

KUWAITING FOR LOVE



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We showed the world and ourselves, more importantly, that inclusiveness is more than just a pipe dream.

On June 26, 2015, IS attacked the Imam Sadiq Mosque in Kuwait during Friday prayers and in the holy month of Ramadan, killing 27 Shiite worshippers and injuring more than 200. Within half an hour, our Amir, HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, arrived at the scene of the attack. When the guards present at the site saw him, they asked him to leave the area, which was not secured yet, but with tears in his eyes, he responded: "These are not my people; these are my children."

Never before had a ruler of a country come to the scene of a terrorist attack so swiftly, but this is indicative of the potential for unity in Kuwait. Although there are separate mosques for Sunnis and Shiites, on the day of the attack, they prayed side by side in mosques around Kuwait, a country in which Shiites are a minority, comprising around 30 percent of the population and a little over 36 percent of the Kuwaiti citizen population. The funeral for the 27 martyrs who died was attended by 200,000 citizens. In a country that houses around 3,370,000 residents, the turnout was astronomical!

The outpouring of love in our community in the aftermath was even praised by neighboring countries. As a nation mourned, there were, thankfully, no vigilantes who took the law into their hands. Instead, the ammunition used in retaliation was love. People took to social media to send

messages of love in honor of those who either lost their lives or were injured. And both locals and expats rushed to blood banks to donate blood for those in need. Additionally, doctors, nurses and medical staff - who were not even on duty - tended to the injured. Posters around Kuwait displayed the loving words of our ruler: "These are my children."

Kuwait sent a message, loud and clear, that tragedy is an opportunity to bring the unity back in a community; a community that is, unfortunately, dictated by social and financial status, tribes, race, nationality and religion. Still, in the aftermath of the attack, all the people living in Kuwait came together, regardless of our backgrounds. We showed the world and ourselves, more importantly, that inclusiveness is more than just a pipe dream.

All across town, citizens and expats participated in efforts to alleviate the shock and pain of the attack. Runq8 - a charity race in Kuwait organized by the Fawzia Sultan Rehabilitation Center - held solidarity walks from Sunday, June 27 until Thursday, July 1 at Hamra Tower. And a local bank ran an ad in which a young boy asked his father whether he was Sunni or Shiite, to which his father responded: "You are Kuwaiti." Though the ad did not mention the foreigners living in Kuwait, it was still a message of solidarity, albeit an exclusive one. These were our acts of defiance. We let anger and grief manifest into

acts and messages of goodwill.

Sadly, though, mere months later, we resumed our old ways, which is often the case for human beings. In fact, my father constantly reminded us that the word for human being in Arabic - insan - is etymologically derived from nisyān, which means forgetfulness. And, now, almost two years since the attack, we seem to be taunting expats even more than ever before.

There are proposals to put in place stringent laws that will affect only foreigners. It is as though we are channeling all our fears of a possible economic recession or terrorist attack on our guests, who come here for a better life, only to experience dismay at our intolerance against those who are not from here.

But, love is the frequency that will help us ascend. It is stronger than conditioning, racism, intolerance, hate, fear, exclusivity. So much stronger. And perhaps during the national celebrations, we can remember that it does not take an invasion or a terrorist attack to embrace everyone.

And perhaps we can also remember that National Day is not about basking in patriotism, but a day that includes everyone living in this nation, Kuwaiti or not. Essentially, our collective nation is Earth, which is way beyond borders and includes all sentient beings.

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