



Statement of support from the National Muslim Prison Board of South Africa

Greetings of Peace & Blessings of The Almighty Lord of the Worlds

(VOD) Victim Offender Dialogue

In its continuous effort to facilitate and promote the Rehabilitation of offenders, the National Muslim Prison Board of South Africa would like to voice its unequivocal support of the VOD. program launched by the Department Correctional Services.

Two key elements of the VOD process, namely **Apology by the offender** and **Acceptance of that apology by the victim**, are actively promoted and encouraged in Islam.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: *“Whoever has committed injustice to his fellow human-being with regards to his honour or anything else, should seek pardon in this world, before a day comes when no gold or silver shall be of any avail, i.e. the Day of Judgment.* (Narrated by Bukhari)

The Holy Prophet also said: *“Help your brother whether he is the victim or the offender.”* A man then asked: *‘O Messenger of God! I know how to help the victim, but how do I help the offender?’* The Messenger of God replied: *“Stop him from committing the crime!”* (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim)

From the above we realize that Islam supports a process that involves assisting both the victim and the offender. We also glean from the Holy Quran and Prophetic Traditions that to pursue any process or effort to prevent crime and to rehabilitate and offender is encouraged and most praiseworthy. All avenues should be explored and all efforts exhausted in an attempt to demonize crime in the minds of offenders, and make them realize the folly of their actions.

The Holy Quran declares: ***“And one who repents after his crime and rehabilitates, God shall turn to him, for God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful (Quran 5:39)*** This verse is encouragement to the offender to desist from crime and repent, and it offers great hope of Divine Mercy and Acceptance for the criminal.

The Quran further states: ***“And he who forgives (the offender) and makes good (their) relationship, then his rewards is firmly with God”***(Quran 42:40). This verse in turn encourages the victim to accept an apology and overlook the harm that was caused.

While Islam firmly believes in strict punitive measures to deter crime, it also extols the virtue and advantageousness of forgiving one who has caused injury or hurt. This makes for greater harmony and unity among fellow humans.

The NMPB (SA) pledges to continue its unequivocal support to all structures that are designed for the above purpose and objective, and will actively interact with role-players in these processes.

Thank You

Ameer Mufti S. Desai.