

Liquor Import Scramble Means Tourism Has Failed Zanzibar

News:

The High Court of Zanzibar on 04th April, 2024 bashed down Section 33(1) of the Liquor Control Act (LCA), calling it unconstitutional. Enacted in 2020, it limited the number of companies allowed to import liquor. The section restricted liquor import permits to Zanzibari-owned businesses and capped the total number of permits at three.

Comment:

The court decision came to address the petition filed by QMB company that they ordered merchandise to avoid inconvenience before their previous license expired and their renewal application was rejected. This decision quashed Zanzibar Liquor Control Board (ZLCB) stance of granting licenses to three new liquor importer companies - Kifaru, Bevko and Zanzi Imports and delayed renewed permits for the three established importers – QMB, One Stop, Scotch Store, and ZMMI.

It has to be clear that board's decision to limit liquor importers was not influenced by morality or any public interests, but likely by corruption and involvement of public figures in the newly permitted companies. The Court's decision paves the way for increased competition in the liquor market and its importation in Zanzibar. It compels the Zanzibar Liquor Control Board (ZLCB) to grant many companies the right to import liquor. This scenario obviously portrays pathetic picture of morally and cultural decline of Zanzibar.

Islam has been part of Zanzibar culture since people of these islands embraced it between 7th and 8th century CE, with 99.9% Muslim population.

Thus, it is more than shame of the highest order for the government whose 99.9% inhabitants are Muslims yet spreading alcoholism that allows distortion of Zanzibar Islamic culture simply for personal interests and impressing western colonial culture in the name of tourism.

Zanzibar just like many other Muslim lands is blessed with many resources including natural gas, surrounded by the Indian Ocean, etc. but it has been imposed to rely on tourist industry as the economic sector that contributes 90% of the archipelago's foreign revenue.

Tourism has been the source of Zanzibar grave moral decay, tourists from the Western countries have been injecting the islands with filth and evil capitalistic morals like alcoholism, drugs abuse, homosexuality, fornication, non-modesty clothing, etc. In fact, tourism has failed Zanzibar Islamic morals and has been the source of disasters in our lands.

The court decision emphasizes the reality of the democratic view in two aspects: Firstly, secular values of disregarding of divine guidance instead weak human mind given the power to administers human affairs. Secondly, secular governments do not care about the affairs of their people, from the fact that alcohol is contributing more than 21.7% of the road accidents in Tanzania, yet instead of making serious efforts to abolish it, its importation is motivated and enhanced.

Islam has the dignified solution for every human problem including alcoholism. Islamic solution for it is simple, practical and rational. Islam forbids alcoholism in any way, Allah (swt) says in the Holy Quran: ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رَجَسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ﴾ “**O believers! Intoxicants, gambling, idols, and drawing lots for decisions¹ are all evil of Satan's handiwork. So shun them so you may be successful**” [Al Maidah: 90].

Through this prohibition, religion, wealth, dignity and society at large would highly protected for the sake of wider interest of human welfare.

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by

Said Bitomwa

Member of the Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir in Tanzania