmative.

In other cases as well, the Holy Qur'an is very strict, because Allah abhores circulation or acceptance of negative news, especially about those who enjoyed a good reputation.[53]

D. Context

The divine command to verify the news and not to follow one's own ignorance also forbids factual reporting that is accurate but out of context. A Muslim is required not only to verify the news item itself, but should know both the circumstances that occasioned a particular action or failure to act and the results thereof, because elimination of the cause or the results may turn the facts upside down and make a virtue look evil and a vice look good.

An example of this is what was reported by al-Bukhari about the third caliph, 'Uthman (RAA). In this account, a man who hated 'Uthman came to one of the companions, Ibn Umar, a Muslim who lived during the Prophet's time, had met him, and believed in him as a Messenger of Allah. This man said:

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[51] As Salih, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 89.
[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 574-5.
[53] Holy Qur'an 24:11-12.

"O Ibn 'Umar, I want to ask you about something: please tell me about it. Do you know that 'Uthman fled on the day (of the battle) of Uhud?" Ibn Umar said: "Yes." The man said: "Do you know that Uthman was absent on the day (of the battle) of Badr and did not join it?" Ibn Umar said: "Yes." The man said: "Do you know that Uthman failed to attend the Al-Ridwan pledge (to defend Islam) and did not witness it?" Ibn Umar said: "Yes." The man said, "Allahu Akbar" (a phrase used to express his happiness at finding evidence to support his hatred for Uthman).

But Umar then said: "Let me explain to you (the circumstances of these three cases). As for his flight on the day of Uhud, I testify that Allah has excused him and forgiven him; and his absence from the battle of Badr was due to the fact that the daughter of Allah's Apostle (PBUH) was his wife and she was sick. The Apostle said to him: 'You will receive the same reward as those who participate in the battle of Badr (if you stay with her).' As for his absence from the Al-Ridwan pledge of allegiance, had there been any person in Mecca more respectable than Uthman (to be sent as representative), Allah's Apostle would have sent him instead of Uthman. Without doubt, the Apostle of Allah (PBUH) did send him. And the incident of the Al-Ridwan pledge of allegiance happened after he had gone to Mecca. The Apostle of Allah held out his right hand saying: 'This is Uthman's hand.' He struck his (other) hand with it saying: 'This (pledge of allegiance) is on behalf of Uthman.' Then Ibn Umar said to the man: "Bear (these explanations) in mind."[54]

If these events were to be reported without their appropriate context, they would have disgraced Uthman (RAA); after the circumstances were explained, they honored him instead.

E. Sensitivity to Bias and Lack of Objectivity

Among the other techniques of verification that could be derived from the major sources of Islam are those based on a knowledge of human nature. Human beings tend to see only the good sides of themselves and of those they love. Sometimes they may even exaggerate them. They are also inclined to find fault with those whom they dislike, ignore their virtues, and even exaggerate their shortcomings.

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[54] Khan, *op. cit.*, Vol. 5, pp. 34-5.

Therefore the Holy Qur'an[55] and the Sunnah[56] consider excessive praise or expression of hatred to be characteristics of those who are not worthy to be trusted. News reflecting such extremes should be examined thoroughly before accepting it. Also the people who originated such news should be scrutinized carefully.

All the above five techniques are helpful in determing the general characteristics of a person and in identifying major events. The specific details, however, are always subject to doubt.

Almost any person or event in the news today is subject to numerous contradictory stories. Which should we believe, especially in the light of the highly advanced techniques of deception used today? The situation becomes worse if deception is an organized political tool.

Consensus (*Tawatur*), in the past, constituted strong evidence, but in to-day's world of overwhelming mass media, it has become deceiving. When radio and television stations and the print media report similar versions of the same story, it is easy to believe that there is a consensus. If we just have a look at the origin of these similar versions, we may find only a single wire service, a single reporter, or a single public relations man. And because of the overwhelming effect of the mass media, some people who want to believe in a particular item of news tend to imagine or pretend that they have heard it from a different source.

Does this mean that truth in all its dimensions is impossible to find in today's news and reports? To some extent, the answer is yes.

It is fashionable today to link the truth with "objectivity." Individuals as well as journalists' associations consider "objectivity" to be one of the basic requirements of accurate reporting, because it "shall yield truth."[57]

With all this concern, the definition of objectivity is still vague. To take some examples, the Society of Professional Journalists in 1973 defined it as accuracy, distinction between news reports and expressions of opinion, and representation of all sides of an issue.[58] Walter Lippman defined objectivity to mean uninfluenced by emotion, personal prejudice, or involvement, and

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[55] "Have you not seen those who claim sanctity for themselves. Only Allah sanctifies whom he pleases but they will never fail to receive justice and shall not receive even a very little injustice. Behold how they invent a lie against Allah. But that by itself is a manifest Sin." Holy Qur'an, 4:49-50; 53:32; As Salih *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, pp. 874-5, 961-965.

[56] As Salih, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, pp. 856-858, especially the hadith which says: "The highly virtuous person cannot be a curser" and the Hadith which says: "The one who disgraces others, curses them, and uses exaggeration and obscene words cannot be a true believer."

[57] William E. Francois, *Introduction to Mass Communications and Mass Media* (Columbus, Ohio: Grid, Inc., 1977), pp. 256-7, 260, 301, 305, 312.

[58] *Ibid.*, pp. 260-1

confined to presentation of observable phenomena.[59] Wire-service officials have stated that objectivity is to present both sides of a story whenever possible and to attribute every disputable statement to the most authoritative source.[60] Another definition of objectivity is to give equal weight to all positions presented on any event.[61]

When all the above definitions are summarized, objectivity is construed to mean:

1) reporting only observable phenomena,
2) reporting without personal emotions,
3) reporting without personal opinion
4) reporting without personal values, and
5) presenting all sides equally.

We may ask, is this objectivity possible? Technical means are said to address all the requirements except equal presentation of all sides. Such equality of presentation is impossible, because for humans judgement is inescapable and the mere sequence of presentation will have some influence on the audience.

This argument should not be used to abandon all thought of objectivity. Many scholars assert that, even though "pure objectivity" is impossible, we can satisfy ourselves with "relative objectivity." Relative objectivity is possible and varies greatly or slightly from one individual to another or from one community to another. It is subject to the effect of efficiency, emotion, opinion, attitude, and beliefs.

In Islam, this standard of objectivity is only one of the criteria to be used as guidance in the media professions. A broader, Islamic concept of objectivity requires not the alleged elimination of values in judging whether or not to publish, but the introduction of values based on the ultimate objectivity of Allah, Who has communicated to all mankind through the Qur'an.

As we have seen, Islam has a whole panoply of guidelines to restrain the publication of whatever can unjustly harm the innocent or falsify reality. Islam opposes any efforts, deliberate or not, to distort or mislead.

Although we have focused on negative constraints, Islamic guidelines on news emphasize positive injunctions. Islamic media managers should encourage publication of whatever informs or educates people on the state of the world and on the most innovative thinking to address or solve its problems.

Islamic values require publication of whatever will promote truth, justice,

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 298.
[60] P.M. Sandman, D.M. Rubin and D. B. Sachsman, *op. cit.* pp. 243-4.
[61] G.S. Hage, *et. al.*, *New Strategies for Public Affairs Reporting: Investigation, Interpretation and Research* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1976), p. 15.

and peace; whatever will promote human rights, which are the substance of justice in the *Shari'ah*; and whatever will bring people, especially the leaders in every community, to do good as it is defined in Divine Revelation.

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