

**RESPECT THE NATIONAL CHIEF IMAM'S OFFICE: A DOUBLE EDGE OPINION**  
**(By: I. M. Idriss)**

I am more than saddened after seeing a flyer containing the image of the national chief Imam, His Eminence, Sheikh Dr. Osman Nuhu Sharubutu, with a slanderous caption: “THE FREE CARS I GET FROM BAWUMIA DEPEND ON YOUR VOTE. REMEMBER ME”, making rounds on the social media.

First of all, I pray that Allah grants the Chief Imam long life and good health, and also flank him with honest, smart, knowledgeable and visionary companions and advisors. May Allah also protect the vice president and reward him for his strives to shoulder his duties to the nation. And to the rest of Ghanaians, may Allah guide us through this elections successfully in peace and harmony.

Before lifting my pen and opening the page to write, I wondered: Who put this flyer out there? Who designed it? Who benefits from it? And who is hurt with it? And finally, who is to be blamed for it?

Over the years, I remember writing about specifically the national chief Imam and his handlers as well as political party fanatics who would do anything possible to align the house of the Sheikh with their political agenda. Not only them, I also remember touching on how politicians will visit his house with boxes of sugar and journalists to make mockery of him and Muslims as a whole. Beyond the politics, I equally remember raising a concern about some misguided Muslim ladies capitalizing on his old age and soft demeanor, daring to shake hands with him, taking pictures of that, and posting it on social media. My most recent write up on him was the one involving Mr. Irbard Ibrahim taking a picture that captures the Imam's bed (suggesting that it probably was his bedroom or his private rest area). I guess we are not going to get over these issues anytime soon unless a firm measure is not taken to help people appreciate what the Chief Imam and his office really mean to us, Muslims in Ghana particularly, and to the entire Ghanaians as a whole.

I write this piece as a Ghanaian Muslim and not a Politician-Muslim, however, any reader has the liberty to read it with the tone of his choice, see it with the lens of his choice, and even classify it opinionatedly based on his emotions and discretion. Every writer's pen is triggered by one thing or the other, but the actual words he puts on the paper sheet may not be completely free from feelings. Under no circumstance should this be taken personal or an attack on any person's personality, because that is not my motive. Let us all take it as a double edge knife which can cut from any direction, and such are true talks, once you drop it in a gathering, no one would laugh to his feel without tearing, and vice-versa.

First of all, who is the National Chief Imam? And what does his office stand for?

The National Chief Imam in simple terms is the exemplum of Islam in Ghana regardless whether or not Muslims in this country unanimously accept it or not. And let me be quick to add this before your curiosity takes your mind away from the topic. I said he is the exemplum of Islam in Ghana regardless our diverging or converging views on him. The truth is that, our positions and views do not undo his appointment, just like opposing the sitting president doesn't stop him from being the president of this country. No matter how much you hate his presidency, he is the president and no matter how many faults you find in the Chief Imam, he is the Chief Imam. I said this on purpose so that the handlers of the national chief Imam will learn to appreciate the task imposed on them and look beyond sectarian rivalry in advising the chief Imam. When you advise him, use the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet and shun any other opinion or personal feelings, because he represents Islam and not a sect or individual feelings. To the other sects too, your responsibility is not to protect your sectorial views, your primary responsibility is to uphold and protect the true values of Islam, for without Islam, you do not have a sect.

This aside, let me look at the substantial concern now. The substantial matter hovers around the questions posted above and hence I will just drive the discussion through the banks of those questions. But let me caution again that as a Muslim reader of this piece, it should not matter whether you get hurt or hailed, what should matter to you is the verity of the

issues being tabled. As for non-Muslim politicians, what I expect from them is to from now on learn to think twice whenever their egos and desperations thrust them to smuggle out the image of Islam and the chief Imam into their comics for political scores. Even as we embrace politics, we stand by our Islamic values first.

Regarding the question “who put this flyer out there”, you do not expect me to magically or digitally show you a picture or mention a name for you. Because I myself have no knowledge of his identity, but I surely know who is behind it. He is none other than a STUNCH ENEMY OF ISLAM, A TRADUCER OF MUSLIMS IN THIS COUNTRY AND MORE LIKELY A NON-MUSLIM OR AN IGNORANT MUSLIM. In my judgement, only a person fit in these will dare put up such a poster in the name of politics. Don’t compare the Chief Imam to any Muslim or a traditional chief in this country.

Regarding “who designed it”, I can only say that the designer has much narrow brain as well and we won’t waste time on him. As for the beneficiaries of the poster, I elect to say what a rational person would say and not what a Muslim or ordinary politician will say. If one is not careful, the designer of the poster will deceive you into being a robotic object so that you only think as he remotes you to think. At the first instance, you would be tempted to say it is the opposition parties who benefit from this, so they are surely behind it. If this guess is right, then bravo to them, they have killed their last commando even before the battle begin.

However, a smart brain will argue that, unless the opposition parties are so foolish, they would not do this if they see what I am seeing. Even if it is seen on their party supporters and communicators’ timelines and statuses, then you can confidently call them enemies of their own progress. You can as well call them victims of their opponents’ aces. Any serious politician knows very well that the chief Imam alone holds over 30% of total votes in his hand due to the number of Muslims who vote in this country. So shaming him or tarnishing his name alone has the potential of depriving his irritator of a Pennsylvanian amount of the

total ballots on December 7. If you are reading this piece, that alone tells you the intensity of this mistake.

I don't practice my Islam based on the sect of the national chief Imam, but probably I would be one of the first few people to retaliate when he is Insulted, because I am a Muslim Ghanaian, and he is the head of Islam in Ghana, regardless. In short, it is the ruling party that benefits more from this slander, and considering prevailing sophisticated tools of campaign smartness and unpredictable political strategies being adopted here and there in the round up to this year's elections, it should be a bit harder for the ruling party to wash off their hands this adhesive-like propaganda. I am not judging anyone, but you too should use your mind. Those who watch "24 Hours" will appreciate terrorism better and I expect them to see through the same lenses on this subject. It is also possible to be the handiwork of the opposition, but to what benefit will it earn them, 12 days to elections, considering their smartness. (Don't forget that the opposition NDC won more elections than any other party, so they cannot be shallow minded enough not to realize the electoral damage this can cause to them). Let me add that, if indeed, it is the opposition parties who put this out there, then they should consider it an own goal scored on the 90<sup>th</sup> minute; its damage is highly irreparable.

Based on the explanation on the point above, the major beneficiary is nonetheless the ruling party. Thus, "who is hurt with it" politically would certainly be the opposition party, but those who are hurt the most are the Muslims in general, for our rooftop is found leaking due to our spiritual dishevelment and sloppiness as Muslims.

We can now ask: "Then, who is to be blamed for it? Primarily, the blame falls (mildly) on the Chief Imam himself and (greatly) on the closers people to him, then the scholars, then the entire Muslim Ummah in Ghana, before the Politicians. Pay a very close attention my listing: I put the Chief Imam first not by way of disrespect, this whole piece is written due to my respect and high expectations of his office, but he is first because that is the general

rule in Islam. Umar, the commander of believers, the exemplum of Rasool pbuh, used to blame himself first for slips in his leadership so that his conscience will become proactive to future hitches. Such is our expectation in our Chief Imam, despite knowing that no man is infallible. May Allah lead him to lead us well.

If you read my recent article entitled: “SHOULD IMAMS TAKEOVER POLITICS?” I did mention in it that if Imams think they shall not be asked on the Judgement Day about the wrongs being done in political environment, then doom for them. The office of the national Chief Imam primarily ought to have demonstrated high level of adeptness in Islamic sciences, its civilization and its history in their dealings with the people and the politicians. Under no circumstance should anyone cow the office into submission, instead, the office should have been source of light and guidance for politicians in whatever they do. The office, if only it realizes its power, could sit and invite presidents to counsel them on anomalies in their leadership that hurts the people. Only the successors of Prophet Muhammad can give such admonishments without fear or favor. Listen to what Allah told the Prophet ﷺ in Qur'an 7:2:

كِتَابٌ أُنزَلْ إِلَيْكَ فَلَا يَكُنْ فِي صَدْرِكَ حَرَجٌ مِّنْهُ لِتُنذِرَ بِهِ وَذِكْرًا لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“(This is the) Book (the Qur'ân) sent down unto you (O Muhammad ﷺ), so let not your breast be narrow therefrom, that you warn thereby, and a reminder unto the believers”.  
[Qur'an 7:2].

Should we be doubtful of the competence of custodians of our honor? Are we to suppose that not even a single one of the handlers of our Imam knows about Umar's type of leadership and the crystal incorruptible parables he left behind as one of the wearers of the Prophet's duty shoes? Where are they with the accounts on how Umar and the Khulafa' handled the issue of gifts during their reigns? If nothing at all, have we all forgotten the

wisdom behind the Prophet's unexampled principle of not accepting alms (Sadaqah) but gifts? There is so much wisdom in the life of our Prophet such that no one has an excuse to deny it! So the fallouts, or perhaps our 'refusal' (if not negligence) to maintain the core values of Islam and the Prophetic principles of leadership around the chief Imam is the sofa bed for all these nonsensical politicization of the highest office of Islam in Ghana.

Let me leave the office of the Chief Imam and his handlers with the following suggestions (if they care to pick it):

1. It is absolutely wrong to allow every Tom Dick and Harry access to the Chief Imam with mobile phones and camera or recording devices. Whoever meets the Chief Imam should be schooled on the security protocols (not necessarily for threats on his life, for we know he has nothing to fear after Allah, just like Ameerul Mu'mineen, Umar was freely sleeping outside with no guards. But his dignity the cameras are stealing away is equally as precious as his life to us, for which we have every right to refuse Phones and cameras into his office or his mosque). If anyone needs to take pictures with him, IT MUST BE TAKEN BY THE SPECIALIZED CAMERA CREW OF THE IMAM'S OFFICE, NOT JUST HIS AIDS. I repeat, a specialized camera crew. This is very important even if we have to permanently employ them solely for it at his office.
2. NO GIFT of any kind should from now on be presented to the national Chief Imam himself at any gathering, or inside his mosque, or at his home directly by ANYONE. Even if the person is the President of United Nations. There should be a specially designated area for such gifts such that no one bearing ill motive will get a chance to film, record or photograph him with the gift. If he must be present at the scene of delivery, then no camera must be allowed there. I do not think my Imam survives on gifts: He is not a beggar and so under no circumstance should he merge his palms and receive any gift from anyone including politicians. For Allah's sake, he is the CHIEF IMAM and not just any mere beggar. Whoever can't gift him

devoid of propaganda should go away with his gift, and leave us with our Imam and dignity.

3. Any personal gift (i.e. house, car, clothes, etc.) to the Chief Imam MUST ONLY be accepted on condition that it will not feature in any news outlet. For there is no one anywhere in his right sense who will buy something for his own father and invite the media to put it on news. It doesn't happen anywhere, so why do we allow that around the chief Imam?
4. There is nothing wrong with supports, e.g. any form of support for his SONSET Scholarship fund being featured in the news. This one is normal and it is not for his personal benefits. It only serves as motivation. However, the office of the chief Imam must scrutinize it well before it is considered. They must also have access to the raw works of the media before publication if it is necessary, to avoid misleading publications. I trust the aids are best at that.
5. Let us all investigate this: "Has there been a single instance where any Pastor or Reverend or Bishop of this country is gifted anything and it features in the news like our Chief Imam? Could it be that they are not receiving gifts? I can vouch that they receive bigger and bigger than our Imams receive. Possibly, before the Chief Imam receives a motor bike, the Reverends had already grabbed their V8s and no one will hear that, and no media house will capture that". This is not an act of ungratefulness on the part of the Church leaders, it is all in their quest to uphold the values of the church ambo. What are we thinking, O Muslims?
6. And let me lament here: I do not expect H. E. Alhaji Mahamudu Bawumia to deliberately donate a car to the national Chief Imam and make it public for it to end up on the social media, considering who he is. Fortunately, I have never spotted anything of that, and hence, I wish to loud him and his aids for such professionalism

- if I am correct. If however he has done it before, someone might try to justify by citing other politicians doing same and making it news. I wish to point out that there is no comparison between Alhaji Bawumia and the rest of non-Muslim politician who do it. Alhaji is a practicing Muslim and we expect him to know the Islamic monish on that. (See Qur'an 76:9).
7. You are all challenge to investigate and confirm this: What I was told is that, each single Imam of the two Holy Mosques of Saudi Arabia receives a brand new car during Eid al Adha from Saudi government. And the car must always be a future released car. Future released car means, if Eid al Adha is celebrated in 2020, the car will be a 2021 model, so they always drive cars into their birth year. Have you ever seen it on social media let alone on national news? The reason is simple, they value the Imams and they know it is insulting to do propaganda with what is gifted them. We expected same from our Muslim politicians at least.
  8. Still in the Imam's office, no strange woman (i.e. not the Imam's relative) must be allowed access to sit next to the Imam on the same seat or even touch him, let alone shaking hands with him. He is the representative of Islam and the Prophet of Islam clearly stated in his traditions: "**I DO NOT SHAKE HANDS WITH WOMEN**". [Annasai'y #4181]. I know his Eminence is a grandfather and humble father, but he is also under the grips of old age, so his aids around him are there to aid him shine not to add him shame, so please aid him to practice Islam properly. All of us – the Muslim community in Ghana relied on you to do the right thing, so do not let us down in the name of considerations. Until the Hadith is valid, there must never be a room for compromise.

Still I ask: who gets hurt with this madness? It is we the young Muslims who feel the pain of any prick on the foot of our religion in this country. Our reactions may appear unprofessional sometimes, but you should also try for once to wear our shoes one day

and see what we go through. I cry for the Sunni Muslim who will smile at this very insult on the Chief Imam. I equally wail for the Shias who might either smile or sit unconcerned on this insult. Yet still, I am horrified at any Muslim politician or non-Muslim politician who will gleefully circulate this embarrassment of a flyer to score political points whiles overlooking the damage, the pain, and the scar it will leave on our morality in this country in future. What goes around, comes around.

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