

Date:

Dear Head Teacher,

Re: Request for a day off to commemorate Ashura on 12th October 2016

I am writing to request for a day's special leave for my child on 12th October 2016 to commemorate the Day of Ashura (10th of Muharram 1438 AH) - a religious event in the Islamic calendar for Shi'a Muslims.

You may already be aware that for Shi'a Muslims the month of Muharram (first month of the Islamic year) brings with it the commemoration and mourning of the martyrdom of Hussain, the grandson of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings on him and his holy progeny). I would like to take this opportunity to inform you about the importance of this event with a humble request to share this during a school assembly to support inclusion for Shi'a Muslim children who are ignored as a minority community living within the Muslim population.

Who is Hussain?

Hussain was the grandson of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and the son of Ali (the first Shi'a Imam and the fourth ruler (Caliph) of the Muslims).

Hussain was revered as a knowledgeable, pious and generous man, who took seriously his responsibility in looking after the poor and needy people in his town. Because of his stature and lineage, he was, and still is regarded as a beacon of guidance and the perfect role model for all those who wish to walk the path of righteousness.

What happened on Ashura?

The 10th day of Muharram is called Ashura to commemorate the event that took place in the year 61 AH (After Hijra), (approx. 20th October 680 AD). On the Day of Ashura, a conflict took place in Iraq at a place called Kerbala, south of Baghdad. A large army (in its tens of thousands) had been mobilised by Yazid, the Caliph of the Umayyad regime, to besiege a small group of around one hundred people, led by Hussain. The group also included women and children. The aim of the ruler was to pressure Hussain into paying allegiance to him.

Hussain refused to submit to the authority of Yazid who was unjust, oppressive and openly defiant of all the Islamic values and norms which he was expected to uphold as the Caliph. Failing negotiations, a battle subsequently took place in which Hussain and all his loyal companions including his family members were martyred. Subsequently, the women and children of the friends and family of Hussain were taken captive to endure a long and arduous journey from Kerbala, Iraq to Damascus in Syria where they were imprisoned.

Why do we still remember the Day of Ashura?

The actions of Hussain represented a conscious choice to courageously resist tyranny and sacrifice his life for a higher cause. At the time, almost the entire Muslim nation had failed to address the malpractice of Yazid, the then Caliph. Instead they had acquiesced to his authority and given their obedience even though he was an oppressive tyrant.

In such circumstances, passiveness by Hussain would have signalled the end of the religion of Islam only some 75 years since its inception. Thus Hussain took the heavy responsibility of restoring the Islamic faith upon himself that is evident in his famous quote:

"I have not risen to spread evil or to show off, nor to spread immorality or oppression. But I have done so for the betterment of the Islamic nation and to propagate goodness and forbid evil"

Muslim communities around the world congregate in their respective centres each night throughout the month of Muharram, in particular during the first ten nights where these events are narrated and their moral lessons are discussed. The

commemoration culminates on the 10th of the month, the Day of Ashura, when the actual martyrdom took place. This day is spent in prayers and in eulogising the tragedy that befell Hussain. His gallant sacrifice is acknowledged by famous personalities from across the world. Here are a couple of examples:

“I learned from Hussein how to achieve victory while being oppressed.” Mahatma Gandhi

“If Husain had fought to quench his worldly desires...then I do not understand why his sister, wife, and children accompanied him. It stands to reason therefore, that he sacrificed purely for

Islam.” Charles Dickens

For further information, please visit

<http://www.whoishussain.org/who-is-hussain/>

This year the Day of Ashura will be on 12th October 2016. I would like to request the school to allow my child to take the day off. As a parent I also wish to extend my appreciation in advance of your cooperation and understanding in this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

Parent/Guardian