

Muslims' reaction to elections and political campaigns vary significantly. Some participate for personal reasons, others for community considerations, and many others do not participate at all. What is the proper attitude in this respect and what is not? To help Muslims answer this question, the following points are presented for your reflection:

1. Every eligible Muslim must vote in elections, and should consider it as a religious duty because:

1. It is a duty of a Muslim to ensure that they are governed by the best people available;
2. The right to vote is a trust that must be given to whom it belongs;
3. Voting is giving witness and witness must be given justly, not withheld.
4. If it is done with the right intentions and for the right reasons, it will be rewarded as a good deed.

5. Those who do not cast their votes are guilty of committing an act that is displeasing to Allaah SWT because:

1. By not voting, a person shirks his responsibility of ensuring the best available people govern our country.
2. Not voting is, in fact, voting for the worst candidate. When the best candidate is not supported by your vote, the worst candidate's chances to win increase. In that way, "not voting" effectively becomes: judging people wrongly, giving trust to the undeserving; and giving false witness; which are all sins and thus strongly prohibited.
3. In addition, not voting is concealing one's witness, which is a grave sin in Islam.

4. Muslims must vote on the basis of each candidate's personal excellence as a human being, his/her ethics and integrity, concern for justice, contribution to community and track record of service to humanity. Selecting candidates on the basis of personal merits – and disregarding any other considerations such as party affiliation, ethnic considerations, friendships, personal agendas, etc.— will ensure that only the most excellent of the available candidates on a riding-by-riding basis make-up the elected parliament. This is the only way of ensuring that we do justice to our responsibility to give witness and to minimize the chance that an inappropriate person gets our vote. Voting by party, we end up voting even for the evil ones of our favoured party.

5. The people who vote on party or any other basis, instead of voting for the best candidate in their own riding, violate Islamic teachings because:

1. They are not ensuring that their representative is the best person available;
2. They are giving the trust to whom it does not belong because vote should belong to the best candidate;
3. They are judging among the candidates unfairly;
4. The vote is supposed to be a witness in favour of the best, and by voting for anyone else than the best, they are giving false witness.

5. The party or party leader should be relevant only in a case where two candidates are equally good. In that case, the better party's candidate should be picked.

6. If we take this approach, the overall quality of parliament will automatically improve and the country will be automatically governed by the best party with the most number of best candidates. It will not happen in one day, but that is the only way improvement will happen.

7. Thus, to determine the best candidate to support, we should evaluate all candidates in a riding in a systematic manner, using the following criteria:

1. Personal credibility, ethics and integrity
2. Stance on pertinent issues and priorities
3. Qualifications (including education, knowledge of the political system, experience in parliamentary procedures) and skills (including communication skills in official Canadian languages)
4. Attitude towards the Muslim community and awareness of its needs
5. Past record of community involvement, volunteerism and activism
6. If two candidates are equal or very close to each other in the above five points, then the alignment of party policies to our issues and the attitude of the leader of the party towards the Muslim community should be taken into account.