



The start of the road to positive change.

The current situation of our families and fellow Muslims overseas can inspire a lot of powerful emotions. The pain of seeing the people you love go through such difficulty; such pain, loss, and heartache, while there is very little you feel you can realistically do, can be disempowering and deflating.

There are a few things we can do to combat the problems we are seeing. I will be focusing in this article on what I think should be a preliminary step in the journey. This is a very broad topic and so it would help to anchor the discussion on a theme that can then be applied across all identified issues.

The Example

Lebanon is facing a prolonged and worsening crisis. The currency has lost more than 90% of its value in less than 2 years. People are having difficulty accessing their savings from the banks. They are suffering significant fuel and medicine shortages, and their government is in shambles. The country is currently facing one of the deepest economic depressions in recent history.¹

The Theme

Ideas float around attempting to make sense of the deterioration. These include: foreign interference, the deliberate undermining of the economy, allegation of fuel smuggling, the stockpiling and withholding of essential medicines, allegations of siphoning of public funds, and others.

The first thing we can do to help a people in crisis is to make sure we do not perpetuate the problem. Deterioration and corruption are connected in meaning both in English and Arabic. The verb form “to corrupt” in English means to alter for the worse.² Similarly, the Arabic word for corruption is *fasaad*, which, in addition to corruption, also has the meaning of deterioration, spoiling, spreading evil and causing mischief.³ In the Quran corruption is not always mentioned as a function of actions, but rather as an outcome:

((ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ)) – سورة الروم 41

((Corruption has spread on land and sea as a result of what people’s hands have earned, to give them a taste of a little of what they had done, lest they might turn back)) - Al Quran 30:41.

When we look at it in the sense that our actions can contribute to the present deterioration, this

¹ [World Bank Document \(https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/394741622469174252/pdf/Lebanon-Economic-Monitor-Lebanon-Sinking-to-the-Top-3.pdf\)](https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/394741622469174252/pdf/Lebanon-Economic-Monitor-Lebanon-Sinking-to-the-Top-3.pdf)

² [Corrupt Definition & Meaning | Dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com/browse/corrupt)

³ *Mu’jam Lughat Al Fuqahaa*, in Arabic, by Professor Ahmed Rawwas Qal’ahji pg. 314. Published by Dar An-Nafaes, Beirut, Lebanon. 3rd edition, 2010.



will allow us to more seriously consider whether we are contributing to this problem.

Exploring Fasaad

As mentioned earlier, *fasaad* has the meaning of deterioration. The more you reduce something in standard, quality, output, morals, values, integrity, etc. the more you corrupt it. An infestation has a corrupting effect on a tree. A rotten fruit has a corrupting effect on the batch. Public officials who cut corners, use their positions for personal gain and ignore set standards have a corrupting effect on the system.

“Corruption” is often used in a relative sense and as such can have little meaning to the individual. The reason for this is that not unlike criminals, a person who is corrupt will always try to identify and distance themselves from someone they believe is more corrupt than they are. At some point along the spectrum, the corruption reaches a peak, and so the distancing changes from a *severity* difference to a *type* difference. “I may have violently assaulted someone, but I would never commit a sexual offense”, or with the corruption example “I may regularly steal from public funds, but I would never use my position to exert undue influence”.

This illustrates that corruption is a process, one that can occur gradually. It shows how even an acceptance of lowering standards is in a way an acceptance of corruption, and if allowed to continue will reach an intolerable level. Transparency International, a global corruption monitor, ranks countries based on perceived levels of public corruption. They draw attention to even how the top 25 countries (with lowest corruption scores) in the “Corruption Perceptions Index” (CPI) are vulnerable to corruption and there is a suggestion that they rank highly on the index because it doesn’t measure levels of private company corruption. There is also a suggestion that corruption in private companies is enabled by the systems in place in these high-ranking countries, and they at times contribute to the corruption of lower ranking countries.

“It turns out those countries that perform best on the CPI are often the very same that enable high levels of illicit private sector activity, money laundering and foreign bribery.”⁴

I mention this in order to alert the reader to the fact that although we may look at other systems in a critical light for their salient heavy corruption, we must not turn a blind eye to the corruption we see around us that may be perceived in a conventional sense to be less corrupt. I would put forward that the corruption in our systems has the potential to be more severe, but because there is a *type* difference, or because it is less pronounced we don’t detest it as much. In fact, within the past 12 months New South Wales public officials including the New South Wales Premier have been implicated in allegations of corruption and investigations by the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) are still ongoing.⁵

Bringing it closer to home

Our public officials are invariably raised within our societies and rose through the ranks while living among us. Their vulnerability to corruption is not alien to us. Rather it is more serious and perverse

⁴ [CPI 2020: Five cases of trouble at the top - News - Transparency.org](https://www.transparency.org/news/2020/cpi-2020-five-cases-of-trouble-at-the-top)

⁵ <https://www.sydneycriminallawyers.com.au/blog/gladys-berejiklian-referred-to-icac-once-again/>

in scale, usually as a result of opportunities that their positions open for them. Let us consider seriously the following 3 sets of examples, and whether we overlook the issues with these examples when we or someone close to us does them. I have attempted to list them in an order that places the matter people are most likely to accept first, and gradually moves on in perceived severity. The examples are certainly not exhaustive:

1.



The common theme in the above matters is fabricating credentials or giving (or accepting) false testimony. The dangers can be quite extreme, and this is why the matter is mentioned in such seriousness in the Quran and Sunnah. The following Verse and prophetic sayings come to mind:

((ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعْظِمِ حُرْمَتِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ ۖ وَأُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ الْأَنْعَامُ إِلَّا مَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ)) – سورة الحج 30

((Such [is the Pilgrimage]: whoever honours the sacred rites of Allah, for him it is good in the Sight of his Lord. Lawful to you [for food in Pilgrimage] are livestock, except those mentioned to you [as exception]: but shun the abomination of idols, and shun the word that is false)) – Al Quran 22:30.

The Prophet peace and blessings upon him referenced this Quranic verse when describing the seriousness of false testimony:

عَنْ خُرَيْمِ بْنِ فَاتِكِ الْأَسَدِيِّ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ صَلَّى صَلَاةَ الصُّبْحِ فَلَمَّا انْتَصَرَفَ قَامَ قَائِمًا فَقَالَ " عُدِلَتْ شَهَادَةُ الزُّورِ بِالشَّيْءِ بِاللَّهِ ". ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ ثُمَّ تَلَا هَذِهِ الْآيَةَ ((وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ)) إِلَى آخِرِ الْآيَةِ - جامع الترمذي

Khuraym bin Fatek Al Asady narrated that The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings upon him,

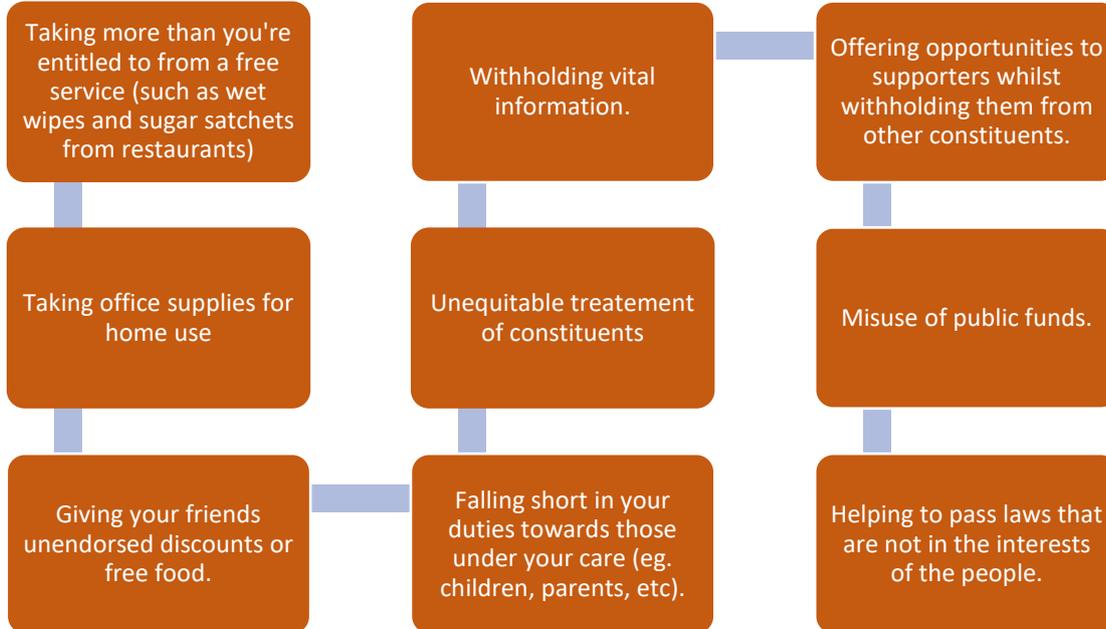
performed the Subh (Fajr) prayer. Then when he turned to get up and stand, he said: "O you people! False testimony is tantamount to Shirk (associating partners) with Allah." He stated it three times, then he recited this Quranic verse **((And shun the word that is false))** until the end of the verse (meaning he recited the entire verse) – Narrated in Jami' Al Tirmidhi.

We also have in our prophetic tradition that the onset of major examples of societal deterioration constitute some of the prevailing signs of the closeness of end times. The following *hadith* is an example:

بينما النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم في مجلس يحدث القوم، جاءه أعرابي فقال: متى الساعة؟ فمضى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، يحدث، فقال بعض القوم: سمع ما قال، فكره ما قال، وقال بعضهم: بل لم يسمع، حتى إذا قضى حديثه قال: "أين السائل عن الساعة؟" قال: ها أنا يا رسول الله. قال: "إذا ضيعت الأمانة، فانتظر الساعة" قال: كيف إضاعتها؟ قال: "إذا وسد الأمر إلى غير أهله فانتظر الساعة" - صحيح البخاري.

Once the Prophet peace and blessings upon him was speaking to us when a Bedouin came and asked him: "When will the Hour (Last Day) be?" The Messenger of Allah continued his talk. Some of those present thought that he had heard him but disliked the interruption and the other said that he had not heard him. When the Messenger of Allah concluded his speech he asked: "Where is the one who inquired about the Hour?" The man replied: "Here I am." The Messenger of Allah replied: "When the practice of honouring a trust is lost, expect the Hour." He asked: "How could it be lost?" He replied, "When the unsuitable people are given positions of authority, then wait for the Hour." – Narrated in Sahih Al Bukhari.

2.



The common theme from this second set of examples is the betrayal of a trust. We learn in Islam that the betrayal of people's trust is one of the defining qualities of the *Munaafiq* (person who outwardly claims to be a believer, but in their heart they are not). The Prophet, peace and

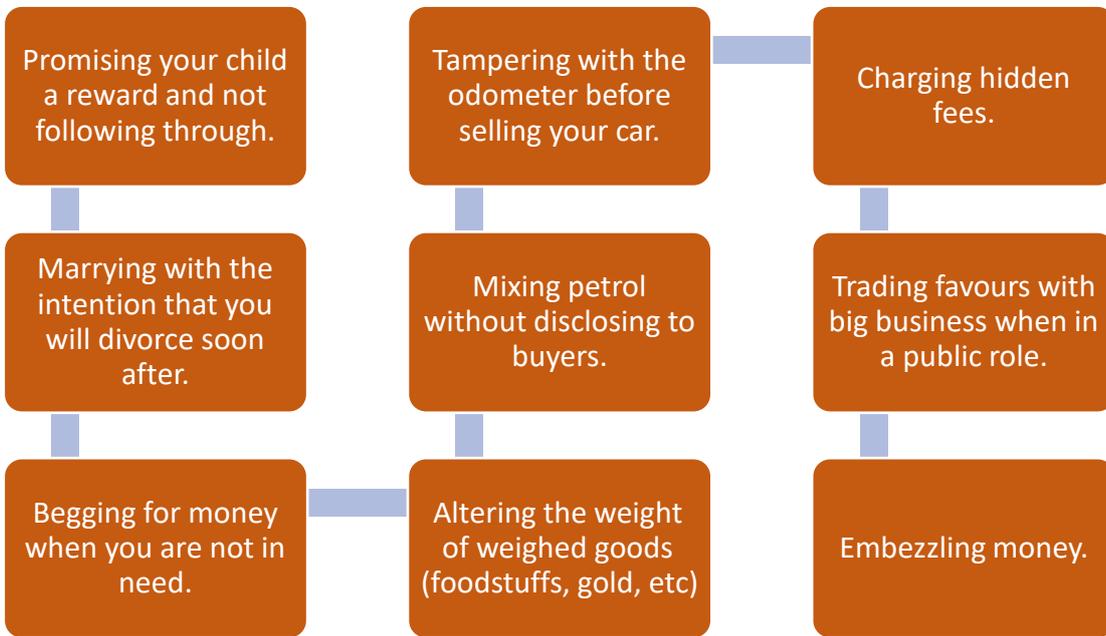
blessings upon him, is reported to have said:

" آيَةُ الْمُنَافِقِ ثَلَاثٌ إِذَا حَدَّثَ كَذَبَ وَإِذَا وَعَدَ أَخْلَفَ وَإِذَا ائْتُمِنَ خَانَ " - صحيح مسلم

Three are the signs of a unafiq: when he speaks he lies, when he makes a promise he does not fulfil it, and when he is entrusted, he betrays the trust – Narrated in Sahih Muslim.

One of the narrators of the *hadith* would add when mentioning the *hadith*: even if he fasted and prayed and asserted that he is Muslim.

3.



The common theme in this third set of examples is the cheating of others, or fraudulent behaviour. As Muslims the cheating of others is a matter that is not at all tolerated, so much so that the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, declared those who cheat others to be “not of us”. In the famous story, Abu Hurayrah narrates:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَرَّ عَلَى صُبْرَةٍ مِنْ طَعَامٍ فَأَدْخَلَ يَدَهُ فِيهَا فَتَأَلَّثَ أَصَابِعُهُ بِلَأْلٍ فَقَالَ " يَا صَاحِبَ الطَّعَامِ مَا هَذَا " . قَالَ أَصَابَتْهُ السَّمَاءُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ . قَالَ " أَفَلَا جَعَلْتَهُ فَوْقَ الطَّعَامِ حَتَّى يَرَاهُ النَّاسُ " . ثُمَّ قَالَ " مَنْ عَشَى فَلَيْسَ مِنَّا " - جامع الترمذي

That the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings upon him passed by a pile of food (in the market). He put his hand in it and felt his fingers getting wet. He said: ‘O owner of the food! What is this?’ The owner replied: ‘It was rained upon O Messenger of Allah.’ He said: ‘Why not put it on top of the food so the people can see it?’ Then he said: ‘Whoever cheats, he is

not (one) of us.’” – Narrated in Jami’ Al Tirmidhi.



The opposing word for *fasaad* in Arabic is *islah*, which means to correct or reform.⁶ In the Quran it is used to imply the removal of corruption.⁷ I will be exploring this term *in sha Allah* (God-willing) in my next article.

Conclusion

The first thing we can do for a people in crisis is to make sure that we don't contribute to a similar problem in our society. Change starts with an unaccepting sentiment. You don't want things to be this way, so you make sure that you are not what you hate. That you don't accept it in your home. You don't accept it from yourself or the people around you. Allah says in the Quran:

((يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِٱلْقِسْطِ شُهَدَآءَ لِلّٰهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ ٱلْوَالِدِينَ وَٱلْأَقْرَبِينَ ؕ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَٱللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا ؕ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا ٱلْهَوَىٰٓ أَن تَغْدُوا ؕ وَإِن تَلَوْاْ أَوْ تَعْرَضُواْ فإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا)) – سورة النساء 135

((O believers! Stand firm for justice as witnesses for Allah even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or close relatives. Be they rich or poor, Allah is best to ensure their interests. So do not let your desires cause you to deviate from justice. If you distort (the testimony) or refuse to give it, then [know that] Allah is certainly All-Aware of what you do.)) – Al Quran 4:135.

I ask Allah to help us all to become a people who stand for justice and oppose corruption in all its forms, regardless of perpetrator.

Alongside this effort to counter corruption, we must exert effort, every effort to address both the root cause and the symptoms. People experiencing starvation need food before they can start to work on a solution. In this regard, it is my hope that AFIC to again lead the Muslim community in a campaign to address immediate need for food in a new Lebanon campaign.

At the same time, we must engage in Istighfar and Istinsaar from Allah, seeking His forgiveness and His succour.

Addressing the root causes through the process of Isslah will be addressed in my next article in shaa Allah.

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⁶ The Dictionary Arabic – English, pg 79. Published by Dar Al Kotob Al Ilmiyah, Beirut, Lebanon. 1st edition, 2003.

⁷ *Mufradaat Alfaaz Al Quran*, in Arabic, by Al Raghbi Al Asfahani, pg. 490. Published by Dar Al Qalam, Damascus, Syria. 5th edition, 2011.