

Template Friday Prayer Sermon (Khutbah)

Lives Not Knives - The Sanctity of Life & Our Responsibility to Act

Part 1:

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh (أَسْلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ)

Respected brothers and sisters,

Allah says in the Quran Chapter 5, Surah Al-Ma'idah (The Table Spread):

"...Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely..." (Qur'an 5:32)

In the eyes of Allah (swt), a single life is immensely valuable. Yet in our communities today, we are witnessing a devastating loss of young lives due to knife crime. Over 50,000 knife-related incidents occurred in the UK last year. Children as young as 12 have been arrested. Parents are burying their sons. Entire families are being torn apart.

Abdullah ibn Umar reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Every one of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock. The leader of people is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects. A man is the guardian of his family and he is responsible for them. A woman is the guardian of her husband's home and his children and she is responsible for them. The servant of a man is a guardian of the property of his master and he is responsible for it. No doubt, every one of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock."

(Şaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 7138, Şaḥīḥ Muslim 1829)

This is not just a government issue. It is not only a police issue. This is a community issue. This is a family issue. We, as a community, as parents, as mosque trustees, as Imams, must ask ourselves — what are we doing to protect our youth from this epidemic?

Our young people today are not just lost — many feel unseen. Unheard. Unwanted. They don't feel they belong in the places that should shelter them — sometimes not even in the masjid. Many are walking our streets with fear in their hearts. In dangerous neighbourhoods, some feel that carrying a knife is the only way to survive.

And yet, we do not talk about it in our homes. We don't discuss it in our mosques. We don't check our children's bags. We don't engage the youth in a way that makes them feel like they matter. The environment we raise our children in has a deep and lasting impact. If our homes are filled with anger, neglect, or distance — our children will seek belonging elsewhere. That elsewhere may be unsafe.

Look at how many young Muslims are affected by this. They are not statistics — they are sons, brothers, daughters, sisters and neighbours. They are the future of our community.

Part 2:

To address knife crime in our local area of [____], we must first educate ourselves about the problem.

Firstly, whilst these offences typically make up just 1% of all crime recorded by the police, they cause some of the most serious harms to individuals, communities and societies.

Evidence also indicates that males commit the majority of serious violence like knife crime, and that the peak age for carrying a weapon is 15 years old, according to a Public Health England report in 2019.

a) So why do people carry and use knives?

- i. The reasons vary – self-protection, theft, in a lot of cases to fund a drug habit, to intimidate people or even peer pressure.
- ii. Research has indicated that children who suffer abuse, or grow up in a hostile atmosphere, might be more at risk of taking part in violence.

b) What's the reality?

- i. What many people don't know is that carrying a blade actually puts you at higher risk.
- ii. 7 out of 10 young people who end up in Accident & Emergency (A&E) wards with a knife injury have been stabbed with their own knife, according to Trusted – an organisation provides information on knife crime to teenagers.
- iii. People carry a knife for show – to be respected and feared, because they think that the one with the knife has the power. But the statistics show that often your own knife will be used against you.
- iv. The consequences are also heavy. If you get caught with a knife you face a prison sentence of up to five years. That's just for possessing a knife in a public place.
- v. And if you hurt someone there will be other charges to answer and you could go to prison for longer.

c) Role of parents and carers - Parents and carers can really help with knife crime prevention by talking through the issues with their children. Some practical steps on talking on these matters include:

- i. Be open and reassure them
- ii. Your child may be reluctant or scared to talk at first – it's a difficult subject. Reassure them that they can be honest with you and let them know you'll support them without judgement – no matter what.
- iii. Be patient and try not to react straight away to what they tell you. Let them talk as much as they want to first.
- iv. Encourage them to share their fears and worries. Sharing your own fears can help – tell them how much you worry about their safety and their future.
- v. Be positive
- vi. Let them know that they do have a choice in what they do, even though it may seem like they don't.
- vii. Make them aware that the vast majority of young people don't carry a knife.

- viii. Raise the point that walking away from confrontation or a fight is the braver thing to do. If someone pulls a knife on them, the safest, wisest thing to do is to walk away. In ten years time, nobody will remember they walked, but if they 'stand their ground' the consequences could last a lifetime or even end someone's life.
- ix. Think about the impact on others
- d) Find alternatives
 - i. Find out about safe, fun activities for children and young people in your local area.
 - ii. Community centres and summer youth programmes in our local area have many programmes running and are led by responsible youth workers.
 - iii. Make an effort to find out about these initiatives and get to know your child's friends and company.

There are local initiatives in our local area aimed at reducing serious violence on our streets, such as by the local authority [_____] and [_____].

It is our duty to play our part, starting with by being aware of the issues and what is happening in our local area to address it.

We can also learn from examples elsewhere in the country. For example, Green Lane Mosque in Birmingham and Tooting Islamic Centre in London have worked with local partners in their areas to install knife amnesty bins. Since 2019, over 1,500 weapons have been surrendered anonymously.

But it's not just about stopping the knife crime - it's about *starting the belonging*. When our youth feel part of something bigger, when they feel seen and loved, they don't need the streets to give them identity.

And we must look inward. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said

"The best of you are those who are best to their families, and I am the best to my family." (Tirmidhi)

What tone do we set in our homes? What are our children exposed to? Are they growing up with love, or with anger? Are we modelling patience, or harshness? Every angry shout, every ignored cry, every broken home leaves a mark.

Our faith is one of mercy. Of compassion. Of accountability.

In my role here as the Imam at this mosque, I also make a personal commitment to do what I can for this mosque to be a second home for our children. To explore what more we can do with the local authorities to host awareness campaigns. And to deliver khutbahs and reminders regularly – not just when tragedy strikes.

Final Dua:

May Allah (swt) protect the young people in our local area from harm. May He make our mosque a place of hope and safety. May He soften our hearts to one another. May He forgive us for our shortcomings and give us the strength to act. *Ameen*.

Credit for input to Part 2: Luton Muslim Journal (2018) Khutba: Dealing with the rise of knife crime.

[<https://lutonmuslimjournal.com/community/khutba-dealing-with-the-rise-of-knife-crime/>]