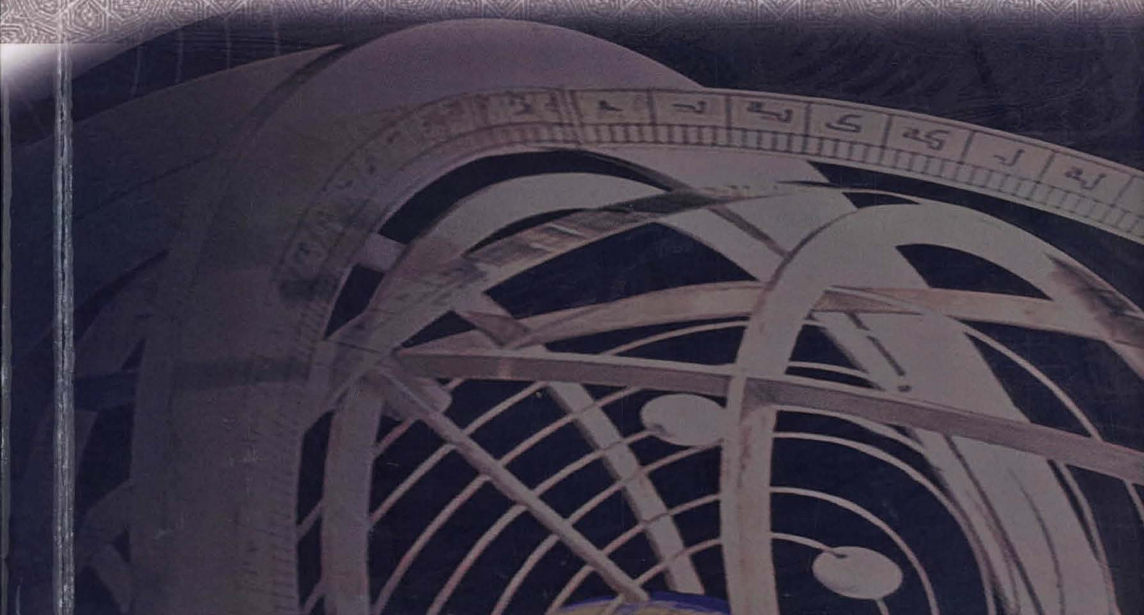


THE ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW, ETHICS AND CIVILIZATION

Issues in Contemporary Interdisciplinary Discourse



ABDUL KABIR HUSSAIN SOLIHU

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Chapter 8

Volunteerism: An Islamic Perspective*

Kabuye Uthman Sulaiman

Introduction

Volunteerism is a great virtue that is grounded in the teachings of both revealed and non-revealed religions and in all cultures. Since time immemorial, people have been spending time and money to help others without any expectation of compensation. All Prophets were volunteers and they emphatically stressed the need for volunteerism (Qur'ān, 21:72-73). Billions of hours are devoted to volunteer activities and some world leaders have also called upon their subjects to volunteer their time and money to help others. For example, President John F. Kennedy is quoted to have said to the American people: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."¹ This chapter elucidates from the Islamic point of view, the meaning of volunteerism, the forms of volunteerism, the ethics of volunteerism and the importance of volunteerism. It also explores the volunteer activities among the IIUM community, i.e. students and staff.

The Concept of Volunteerism

In Islam, volunteerism is a very broad concept that encompasses whatever one does for the benefit of others for the sake of Allāh. Within the Islamic context, the term most used for volunteerism is *taṭawwu'*, which is etymologically derived from *ṭawa'a*, an Arabic verb that conveys the meaning of performing an action willingly.² The volunteers are called *muṭawwi'ah*, meaning those who fight in the *jihād*³ or *muṭawwi'ūn* (Qur'ān, 9:79). According to Lāfī, a close look at the Arabic Lexicons reveals that the literal meanings for *taṭawwu'* are centred around: *tabarru'* (contribution or giving