

HACKING DOWN TALL STORIES

A tall story is an unbelievable tale related in a manner as if it was true. Actual events are grossly exaggerated to ensnare the listener's interest and emotions. There is a very thin line between a tall story and the fomenting of a rumour.

Rumour is the oldest media in the world, usually anonymous information of doubtful veracity and uncertainty that people are currently talking about. It is always harmful, creates tensions between people and affects relationships.

IT IS UNISLAMIC AND A GRAVE SIN

Islam being the perfect Deen and the Final Revelation has very comprehensive rules and guidelines of conduct in the Noble Quraan. Almighty Allah explains in the following Quraanic verse: ***“O you who believe! If a transgressor brings you news, verify it lest you harm a people in ignorance. You will then be regretful about what you did.”*** (Chapter 49, Verse 6)

The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also records very clearly advice in these matters. Rasulullah *sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam* said: ***“It is sufficient for a person to be called a liar if he conveys all that he hears”.*** (Muslim)

IT IS ILLEGAL

The highest court of the Republic of South Africa, the Constitutional Court has confirmed that the law of defamation is designed to compensate a victim for any publication that injures the victim in their good name and reputation. Publication is not limited to hardcopy print as in the pre internet era. Leading South African law firm Cliffe Dekke Hofmeyr explain that the following media are regarded as publications;

- e-mails;
- posts on all social media platforms including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and TikTok included;
- WhatsApp messages;
- comments on online news articles; and
- any other publicly accessible medium.

South African law considers repeating or sharing defamatory content as sufficient to constitute ***“publication.”*** even if the repeater or sharer was not the author of the original defamatory post. Disclaimers such as ***“forwarded as received”*** does not absolve one from the crime that could prove very costly to defend and could even result in loss of employment.

For further reading on this subject click on the links below:-

<https://www.businessinsider.co.za/beware-of-defamation-on-facebook-and-whatsapp-2020-6>

<https://techfinancials.co.za/2020/06/08/you-can-be-fired-or-sued-for-sharing-or-forwarding-nasty-post-on-social-media/>

THE TEST OF CONSCIENCE AND INNER VOICE

The religion of Islam is replete with Quraanic and Prophetic advices on external and internal reflection and the exercising of logic and reasoning.

Put the rumour to this simple test, evaluate the results and listen to your inner voice.

1. WHO IS THE AUTHOR AND/OR FORWARDER

This helps to establish credibility of the report. An immediate red flag is a message posted anonymously? Reflect as to why a person does not have the courage of his conviction to append their name to the message?

Is it posted by a respectable member of the community, an Aalim, a close friend, family member; or an extremist hater, serial slanderer, a proxy for mischief makers, a rival organisation etc?

2. WHAT IS THE MESSAGE?

Fake news use sensational headlines. Does it evoke anger? Check the entire article beyond the headline.

How relevant and current is the information or is it using a topical happening as the excuse to peddle the message. We have come across incidents mentioned that are from more than a decade ago.

Be wary of content where the person quotes sources such as *“a brother wrote, a friend said, a former employee told me, a Moulana once observed, concerned brothers contacted me, the public are asking etc.”*

3. PURPOSE OF THIS MESSAGE AND WHY WAS IT SENT TO ME?

Ask yourself, did the sender believe it was in my interest and I could benefit greatly from it? Am I being enlisted perhaps inadvertently into perpetuating a fitnah on behalf of an anonymous mischief maker for their own nefarious ends.

4. WHAT CAN I DO WITH IT?

Does it concern me? Delete it if not. Also ask yourself do you wish to continuously receive messages from such a source. If the contents are authentic and concerns you, and you feel that you can under the Islamic duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil, influence and contribute positively then by all means contact the parties mentioned directly.

As for forwarding it, send it only to persons who you believe can benefit or contribute positively

***DISHING THE DIRT IS DIRTY BUSINESS –
DON'T GET COURT DOING IT!***

Any queries pertaining to the above or any other aspect of Halaal may be referred to our offices

Halaal Helpline 0861 786 111