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Muslims must embrace all

YOUR correspondent M Cooper raised a relevant point (Muslim unity puzzling) and unwittingly challenges what appears to be a global group identity based on sectionalism.

The history of Prophet Muhammad, the early Muslims and the Qur'an identified Muslims as a community (ummah) without geographical boundaries but a community integrally linked to the world community.

While Islam requires Muslims to empathise and support fellow Muslims, it demands a similar commitment towards fellow human beings in respect of freedom of worship, justice, peace and freedom from oppression. Muslims cannot therefore defend a despotic ruler simply because of his or her religious affiliation with them.

They are directed to protect the rights of people, believers and atheists alike, even against unjust Muslim rulers. The

incongruent behaviour of some Muslims is perplexing, especially to people who understand the Islamic ethos.

The following examples have indeed created a view that Muslims are sectionalist. The silence of the genocide in Rwanda, the massacre of Christians in Sudan, the killings of innocent men, women and children in India, Kashmir, Israel-Palestine and Algeria.

The carnage of ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia led some Muslims to support the adoption of orphans and marry widows, an honourable gesture not yet extended to Africa, and particularly South Africa.

It is the action and speech of certain Muslims that tarnish the selfless work undertaken by South African Muslim NGOs locally and abroad.

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