164443 - They live in the west and are asking about appropriate ways of calling people to Allah

the question

We live in Britain, where we see many of the Muslims committing a lot of sins and deeds that could lead to doom, such as shirk. We see some of them hanging up amulets with black cloth on the rear-view mirror of their car for fear of the evil eye, and similar actions. There are others who do not offer the five daily prayers, and there are people who sell what Allah has forbidden. All of these people, in addition to those who are not Muslim in the first place, need to be called and reminded of Allah. Hence some of the brothers were thinking of using some advertising billboards on the main streets to put up some posters, whether they are calling the Muslims and reminding them of Allah, or calling the non-Muslims. We intend to do this, based on our conviction that Allah will ask us on the Day of Resurrection about these people and what our role was in calling them to Him. Therefore we want to take some measures so that we will have discharged our responsibility before Allah, may He be exalted. But the question is: What is the best message that can be given? We thought of focusing on the obligation to worship Allah, and to turn back to Him and fear Him, and stating that He is most merciful and accepts repentance. This is for the Muslims. As for the non-Muslims, we want to tell them that we believe in Jesus (‘Eesa) as a Messenger, and so on. What you think of this idea? We also intend to put a link to your website as a reference to which people can go to find out more about the religion, but I wish that you would set up a separate section for non-Muslims, dealing with Islam teachings on non-Muslims, and some other da‘wah topics, so as to be of greater benefit. But using these billboards will cost money. Therefore we thought of using a more widely-used method, which is to publish flyers and leaflets. But if we resort to that, there is a problem that we will face and we do not know how to deal with it. As is well known, the leaflets will contain some Qur’anic verses and other religious texts, and will be distributed to all kinds of people, and some of them will undoubtedly be thrown away. In that case there will be a kind of disrespect. What can we do to avoid this problem? I hope the brothers in charge of the website can offer some advice. Please rest assured that if we had known the proper

way to deal with these matters, we would not have bothered you with questions, because we know how busy you are. Thank you for your advice, and may Allah reward you abundantly.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

We praise Allah, may He be exalted, for enabling you to take an interest in calling people to Allah (da‘wah) and in the guidance of people in the Western country in which you live. We ask Him, may He be glorified, to bless your efforts and to make you guides and callers to His religion and to that with which He is pleased, may He be glorified.

With regard to your questions about da‘wah (calling people to Islam), what we think is that billboards do not serve the purpose in the best manner, even if you could afford to cover the financial costs.

Nevertheless, you could use them in an appropriate way, to give a brief message that can be read quickly by anyone who sees it, which will help him to review his situation and what he is doing, and include information on another place where he can meet people who could explain Islam to him, and he can learn correct information about the faith; or the message could tell him about some written material, pamphlets that you have prepared, or a translation of the meanings of the Qur’an, and so on. The point here is that when it comes to billboards, the messages should be very short, because they are going to be read very quickly. Thus they may serve to alert the reader or make him shocked about how he is living his life.

As for flyers, publications, books, audio tapes, and video tapes, they are more likely to be of benefit and more effective in conveying the message according to the people’s situation and what they need to know.

You should have two different types of these da‘wah publications:

The first should be suitable for Muslims who live in that country, to encourage them to maintain their Islamic identity and not to be heedless about any aspect of it, and they should raise their children to be proud of this identity, and make them aware of the dangers that face the Muslim with regard to his religious commitment when he is in that country, such as the dangers of desires that surround him everywhere, and the dangers posed by specious arguments and corrupt beliefs that may shake his faith.

The second type of these publications should be addressed to non-Muslims in that country, to explain people's need for religion in general, and the need for Islam in particular; to explain to them briefly and clearly the basic beliefs of Islam, and the beautiful characteristics of this religion, and how it may nourish their hearts and souls which are thirsting for this pure light.

Secondly:

With regard to your question about the possibility of these flyers and pamphlets being thrown away, you can reduce this problem – as much as possible – with a gentle reminder, telling the one who does not need these pamphlets any more to give them to someone else, instead of throwing them away, or to put them in a special place that you have set up, or to give them to the nearest mosque or Islamic centre, and other ways of making use of them.

But if it so happens that the one who takes these pamphlets does not do any of these things, and he is going to throw them away, then the interest served by publishing and distributing them outweighs the problem of them being thrown away.

Having said that, we should point out that with regard to the verses and hadiths that have been translated from Arabic into your language, if they are thrown away the matter is much less serious than if they were written in Arabic, because the translation does not have the same sanctity as the verses that are written in Arabic.

Taking into account the fact that there is nothing wrong with allowing a disbeliever to read a book or publication in Arabic even if it contains Qur'anic verses, we nevertheless should not allow him to get hold of the Mus-haf (Arabic-only Qur'an).

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) sent to the ruler of Byzantium, who was a Christian, a letter in which he called him to Islam, which contained verses from the Holy Qur'an:

In that letter, he said: "In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. From Muhammad the Messenger of Allah to Heraclius the ruler of the Byzantines. Peace be upon those who follow true guidance. I invite you with the call of Islam. Become Muslim and you will be safe. Become Muslim and Allah will give you a twofold reward, but if you turn away, then upon you will be the sins of the peasants (your subjects). 'O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you - that we will not worship except Allah and not associate anything with Him and not take one another as lords instead of Allah. But if they turn away, then say, Bear witness that we are Muslims [submitting to Him]' [Aal 'Imraan 3:64]."

Imam an-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said, discussing the lessons learned from this hadith:

From it we learn that it is recommended to start a letter with the words Bismillah ir-Rahmaan ar-Raheem (In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful), even if the letter is sent to a disbeliever. We also learn that it is permissible to travel to the land of the enemy with one or two verses and the like, and that that may be sent to a disbeliever. Rather what is prohibited is for a traveller to take the entire Qur'an or some parts of it to the land of the enemy. That may also apply if there is the fear that it may end up in the hands of the disbelievers. We also learn that it is permissible for someone who is in a state of minor impurity, or a disbeliever, to touch a few verses if they are quoted in a page other than Qur'an. End quote.

Conclusion:

We hope that you will use all permissible means available to you, according to what you are able to do.

There is nothing wrong with writing verses or hadiths in publications that are to be distributed to disbelievers, especially if they have been translated into your language. The matter is easy, in sha Allah.

And Allah knows best.