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Khutbah

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: [Today's Fasād](#)

DVD title: Fasād: The Corruptors of the Earth
Corruption Reform through the Spiritual Basis of Love for Humanity

Opening Duas

My dear brothers and sisters, many things are happening in the world today and many of the things that are happening in the world today, even the way natural disasters hit in places like Haiti can be traced back to *fasād*. Nature responds in the way it responds and human beings respond in the way they respond. In between the responses, often there is corruption and exploitation and environmental destruction. If you live on the earth today, we hear a lot about corruption. Allah (swt) says:

And if you say to them, “Do not corrupt the earth,” they say, “Truly we are only trying to set things right.” (2:11)

Well, [they mean] to set things right from the point of view of making a profit and stripping the land of its resources, with terrible consequences in this case. In Haiti, you listen to the “experts” speak about how much of this natural disaster could have been averted, if there was not so much stripping of the land of its trees and its natural resources, and if the materials used [for building structures] had been better, and if you go back historically to the way the French had used the colonies as, basically, a slave colony during the colonial period.

This corruption takes many faces in the world we live in today. Allah says in Qur'an:

And when your Lord said to the angels, “I shall place upon the earth an emissary,” they said, “Will You place upon it [one] who will corrupt it and shed blood, [while] it is we who hymn Your praise and sanctify You?” He said, “Truly I now what you do not know.” (2:30)

Then Allah gives us the names of things which we have talked about many times. In Arabic, this word *fasād* is a very interesting word that Allah uses in many different ways in Qur’an. It means corruption. It also means unlawful warfare, many kinds of wars. It means crimes against law and order—meaning directly in the Muslim community, but I think by extension we should say in the faith communities, the Ahl al-Kitāb. We live in the world today where we see a lot of crimes against law and order. It is a general concept therefore of social disorder. Within Islamic law and jurisprudence, it is a source of a basis for *hirabah*, related laws—illegal acts that are done under the principle of *fasād*. In recent times, Muslim thinkers have also included terrorism in this *fasād*.

Whether or not that is what it is in the technical sense, it is important to understand even more things the Qur’an tells us. Allah tells us in Qur’an who to befriend, who to work with, who to trust.

Oh you who securely believe, do not take for your intimate friends those who are not of your kind. They will not fail to corrupt you; they love that which causes you anguish. [Their] hatred [shows by what] comes out of their mouths, but what is in their hearts is far worse. We have made clear the Signs for you if you will [but use your] intellect. (3:118)

Who are those who are not of your kind? If your kind is for goodness and security and safety and love and service to Allah and kindness to human beings, then we know who they are. We know who they are. Allah sends messengers with clear descriptions. He

said that among the people are the hypocrites, the ones who deceive you. Even when dealing with natural disasters, we see corruption. We look at the health care industry and we see corruption. We look at the financial industry and we see corruption. We look at the media and we see corruptive forces that have taken over the media. Wherever you look, you can see. Allah says: “**All that has been mentioned is distasteful to your Lord.**” He says:

Do not walk arrogantly upon this earth. Surely you cannot tear the earth apart and you will never be taller than the mountains. (17:37)

Well, the earth got torn apart this week. So briefly I want to talk about *fasād* because Allah told the angels about His plan, and we read about that and they said what they said. Obviously Allah (swt) knew there were going to be many corrupters. Corruption would come as part of this. There would be many others who would build on, and improve, and reform and make peace; and Allah (swt) enjoins only to do that. Why would He enjoin us to do good and forbid wrong if He didn't already know that some people would do wrong and some people would do good. He sets these forces against one another. In a sense, Allah (swt) (or this System, if you will) is set up to purify humanity, remind humanity and to bring humanity back to a sense of submission.

It is obvious that submission is part of humanities existence, because look at what has happened in Haiti. In a sense you could say that Allah took a choice or a risk in creating human beings. He set into motion possibilities and probabilities. But does Allah take risks? Not, maybe, in the sense that we think of risks today. Allah created human beings that they might struggle, that they might risk their own future against the *rizq*/provisions that Allah provides. Here is what is provided; now, share the *rizq*, as we say. Share those provisions so that everybody benefits from it.

In Islamic banks we speak of shared labor and shared risk. We use the term risk in its English definition. But if you extend it, you are sharing the provision/*rizq*; and you are sharing the risk as we understand it in the English sense—partnership. But we have not lived as partners on this earth. We have not shared this earth with a sense of partnership and mutual benefit, in many cases, in most cases, historically. Yet we are risking our future by actions of others.

There are good people are down in Haiti. I think somebody said there were 1,000 NGOs in Haiti, and over all these years, they were not able to change the society. Some of them are motivated just for religious reasons and conversion and all of that. They were providing services, and clinics and hospitals and food, all of this up until this tragedy, from the last tragedy from the last hurricane, from the previous hurricane, from the previous invasion and circumstances—the years of Papa Doc and Truille. I remember that story as a child because we had a neighbor in New Jersey who was a fighter against Truille in the Dominican Republic.

What is the lesson? Allah takes this risk in creating human beings knowing that there is *fasād* as part of the character of human beings. We find that life on this earth is full of struggle, and there are those who do make mischief and corruption. There are those who do create corruption, especially in the world in which we live in today—in Iran, in Sudan, and even in this country. Name a place: there is corruption. When we speak with the young people from Indonesia, they say, “The worst problem is corruption.” How do we change the society? I believe it takes spiritual people. I don’t just mean religious people. I mean spiritual people. Let them work from Christian or Islamic, or Judaic or Buddhist or Hindu, I don’t care. Spiritual people are people who care and love human beings.

Unfortunately you are not going to see a lot of them. You will see a lot of the religious types walking around the halls of Congress or parliaments or Majlis. But where are the spiritual people who love human beings and who love Allah? Unfortunately, we find in

these places where people claim religion for their basis for decision-making that they are corrupt in the way they do it. There are a lot of interesting parallels, that we won't go into today, like destiny. There are also the peaceful people who do acts of kindness and love and charity. Even some of those "religious" people, motivated by their religious beliefs are good, kind people trying to do their best. They were not spared in Haiti. Did you hear about the one report of the girl who had her foot amputated and she survived? We want to see more of those people. We want to be like those people who are good people, who love kindness and love charity. Then there are those who make *musadīn*, who do reform. Then there are those who make *muslahīn*.

The challenge before us is always who do we want to be; what camp do we want to be in? Of course we know the camp we want to be in. But it remains a challenge for us, every day, to reach out with our hearts and to feel safe and secure in who we are as we reach out to other people. But more than that, we have to overcome this corruption. It is a very big evil, a very big problem. However, the bigger the problem is that when you don't see, and when many people are willing to do reform, worried about doing reform, worried about reforms, reforms, reforms in our country, then as soon as the reforms start, people are impatient. They are impatient: "Let it happen today!" The President gets elected; tomorrow everything should be solved. This is not a political talk. It is these expectations that people have.

For the people in Haiti, it has been some 70 hours. The streets are blocked. The food is there. The help is there. The water is there. But they are worried about violence because they cannot distribute it. Where does reason go? Instead of piling corpses in the streets blocking the roads, they should be clearing the streets knowing that the help is coming. But we don't trust that the help is coming. Part of the reason is because if you have a belief that religion is just form and not content, then you are not sure. But if you have an understanding that people are good, essentially good, and they are rushing from all parts of the world to you [then you trust more]. Maybe they should be flying over with

helicopters with speakers, “The help is coming. The help is coming.” Maybe they should have their religious leaders on those helicopters saying, “I am Bishop so and so.” “I am so and so.” Put the hearts to rest with sincerity and love. Put the hearts to rest with words of compassion and mercy. Then as soon as you can, you start to drop the water bottles and tents... or placing them, because if you drop them, what is going to happen? You know what is going to happen.

Even in this country on a small level [is an example]. There is an election going on in Massachusetts. A man spent his whole life getting to where we are today, and the chances are that they are going to lose that senate seat. Why? Because people are impatient. That impatience comes from what? Because they have been influenced by the people who are corrupt. They are corrupt: the people who say “no” to everything for political reasons, the people who are the worst political opportunists. They say, “Time’s up. Time’s up!” We have given a year to solve problems that have been caused for years, partially by the party in power, largely by the party that is out of power. But we are going to let them come back into power and let them do it to us again. What did the ex-President say? “Shame on...” Oh, he couldn’t remember that quote.

It is a form of mental corruption, intellectual corruption. How do you reform? You have to do it from a spiritual basis of love and concern for humanity. I don’t care if you are a Republican or a Democrat or you are a conservative or you are a Liberal. If you have compassion in your heart, you will find the way. Whether it is on the streets of Haiti or the streets of Tehran, you see the misery caused by corruption, greed. Do they forget? How can they forget in light of what has happened in Haiti or other places? Life is very short! Death is for certain. Death is for certain. Live every day as if it is your last day, and try to do something good in it, and not waste your time.

Make not mischief on the earth. They say, “We are just reformers. We are peace makers.” They are mischief makers, though they say they are peace makers. They offer

nothing except, “No.” They don’t give support. Now what? A major catastrophe. And support comes, support comes to bring us back to what? Poverty? To bring them back to a level of poverty? The promises are, “We won’t forget you, even after this thing. We won’t forget you.” Sure we will, just as in every catastrophe. Promises are made but they are not fulfilled. How many billions of dollars were promised to Atche? How much was delivered?

Fasād means to spoil the order, disturbing the balance of justice... by greed, by self-interest, by deception, by double speak. We just came out of a decade of double speak. Now do we want to enter back into it? We are all comfortable with that, because we hear it everyday. The results in one country might be violence and death and destruction. Results in another country might be moral and ethical corruption or financial corruption. One is more obvious than the other. The other is more insidious than the obvious one.

Qur’an uses the word *fasād* at least fifty times. *Al-fasād* could be in morals and values and social systems and family systems and educational systems and economics and politics and human relations. *Al-fasād* appears when people follow their vain desires, when they try to twist the truth and distort the facts, and use misery and politicize it. Allah says that instead of following the Truth and the guidance of their Lord, their Creator, they ignore it and turn away from the message. Allah (swt) says, **“If the Truth had been in accord with their desires, truly they heavens and the earth and all beings there would have been in confusion and corruption. Nay, we have sent them their admonition. But they turn away from their admonition.”** (23:71)

Al-fasād comes when people tell lies and break promises, and don’t care about their family ties, their relationships, their society, their community, their brothers, their sisters, their Lord. Those who break their covenant with their Lord, Allah says to them in Suratu-r-Ra’ad: **“After plighting their word thereto, and cut asunder those things which Allah has commanded to be joined, and work mischief in the land, on them is**

a curse, for them is a terrible home.” (13:25) People are wandering the streets of Port-au-Prince and it is like the people wandering on the Day of Resurrection. They have nowhere to go, nowhere to turn. Even their kith and kin are left. That is what it says in Qur'an: **“Even your kith and kin.”** And there it is true. Babies left on the street, on a plank with no parent around—gone. Who knows where? Nothing can save you. This is more than a metaphor.

Al-fasād happens when people cheat and deceive in business, deprive others of their rights in law or in government, or act in dishonest ways for their own selfish ends. Allah mentions the Prophet Hud (as) telling his people, **“Oh my people. Give them just measure and weight. Nor withhold from the people what they are due. Commit not evil in the land with the intent to do mischief, corruption.”** (11:85) What is he describing: 3,000 years ago, or yesterday and today? When the political order becomes unjust and people's rights are denied, the cities, the townships, the villages become corrupt. They are filled with mischief and mischief makers, and one's life loses its meaning and purpose. People kill each other for no reason. Agricultural lands are destroyed. Livestock consumes the resources or dies. The environment suffers the evils of corruption, and mischief become obvious. When the earth does what it does naturally, it has exponential consequences.

Allah tells us again in Surah Baqarah:

There is this type of man who speech about the world's life may dazzle you, and he calls to Allah to witness what is in his heart; yet he is the most contemptuous of enemies. When he rules, his aim is to spread mischief throughout the earth and to destroy crops and cattle. But Allah does not love mischief. When it is said to him, “Fear Allah”, he is led by arrogance to more crime. (2:204)

That is called outsourcing, today. You outsource your wars. You get paid to be a mercenary, to kill people, to strip the land. Mercenary. You use the government to destroy the land, have the right to take the resources, to “drill, baby, drill.” The rulers who rule the people without any care and without any consultation make corruption and mischief. They spoil peace for their land. They disgrace the noble inhabitants of their country. From the mouth of the Queen of Sheba we have the following words of wisdom in Qur’an. These words contain the most profound, the most true appraisal of imperialistic systems of all times and all places, whether they are Islamic, American Democratic, European supposed Democracy, or Hindu supposed Democracy, corruption is corruption.

She said, “Kings, when they enter a country despoil it, and make the noblest of its people its meanest; thus they behave.” (27:34)

The Pharaonic system of Egypt was the paradigm of this mischief and corruption as related in Torah and Qur’an. Pharaohs used to mistreat their people. They used to exploit one group against another. Allah says of that:

Truly, Firoan elevated himself in the land and broke up its people into sections depressing a small group among them. Their sons he slew, but he kept alive their females because he was indeed a maker of mischief. (28:4)

Al-fasād brings violence, brings death, brings destruction. When there is more corruption, there needs to be a greater effort to reform it and to correct it. It is natural that we feel oppressed, if there is goodness in our heart. We know when we do error and we seek forgiveness from Allah, Allah forgives us. We see those around us that don’t seek it, our leaders, unfortunately, in this world. Whether it is today in this country, or in Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, African countries, or in Haiti, Allah gives the people a chance to repent, to turn back from the evil, to improve their conditions, to become better human

beings. But their greed keeps them corrupted. Whether they wear a black turban on their head or a blue tie around their neck (a noose around their necks), it makes no difference. If they don't repent and seek goodness for all human beings, Allah has told them:

Mischief has appeared on the land and the sea. Because of the meed/evil the hands have earned that Allah may give them a taste of some of their deeds in order that they may turn back from their evil. (30:41)

We are at a time of severe corruption in our world, and have been. The world needs sincere and honest reformers, those who care for the people, those whose interests are not parochial, sectarian, culturally biased, racially biased, gender biased, nationalistic, political. Those who follow the path of justice, those who follow the path of fairness for all people, those who know how to work with wisdom and hikma with love, not with irrationality, not with bigotry, not with prejudice, not with bias, not with hate, not with greed—those are the people we need. When they come, every force goes against them to cut them down. They are not even allowed the time to manifest all their goodness or even for us to measure it. If they look the slightest good, say, “No.” Cut them down.

Many of us have dedicated 35, 40 years of our lives to public service, just to be among the people of need and among the people we can serve, so that we can quietly in the still of the night somehow feel we are not total failures. We can see how much more we need to do. We have to be ready to do more. Then the looming question is [how have we done with our children?] Our children want to do this, and want to do that, want to be here, or own this, or do this or do that. We have failed if we have not instilled in them a sense of public service. We have failed if they do not want to carry on the good works. That is the truth—like it or not. How can we be sure to make our children such people who spread the *dīn*, the real *dīn* of Islam.

The word Islam should not be a pejorative word in the world. It is not to try and make people Muslims, but to help bring out the *taslim*, the *salām*. It is to help people believe what is in the core of a heart of a *mu'min*. I don't care what they call themselves, but I do care in our own family. But I don't care what the good people call themselves, as long as they are like the people of Tasawwuf in their hearts. History is history. The future is where we should turn our mind and eyes. Of course, I pray to Allah to make those people among us.

Why, were there not among your generations before you people possessed of balance, good sense, prohibiting men from mischief on this earth? Except for a few among you from whom we saved from harm. But the wrongdoers among you pursued the enjoyment of the good things in life which were given to them and persisted in sin.

This is a big subject. You can quote all 50 references of *fasād*. We do not really have to; there are other opportunities. But today let's take this brief *khutbah* as a serious reminder. Pray for the people on the streets of Tehran, in the streets of Haiti; pray for the people on the plains of Darfur. Pray for the people in the oppressed lands in Africa and Asia, for the people trying to find a government in Iraq. Pray for the people trying to rid themselves of loss of civil liberties and greed and corruption. Pray for promoters of good will and understanding, here in our community and our lives, by being positive about ourselves, and confident in our abilities and humble in our repentance. Humbly help one another and give the best of ourselves to each other, and make the work expand.

Asalāmu aleikum.

Let us pray for that, *insh'allah*, and remember that in our prayers, even in this month the kind of corruption that caused the death of Ali and his sons. We have to remember those great people whose names we don't know, who sacrificed their wealth, lands, homes,

riches, and families and children for goodness. Remember them, not just as victims but as sacrifices, but let their losses be reminders of good choices for us in this month.

Du'ās.