Dear brothers and sisters: Children are the fruits of the marital relationship and a pleasure in this life. Among the main purposes of marriage in Islam is to have children and maintain the human race. Therefore Allah has given children rights over their parents, just as parents have rights over their children. Parents should fulfil their duties in order to get their rights. It is a form of mutual treatment. Last Friday, I talked about the rights of parents over their children and today I will deal with the rights of children over their parents.

Children, in accordance with Islam are entitled to various rights. Some of these rights are due even before birth. The first right of the child over the father is to choose a righteous wife in order to be a righteous mother.

The Prophet [pbuh] said: “A woman may be married for four reasons: her wealth, her lineage, her beauty and her moral. Marry the one who has morals [is religiously committed]…” [al-Bukhari] He also said, ‘Choose the right place for your nutfa [sperm] and get married to an equivalent partner.’ [Ibn Majah].

Dear brothers and sisters: The second right after birth is to be given a good name, such as a name of a prophet, or names such as ‘Abdullah or ‘Abdur-Rahman. The Messenger of Allah [pbuh] said: “Give your newborn the name of a prophet; and the most beloved of your names to Allah are ‘Abdullah and ‘Abdur-Rahmaan.” [Muslim] The Messenger of Allah [pbuh] said: “A child was born to me last night and I called him by the name of my father Ibrahim.” [Muslim]

It is recommended to make the Adhan in the baby’s ear, and to make Aqiqah [sacrifice], to take some of the baby hair, and to circumcise him. The Messenger of Allah [pbuh] said: “Every child is in pledge for his ‘aqiqah which should be slaughtered for him on the seventh day, the child’s head should be shaved and he should be given a name. [Abu Dawud]

‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab stressed some of these rights as well, when a man once came to him complaining of his son’s disobedience. ‘Umar called for the boy and asked him about his father’s complaint, and his neglect of his duties towards his father. The boy replied, ‘Does the child not have rights over his father? ‘Certainly’ ‘Umar replied. ‘What are they then? the boy asked. He should choose a mother with care, preferring the righteous woman. He should give his child a good name and teach him the Qur’an. ‘O caliph! My father did none of these. ‘Umar turned to the father and said, ‘You have come to complain about the disobedience of your son. You have failed in your duty to him before he failed in his duty to you. You wronged him before he wronged you.’

Dear brothers and sisters: The third right is to be suckled naturally by the mother who should take care of the baby personally; not a servant or baby-sitter if there is no necessity. The Qur’an says, ‘Mothers shall suckle their children for two whole years; (that is) for those who wish to complete the suckling.’ [2:233]

The fourth right is to be brought up properly, raised and educated. This means that children should be given suitable, sufficient, sound and adequate religious, ethical and moral guidance to last them for their entire life. They should be engraved with true values, the meaning of right and wrong, true and false, correct and incorrect, appropriate and inappropriate and so forth and so on.

Allah says: “O ye who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire.” [66:6] The messenger of Allah also said: “Everyone of your [people] is a guardian. And every one is responsible
for whatever falls under his responsibility. A man is a guardian for his own family, and he is responsible for them; and the wife is a guardian in her marital house and will be responsible for this responsibility…” [al-Bukhari]

Children are therefore given in trust to their parents. Parents will be responsible for this trust on the Day of Judgement. Parents are essentially responsible for the moral, ethical and the basic and essential religious teachings of their children. If parents fulfil this responsibility, they will be free of the consequences on the Day of Judgement. The children will become better citizens and a pleasure to the eyes of their parents, first in this life, and in the hereafter.

So parents must take care of teaching their children the duties of Islam and other virtues that are recommended in the Shari’ah, and worldly matters that they need in order to live a decent life in this world. Then they teach them and train them in good manners and characteristics, and everything that is good. The Messenger of Allah [pbuh] said: “Teach the child to pray when he is seven years old, and reprove him severely if he does not pray when he is ten.” [al-Tirmidhi]

Education is very important in Islam. Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim male or female as Prophet Muhammad said. It is the responsibility of parents to look after their children. Negligence of a child’s education is a sin. The Messenger of Allah [pbuh] said: “It is a sufficient sin for a man if he neglects those on whom he is obliged to spend.” [Abu Dawud] He also said, ‘Surely Allah will question everybody whether he fulfilled of neglected his responsibility. He will even question a person about his family.’

Dear brothers and sisters: Children also have the right to be treated equally, justly and fairly. They should be treated fairly in terms financial gifts. None should be preferred over the others. Depriving, or banning the right of inheritance, or other financial gifts during the lifetime of the parents or preference of a parent for one child over the other will be considered in accordance to Islam an act of injustice. Injustice will definitely lead to an atmosphere of hatred, anger and dismay amongst the children in one household. This right was referred to by the Prophet [pbuh], he said, ‘Fear Allah and treat your children fairly.” [al-Bukhaari].

It is not permissible to show preference to males over females, just as it is not permissible to show preference to females over males. The Messenger of Allah [pbuh] encouraged this righteous deed. The Prophet said: “Whoever is in charge of three girls and educates and treats them well, they will be a shield for him against the Fire.” [al-Bukhari]

If the father makes this mistake and shows preference to some of his children over others, and does not treat them fairly, this will lead to many evils. In other words, if you want them all to honour you equally, then be fair to them all male or female. Another evil consequence is the children hate one another, as injustice stokes the flames of hatred and enmity between them.

Among the rights of children is be protected from bad friends and evil companions. Among the rights of children is to be given support and confidence from parents and to be treated gently for this will help children to have strong personality. Parents should form friendships with their children for this will increase trust and affinity.

Finally, the relationship between children and their parents is based on mutual respect, good treatment, and affection.

Dear brothers and sisters: finally we ask Allah to guide us all.