Dear brothers and sisters: Islam gives great emphasis on the rights of neighbours and recommends that a Muslim treats their neighbours kindly. In a Hadith prophet Muhammad said, ‘Jibril always recommended treating neighbours with kindness until I thought he would assign a share of inheritance.’ [Al-Bukhari]

A common proverb says, ‘Look for the good neighbour before buying the house.’ It is commonly known that the neighbour plays a vital role in terms of the value of the house.

Some think that the neighbour is only the one living close to your house; but it includes the neighbour at work, the market and study…etc. The Prophet [pbuh] mentioned in a Hadith three types of neighbours and their rights. If your neighbours are Muslim and relatives, then they have three rights on you: the right of the neighbour, the right of kin, and the right of co-religion. If they are Muslims but not relatives; then they have two rights; that of a neighbour and in religion; if they are non-Muslims; then they have the right of a neighbour only.

The scholars mentioned a fourth kind which is if they are non-Muslim relatives, then two rights are due to them: that of neighbour and kin. The Qur’an declares about kindness to neighbours, ‘Worship Allah and join none with Him [in worship]; and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, the poor, the neighbour who is near of kin, the neighbour who is a stranger, the companion by your side, the wayfarer [you meet], and those [slaves] whom your right hands possess.’ [4:36]

Dear brothers and sisters: ill treatment towards neighbours is the habit of the ignorant that the Prophet was sent to change. When Ja’far Ibn Abi Talib was asked by Negus about the principles of the new religion, he said, ‘We were ignorant people before Islam for we used to worship idols, eat the dead; commit adultery; severe ties with kin; treat neighbours badly and the strong used to oppress the weak.’ [Narrated by Ahmad]

Good treatment towards neighbours is one of the characteristics that make a person among the best. The Prophet said, ‘The best friend in the sight of Allah is the friend who is best to his friends; and the best neighbour is the neighbour who is best to his neighbours.’ [At-Tirmidhi]

Nice treatment towards neighbours leads to the forgiveness of Allah. The Prophet said, ‘Whoever has three witnesses from his neighbours who testify for his goodness on the Day of Judgment, Allah will say, ‘I accept their witness for what they know and I forgive his sins that I know.’[Ahmad]

Good treatment to neighbours is a sign of belief. The Prophet [pbuh] said, ‘By Allah, he is not a believer! By Allah, he is not a believer! By Allah, he is not a believer." It was asked, "Who is that, O Messenger of Allah?" He said, ‘The one whose neighbour does not feel safe from his evil.’ [Al-Bukhari and Muslim] This reveals that hurting or troubling a neighbour is such a serious offence that it causes Allah's Wrath, and thus punishment in Hell. The Messenger of Allah [pbuh] said, ‘He will not enter Jannah whose neighbour is not secure from his wrongful conduct.’ The Messenger of Allah [pbuh] said, "He who believes in Allah and the Last Day let him not harm his neighbour; and he who believes in Allah and the Last Day let him show hospitality to his guest; and he who believes in Allah and the Last Day let him speak good or remain silent.’ [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Dear brothers and sisters: A good neighbour is one of the four things that cause enjoyment and happiness in the worldly life. The Prophet said, ‘There are four things that cause happiness for the human being: A good wife, a good house, a good neighbour and good transport. And four things
that create misery for the human being: A bad woman, a bad house, a bad neighbour, and bad transport cause his misery.’ [Narrated by Ahmad]

Among the good acts towards neighbours is to be generous with them. The Messenger of Allah [pbuh] said, ‘O Abu Dharr! Whenever you prepare a broth, put plenty of water in it, and give some of it to your neighbours.’ [Muslim] This makes it clear that Islam does not like a Muslim to ignore his poor neighbour and eat up everything himself. It stresses that one must take care of his poor neighbours.

Among the good treatment towards neighbours is to give them gifts. The Messenger of Allah [pbuh] said, ‘O Muslim women! No one of you should consider insignificant [a gift] to give to her neighbour even if it is [a gift of] sheep trotters.’ [Al-Bukhari and Muslim] ‘A’ishah narrated I said, "O Messenger of Allah [pbuh], I have two neighbours, to which of them should I send a present?" He [pbuh] replied, "To the one whose door is nearer to you.’ [Al-Bukhari] This means neighbours should present gifts to each other. The rich man and the poor give according to their means. The nearest neighbour should have precedence over all others.''

Dear brothers and sisters: from the above mentioned verses and traditions of the prophet, it becomes clear that there are rights of neighbours in Islam which can be summarised as follows:

1. To feel safe and secure from any harm or injury or ill treatment of conduct such as to envy him; to mock or laugh at him; disclose his news or secrets to people; to lie about him; or to follow his faults and his personal condition;
2. To be kind and noble towards him by exchange gifts which is a token of doing good to one’s neighbour for these small things create amity and are bound to eradicate hatred.
3. Non-Muslims neighbours i.e. Christians, Jews, Sikhs, Hindus and others have rights on you that should be fulfilled. Be respectful, kind and honourable to them as these are their rights in Islam.
4. To love for your neighbour what you love for yourself
5. To keep his secrets and personal affairs; and not to disclose them to others.
6. To respect and honour his family i.e. wife and children
7. To help him financially in times of need.

Dear brothers and sisters: regarding non-Muslim neighbours, there are some tips on how to approach them in a kind way that exemplifies Islamic manners:
1. Being good to your neighbours is not only restricted to those who share the same building with you. Your roommate is your neighbour; the person sitting behind you or next to you on a bus or at a bus stop is your neighbour; the one sharing your office at work is your neighbour.
2. Introduce yourself and your family to your neighbours when you move into a new home or when new neighbours move in. This will also help to relieve any fears or tensions.
3. Care for them continually, especially in times of need and distress
4. In dealing with neighbours, it is safer to deal with those of the same gender as yourself.
5. While socializing with non-Muslims, be cautious of becoming too lenient at the expense of your creed and principles.
6. In addition to sharing ideas, you can share meals with them by inviting them to dinner or accepting their invitation to the same.
7. Conduct mutual visits so that the families can interact in a constructive way.
8. While socializing with neighbours, present your deen [Islam] in the best way.
9. If your neighbours show an interest in Islam, invite them to attend Islamic events, and even to accompany you to the mosque to see what it is like.

Unfortunately, a lot of people, nowadays, have disregarded these rights in constant fear of mischief inflicted on them by the people living next to them. Consequently, continual disputes will ensue with the possible contravention of rights.

Finally we ask Allah to guide us all.