

# BUILDING PEACEFUL COMMUNITIES THROUGH GOOD NEIGHBOUR RELATIONS



## INTRODUCTION

Good neighbourly relations form a fundamental foundation in nurturing peaceful, stable, cohesive communities. In Islam, neighbours are not merely individuals who live in proximity, but social partners who share responsibility in creating an environment that is safe, harmonious, and emotionally secure. However, in the context of modern Malaysian society, rapid urbanisation, rising individualism, limited face-to-face interaction, and increasing societal pressures have gradually weakened neighbourly bonds, resulting in misunderstandings and disputes that threaten both emotional well-being and social solidarity. Islam, through the guidance of the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, and Islamic legal principles (*Maqasid Shariah*), places neighbourliness as a core social obligation closely connected to faith and the higher objectives of Shariah (*Maqasid Shariah*). Addressing contemporary challenges such as multicultural dynamics, the influence of digital media, and urban residential issues, this article highlights the importance of reviving Islamic values of *adab berjiran* through moral education, collective community involvement, and non-violent conflict management. Ultimately, it argues that fostering constructive and compassionate neighborly relations is a shared responsibility and a vital pillar in building peaceful, resilient, and socially integrated societies.

## NEIGHBOURLINESS AS A REFLECTION OF IMAN

Good relations with neighbours are a fundamental pillar in building a cohesive and peaceful Islamic society. Islam places strong emphasis on good neighbourly conduct as taught in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad, highlighting moral values such as kindness, respect, and cooperation as essential to social harmony. Good treatment of neighbours is not limited to acts of worship but extends to daily social interactions, reflecting a moral and social responsibility that contributes to overall community stability.

The Qur'an emphasizes this principle in Surah An-Nisa' (4:36), which commands kindness to both near and distant neighbours, showing that all neighbours possess clear social rights in Islam. Similarly, the Sunnah strongly links faith with good neighbourly behaviour, warning against harming one's neighbour and encouraging care and generosity. The Prophet even indicated the importance of neighbours by suggesting their near entitlement to inheritance rights. These teachings affirm that respect, avoidance of harm, mutual assistance, and peaceful conflict resolution are central principles of Islamic neighbourliness. By practicing these values through communication, cooperation, and mutual care, Muslims can foster safe, harmonious, and peaceful communities that reflect the true spirit of Islamic teachings.

## MODERN BARRIERS TO NEIGHBOURLY HARMONY

Relations among neighbours in Malaysian society indicate a noticeable change in line with the increasing busyness of daily life and transformations in modern lifestyle. According to data from the Department of Statistics Malaysia, nearly one million Malaysians reported having no direct interaction with their neighbours, including not exchanging greetings or communicating with them, over the course of one month. This data suggests that although some level of social interaction continues within society, a segment of individuals has become less engaged in a fundamental aspect of neighbourhood relations. This situation may negatively affect social harmony and the spirit of community among neighbours, particularly in the context of the growing trend of individualism in contemporary life.

One of the most significant challenges facing neighbourhood relations in modern society is the rise of individualistic tendencies. The widespread use of technology and social media has further reduced face-to-face interactions among neighbours, sometimes causing minor disagreements to escalate into more widespread conflicts. Cultural and religious diversity may also contribute to misunderstandings about certain customs and sensitivities when awareness and mutual respect are lacking.

Additionally, urban residential issues such as noise, waste management, and parking problems often create tension among neighbours. These challenges are further compounded by the pressures of modern life, which can lead to stress and irritability, ultimately resulting in disputes between neighbours.

From an Islamic perspective, neighbourly relations are a fundamental element in building a cohesive and balanced society. Islam strongly emphasizes kindness and good treatment towards neighbours regardless of their background, as these reflect noble character and the perfection of faith. Positive neighbourhood relationships also play a crucial role in strengthening brotherhood, fostering mutual respect, and reinforcing the values of social responsibility. Therefore, the decline in neighbourly interaction in contemporary society requires serious attention. It is essential to revive Islamic values that encourage communication and care for neighbours to preserve social cohesion, thereby achieving a balance between the demands of modern life and the teachings of Islam.

### MAQASID SHARIAH IN STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY BONDS

In addressing contemporary challenges in neighbourly relations and community harmony, Islam offers a comprehensive framework through the concept of Maqasid Shariah. These objectives aim to preserve essential human interests, namely religion, life, intellect, property, and lineage.

By aligning solutions and recommendations with these principles, Muslim communities can foster peaceful, supportive, and socially cohesive environments. This approach emphasizes not only legal compliance but also ethical responsibility and collective well-being.

Firstly, from the perspective of preserving religion (*hifz al-din*), promoting awareness of neighbourly rights is a crucial step. Families, mosques, and educational institutions should actively educate individuals about the moral and religious significance of good neighbourly conduct. Islamic teachings emphasize that respecting and caring for one's neighbours is a fundamental aspect of faith, not merely a social courtesy. Programs such as mosque sermons or religious talks, community classes, and school-based moral education can reinforce values like greeting others, avoiding harm, and showing kindness. When individuals understand that maintaining good relations with neighbours is an act of worship, they are more likely to practice these values consistently in daily life.

Secondly, in fulfilling the objective of preserving life (*hifz al-nafs*), strong neighbourly relationships contribute significantly to creating safe and secure communities. Positive interaction among neighbours helps reduce fear, isolation, and insecurity, especially in urban environments where people often live side by side but remain socially disconnected. Communities should encourage mutual care through neighbourhood support systems, such as checking on elderly residents, assisting families in distress, and providing emergency help when needed.

Additionally, organizing community safety initiatives and voluntary neighbourhood watch programs can enhance collective security. A sense of belonging and mutual concern not only protects physical safety but also promotes emotional well-being and peace of mind.

Thirdly, preserving intellect (*hifz al-'aql*) requires raising awareness and understanding among community members, particularly in managing differences and conflicts wisely. In diverse societies, misunderstandings may arise due to cultural, social, or personal differences. Therefore, organizing community dialogues, shared activities, and awareness campaigns can help promote respect, tolerance, and open-mindedness. Moreover, in the age of social media, individuals must be guided to communicate responsibly and ethically, avoiding the spread of rumours, hostility, or false information that could damage neighbourly trust. Encouraging emotional intelligence, patience, and constructive communication helps prevent conflicts and supports a mentally healthy community.

Furthermore, from the standpoint of preserving property (*hifz al-mal*), cooperation among neighbours plays an important role in protecting both private and public assets. Respecting others' property, maintaining cleanliness in shared spaces, and addressing issues such as noise disturbances or parking conflicts through dialogue are essential practices. Community management bodies or residents' associations should act as fair mediators when disputes arise, ensuring that conflicts are resolved justly and peacefully.

This reflects the Islamic principle of justice ('*adl*), which is central to maintaining social balance and preventing harm.

Finally, preserving lineage (*hifz al-nasl*) highlights the importance of a healthy social environment for the upbringing of children. Children are deeply influenced by their surroundings, including the behaviour and values demonstrated by neighbours. Harmonious neighbourly relations create a supportive environment that nurtures moral development, emotional stability, and positive social behaviour. Cooperation between families, such as organizing community activities and offering mutual advice, helps protect children from negative influences and strengthens family stability. A peaceful neighbourhood becomes a foundation for raising a morally grounded and socially responsible generation.

## CONCLUSION

Fostering good neighbourly relations is a vital component in building peaceful, cohesive, and resilient communities. Islam emphasizes that kindness, respect, and cooperation with neighbours are not merely social obligations but acts of faith that reflect the moral and spiritual integrity of individuals. In contemporary society, where urbanisation, individualism, and cultural diversity pose challenges to social cohesion, reviving Islamic values of *adab berjiran* through education, dialogue, and community engagement becomes essential. By aligning these practices with the objectives of Shariah: protecting faith, life, intellect, property, and lineage, Muslims can cultivate safe, supportive, and morally grounded neighbourhoods. Such environments nurture positive social behaviour, strengthen family and community bonds, and contribute to the development of harmonious societies under the guidance and blessings of Allah SWT.

## REFERENCES

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