

Sheikh Alsaffar Condemns "Sectarian Discrimination" and Describes Its Perpetrators as Outlaws

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In one of his lectures for Ashura season in Qatif in Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Hasan Alsaffar, a prominent Saudi Shiite religious leader, emphasized that it is the right time to discuss the issue of sectarian discrimination in Saudi Arabia.

He explained that the "Basic Law" of Saudi Arabia does not allow any form of discrimination between Saudi citizens, and guarantees equality in rights and duties for all of them. He referred to the eighth Article of the Saudi Law, and cited "although the law prohibits discrimination, there are a number of extremists who practice discrimination against citizens whom the Law ensured them equality in rights and duties".

In this lecture, which was attended by thousands of people from different Saudi regions, Alsaffar confirmed that it is the appropriate time to discuss the issue of discrimination which is practiced by a social group that benefit from maintaining the situation as it is, and described those discriminators as "outlaws".

He, also, said that "some issues were not discussed at the national level previously, but, currently, they were such as human rights and poverty". He referred to the accomplishment of several reform initiatives that were presented by Saudi officials; led by King Abdullah bin AbdulAziz Al Saud.

Alsaffar called the Saudi elites to raise this issue which highly concerns a group of citizens, and criticized the state of silence which made discriminators go to the extremes more than ever before. Sheikh Alsaffar stressed the necessity of "creating an opponent environment against extremists in any party" pointing to National Dialogue which was launched by King Abdullah Al Saud as an example. He added that

"people were optimistic towards National Dialogue because they felt that it would handle the issue of discrimination between citizens".

Over religious extremism which leads to discrimination, Sheikh Hasan Alsaffar declared that "there are extremist groups which accuse Saudi Shiites through various media of allegiance to other states, and that is the claim of fools because Shiites' allegiance is to their nation and that is recognized by senior officials in the state". He, also, added "as responsible citizens, we defend our nation and seek its security and stability".

Alsaffar condemned the extremists in all parties and trends stating that "among Shiites, as well, there are some religiously extreme individuals; therefore, we have to hold our responsibility as we call upon others to their responsibilities". Furthermore, he said "failure to acknowledge the problem of discrimination and religious extremism contribute in creating a passive environment in the nation", and "not admitting mistakes of a party against the other leads to the continuation of the problem which is not of the favor of the nation".

He reviewed several aspects of discrimination forms around the world, explaining "we are aware of how problems were and how they expand to interfere in states affairs; for instance, there is an international intervention in the issue of Darfur in Sudan due to inequality there". He explored the history of Afro-Americans; how they were brought to the United States as slaves, struggled all the way to attain their rights, and achieved the presidency of the United States.

Sheikh Alsaffar added: "I do not address the extremists, but I address the wise men in our nation. I state that we all must stand together against the problems that hinder reform in our nation, and we must cooperate with our leadership to achieve that". He, also, said: "whoever discriminates between citizen and another is an enemy to this nation; all citizens are equal as the law provides".

Humoud AlOtaibi, a Saudi researcher from Riyadh attended the speech, said: "what I heard tonight is a great national speech that is

highly convenient to be the starting point for dealing with such issues that are practiced by some individuals".