



Al Mahdi Islamic Centre Communications and Social Media Policy and Procedures

INTRODUCTION

This policy outlines the standards for communicating when using social media platforms on behalf of the Al-Mahdi Islamic Community Centre, London Ontario, Canada. This policy includes Endowment Council members, Board of directors, staff, or volunteers, and community members at large.

This policy is a “living document” and should evolve with new incidents and learnings.

PURPOSE OF POLICY

1. To maximize the benefits of wide-ranging delivery of good content INTERNALLY via social media tools e.g. Gmail and WhatsApp etc. for internal communication.
2. To minimize the risk to Al-Mahdi’s reputation, that can be caused by improper and unauthorized EXTERNAL communications e.g. Facebook, YouTube, or Zoom.
3. Al-Mahdi communications may not be used for partisan political messages or paid advertising.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE POLICY

1. The Board of Al-Mahdi Centre has the sole responsibility for editorial policies governing Al-Mahdi communications and the content posted.
2. Only those persons authorized by the Al-Mahdi Centre Board are permitted to post material on social media.
3. Only authorized spokespersons such as **Social Media Officer** or the liaison for the Board of Directors may coordinate communications with members of the media.
4. The Al-Mahdi Centre holds in regard all the Marjaas of Shia Ithna-Asheri, Ja’afari Islamic School of Thought and respects our diverse culture. Therefore, no posts or communications against any personality or values will be tolerated.



STRUCTURE & PROCEDURES

The liaison for the Board of Directors of Al-Mahdi Centre will work with the Social Media Officer who will oversee the posts. The Social Media Officer can form a team to divide the work internally or share these tasks with a Board of Directors (such as the Secretary).

I. Internal communication:

1. All posts that are suggested by a community member, or director(s) for the consumption of the whole community should be approved by the Board liaison for social media (e.g. the Secretary). Endowment Council member(s), if for any reason, would like to use social media would coordinate with the sitting President of the Board.
2. Privacy and security of members of the Al Mahdi Islamic Centre is to be maintained at all times.
3. Email and WhatsApp will be the primary sources of internal communication:

i. Email Announcements types:

- a) **Program announcement:** AMAMU events that Al-Mahdi is responsible for.
 - i. **Frequency:** May be sent any day of the week.
 - ii. **Time:** Sent by email a week prior to the event; the reminders sent on WhatsApp a day prior to the day of the event.
- b) **Community announcement:** email announcements sent on request of community members. AMAMU does not take responsibility for the event and the content (non-AMAMU events).
 - i. **Includes**
 - Home programs/ Majalis
 - Private programs at Al-Mahdi Islamic Centre
 - Business ads for AMAMU members
 - Excludes businesses of non-community members, as we do not provide a free ad platform for non-members (to avoid spamming community members)
 - Religious events in the GTA area or elsewhere that can be useful and within the bounds of our principles.
 - ii. **Frequency:** sent on Thursdays or Fridays, if requested by community members.



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iii. **Criteria:**

- Announcements have to adhere to our center's policies (e.g., unity among all Maraj'e)
- The time of the private event must not conflict with the Centre's programming schedule.

c) **Death announcements:** sent on request of community member(s), or family. Typically sent through the secretariat.

- i. **Frequency and Time:** Email can be sent any day of the week. Secretariat to notify Burial/Funeral Group on WhatsApp regarding any assistance required for Burial.

4. **Isolated events:**

- a) Events that only include our girls and daughters **will not** be advertised on social media platforms, including email, WhatsApp. That is because we do not have any control on the forwarding of our messages to others. For girls' sleepovers, the details should be coordinated informally by project leaders on the personal WhatsApp group. This is strictly for security reasons.
- b) Some of our outreach programs will only be informally coordinated with the Board with no public ad for community members or social media posts.

II. **External communication:**

1. All posts must be initially screened by the social media officer for his/her comments and passed on to the Board liaison for social media (e.g., the Secretary) for onward transmission.
2. Any external communication regarding unexpected events or serious incidents must be coordinated with the President of the Board.
3. The Secretary is in charge of formal responses on social media (e.g., responding to a FB comment), interview requests, etc.
4. Formal press releases are written by the Secretary and are coordinated with the President.
5. **Website:**
 - a) An informative website should be maintained, abiding by all the above social media guidelines.
 - b) Only a comment box or Contact Us form should be used for communicating with the board.



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- c) No email of the Board Member or Secretariat should be made public on the website as it has been used for phishing emails in the past.
6. **Facebook (FB):**
- a) Facebook can be used to maintain a presence of a Shia Ithna-Ashe'ri Centre in London, ON for the larger Community.
 - b) Can be used to advertise outreach projects and events that seek publicity and encourage a positive image of the community.
 - c) May include posters of the programs.
 - d) Try to exclude any private or identifying information of children and families of the Community to prevent future harm. However, if shared, permission is to be received by the Board or Board representative and steps should be taken to ensure that participants are aware of the inherent risks.
7. **Live programs:** (YouTube and Zoom)
- a) The social media officer (or an appointee) will be assigned to oversee the live program.
 - b) In case of any concern (e.g., inappropriate content, violation of federal and/or provincial laws, or a Zoom-bomb), the social media officer will immediately terminate the transmission and stop the live feed.
 - c) For programs broadcasted via Zoom, the live content should be linked to the Al-Mahdi Centre's "programs" website page. This provides the social media team with the ability to update the Zoom link at the last minute should this be required. The Zoom link should not be shared with community members as it provides potential hackers time to know the link and plan for Zoom bombs.
- d) **Assistance helpline during live functions:**
- i. The Social media officer may identify a list of people who can assist community members during live programs. This can include sharing their phone numbers with the community. Where possible, these should be shared with internal communications **only** to ensure privacy.
 - ii. Use of Vo-IP numbers should be researched in more detail if COVID-19 restrictions remain in place long term, as this alternative method may ensure the privacy and security of the volunteers.
8. **Paper/Flier distribution**
- a) Distribution of any paper or brochure by the community members requires the approval by the Board of Directors by submitting through the Contact Us form through the website. This can include personal invites to a private function (e.g. majlis/mulood event).



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- b) Individuals or organizations must take advance approval from the Al-Mahdi Centre Board. Other Shia Ithna-Ashe'ri entities, groups, or organizations may use Al-Mahdi Centre for verbal or written announcements.

THE RIGHT TO RECORD AND SHARE CONTENT

- Only the Board of Al-Mahdi Centre has the right to record events and post content about the organization and events that take place on the premises.
- Without written or electronic permission from the Board in advance:
 - Individuals are not permitted to take and/or share photographs, and/or video record events (of those other than the speaker or reciters). This does not include events taking place at a public location such as park etc.
 - Individuals cannot live broadcast Al-Mahdi events on Facebook.
- To ensure informed consent, before taking any photographs or video, an announcement will be made of the intent to do so. Those who do not wish to be photographed or video recorded as part of a group in attendance can either remove themselves or take steps to avoid the camera. If an attendee would like their photograph or video recording removed from any of the communication channels of Al-Mahdi, they are to contact the Board of Members or Secretariat through the website Contact Us form requesting this.
- For specific, formal events at the Centre where sharing pictures and videos of identifiable individuals is concerned, prior authorization from the individuals in the video/picture is to be obtained by the Board. If the person(s) in question are minors (under 18), the consent of parents needs to be obtained via registration forms etc.
- No personal information of a member should be used on internal and external social media channels unless consent is obtained.
- All consent forms are to be maintained by the Secretariat.

ACCOUNT PASSWORDS

- The passwords for all social media accounts will be kept with the Social media Officer and the Secretary for the Al Mahdi Board of Directors.
 - Passwords will be reset every 6 months to ensure that they are kept secure.
- ✓ **All communication posts should meet Islamic ethical and religious values. The Board or appointee will refrain from taking a position or making a statement against any Islamic values.**
- ✓ **All communication should abide by Canadian federal and provincial laws.**



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- ✓ No copyright, or trademark material is to be shared, unless permission of the authorized party is received in writing.

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