

Where Are the Ansar Today?

The Lost Spirit of Hijrah

By AElfwine Mischler

A sister once told me that she and her family made Hijrah (migration) to Egypt but she could not have come without her microwave oven. That struck me as perhaps not being in quite the same spirit as the Muhajirun who emigrated from Makkah to Madinah in 622 CE. But then again, maybe that's just because when I lived in Los Angeles, I was the only person there who did not own a microwave.

The Muhajirun (migrants) left behind not only their property but often their families and all they owned, too. At that time, there were very few households in which everyone was Muslim. Most families were split, with one spouse or one child having become Muslim. Those who emigrated never knew if they would see their family members again. No photographs to remember them by, no weekly telephone calls or e-mails to those left behind. Yet the Muhajirun did not hesitate to make the grand sacrifice.

Today, there are still many who revert to Islam and find themselves cut off by their families. If they are still living at home at the time of their becoming Muslim, they may actually be kicked out. If they are not living at home, their families may just cut their relations with them. There are also families who do not ostracize their Muslim family member, even if they do think he or she has "gone off the deep end." Yet, countless ordinary people continue to become Muslim in the present day. So, though they may not actually move to a new land, they are in some respects like the Muhajirun, that is, in need of help and moral support.

But where are the Ansar today?

We often hear about the great sacrifices that the Muhajirun made leaving their belongings and families behind. They could have never survived in their new home of Madinah without the promise the Ansar made to Prophet Mohammad that they will provide unconditional shelter and protection to all Muslims who migrate to Madinah.

The Ansar did more than open their homes and hearts to help the Muhajirun. They knew full well that by pledging to protect Muhammad and his followers, they were challenging the whole of Arabia. They realized that, because one of them stood up and warned the others just before they made that pledge, one dark night, a year or so prior to the migration.

Are there many of us today who are willing to help our fellow Muslims if there is any sort of risk involved? Do we have shelters for new Muslims (or for those suffering from domestic violence)? Do we have social services for them? Networks to help them find jobs? Or even just services to help them learn their religion? Or what about services for immigrant Muslims who need to settle in a new land, learn a new language?

Another great thing about the Ansar is that before they became Muslim, they were divided into two tribes, Aws and Khazrah. This means that they were frequently at war with each other. When they

accepted Islam, however, they experienced a 360-degree shift in thinking. Under the banner of Islam, they were able to overcome those differences and unite under Muhammad's leadership. These people were very serious in their devotion to Islam and their practice of its teachings.

Where are the Ansar Today?

Well, yes, we should be progressing materially, while not letting that become our be-all end-all. In fact, the Prophet's main concerns in Madinah were not for the economic revival or the pursuit of wealth, but simply that the Muslims be safe and secure—able to walk the streets without being hassled or molested—and free to worship.

As the beginning of another Hijri year arrives, we need to take stock of where we stand as individuals and as an Ummah. We need to thrive to be the today's Ansar of our faith, our fellow Muslims, our fellow human beings, and all of Allah's creation. After all, this is the very purpose for our existence on this Earth.

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