

# Codes of Ethics for Virtual Space

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**Introduction** - Any act human beings do is indispensably predicated on a particular value system and a set of ethical principles according to which the individual settles on a choice. Although we often have faith in corresponding general ethical standards, an adjustment of the norms to specific circumstances meets with assorted challenges. As a consequence, we embrace distinctive choices activated by the condition bringing on a given development. Notwithstanding, an exact examination of our choices indicates that our exercises are frequently at variance with ethical standards. All matters considered, we tend to regard an act that is not morally appropriate as moral or an act that is morally-sanctioned as immoral. For this reason, the scholars on ethical issues endeavor to direct our moral behavior and obligation by exchanging views and breaking down specific states of a given action. The scholars lay down moral statutes in conformity with our part in specific circumstances to assist solitary people in holding on to an ethical life. Those ethical precepts are insinuated as "code of ethics," ethical doctrines" or "ethical guidelines."

One of the most important of those activities is our pursuit in virtual space. It has confronted us with different moral conceptions proportional to its specific situations. Consequently, we require norms to perform our work in virtual circumstances with an expectation of high standard of living. For this purpose, the present work has strived to codify ethical guidelines for various sorts of practices in a virtual world, getting it presented as a yardstick for all cyber-activists in this field.

To accommodate virtual space with codes of ethics we have made awe-inspiring efforts gathering and categorizing a substantial lot of the cyber moral declarations so far composed all through the world. The statements were examined and their structures weighed with great care. Eventually, a concrete framework compatible with prevalent

standards of declarations was designed so that in this body structure the codes of ethics in virtual space in our Islamic country would be classified and composed. Although plenty of the declarations shared equal and identical features as far as general moral concepts are concerned, ethical standards can be altered by diverse cultures. Therefore, the content of the declarations was evaluated in terms of conformity with Iranian-Islamic subculture and the vital points preferred by our culture became adapted by assimilation.

The present research attempts to present simply ethical directives in different conditions of virtual space for different officials involved in virtual space. In spite of the fact that these ethical codes are regulated and presented predicated on theoretical substructure and features of virtual space and general ethical instructions, this matter is not at all cited in the codes of ethics; rather some of them are pointed out in annexations or exordium to the subjects.

## **1- Islamic approach to ethics in virtual space: distinctions and methods**

Despite the fact that in *Shia* view of ethics, rational good and evil nature of the action is the criterion, ethical perspective in Islamic thought display some differences with secular ethics in some affairs, making it distinct from secular, Christian, Asharite and Traditionalist ethics. For the formulation of Islamic attitude to ethics in virtual space, specific and fundamental considerations should be taken into account so that its Islamic spirit would be preserved. This approach in its fundamental and content-related aspect pays attention to the good agent as well, confirming in detail the inability of intellect to attain all ethical aspects. Consequently, it finds itself to be in need of the guidelines of divine revelation. For more detailed cases, too, intellect conducts Ijtihad on the basis of teachings of revelation. All these directions are expressed in accordance with God's divinity.

Islamic posture to ethics in its spiritual component does not consider ethics to be mere attention to man's material welfare and comfort. Rather, its main concern is man's material growth and spiritual elevation- that is like divine propensity - viewing both equally significant in a balanced system.

From a legal aspect, it has also set up a *sharia* (Islamic Law) that views the rights of all creatures in light of the divine and considers the base of the legitimacy of ethical activities to be divinely governance and lordship. Negation of this right is not feasible but through the course of divine permission. God cites munificence for man; in this benevolence is regarded as man's entire life and deference. Ethical instructions should be constituted on divinely right.

To enforce ethics, Islamic is not content simply with admonitory advice; it has considered a penal system for actualizing the rights of human beings and adorning them with divine ethics that is given due regard in Islam's penal order whose most important part is the system or otherworldly rewarding and punishing.

## **2- Ethical issues and considerations in cyberspace:**

Usually, several features have been cited for cyberspace: 1) highly inclusive universal realm, 2) distinct identity conditions, 3) multiplicity, (Johnson, 2009, 62-62), 4- extraordinary speed, 5- amazing amplex of data and 6- plausibility of prompt and broad impact.

Given the cited features, ethical relationships in cyberspace assume features attention to which calls for particular contemplations. Ethical issues involving clients and the recipients of communication technologies are exceedingly broad and occasionally obscure. The most widespread of these issues can be counted as distinct from physical space because of the accompanying unique conditions:

1) **Association with unfamiliarity and anonymity:** One of the qualities of interaction in virtual space is that individuals can retain their identity for the other side to be obscure, anonymous or under a pseudonym. In actuality, the individuals' virtual character does not necessarily cover their genuine personality in the physical world; consequently, the genuine character is not unveiled. This quality can give rise to various ethical subjects and issues in the individuals' relationship in virtual space (Thiqat-ul Eslami, 1391, P. 187-194).

2) **A variety of Accountability and Responsiveness:** Generally speaking, human beings have responsibilities versus the resources they enjoy and should be accountable to efficient exploitation of such resources. Information and communication

technologies as a supplier of extensive resources at the command of individuals engender sundry accountabilities for beneficiaries linked to such technologies.

**3) The Ambit of Information Privacy and the Privacy:** Physical criteria to distinguish between the people's public and private privacy have been more or less defined in the material world. With the emergence and expansion of correspondence advances, these physical criteria experience the ill effects of failings and inefficiencies in designating the examples of privacy in virtual space. Definition of people's privacy in virtual space and respecting it by others is the most consequential questions brought up in this extension.

**4) Ambiguities in information and intellectual property:** Since virtual and electronic contents essentially differ from material contents, it will no longer be viable to apply the commonplace legal guidelines handling physical space to virtual contents. As such, supposing that "any digital content in virtual space is under the protection of intellectual ownership" the definition and interpretation of relevant examples should be treated and the right to the said ownership respected.

**5) The scope of crimes in virtual space:** On account of the substantial difference between material space and virtual space, quiddity, whyness and howness of crimes in virtual space are impressed by this substantial difference. Hence, definition and interpretation of criminal examples in the communication of individuals in virtual space and their prevention assumes a wider scope for germane recipients.

**6) Information security and secure information:** Access to and safe and sure use of information and building confidence in the dissemination of digital contents in cyberspace is a standout amongst the most critical worries of clients in communication with virtual space. To give expression to this goal, recipients should require appropriate sensitivity to production, transmission and dissemination of digital content in virtual space.

As pointed out in the descriptions of the above issues, elucidation of non-ethical examples in virtual space and subsequently designation of appropriate ethical predicates against those cases can be subordinated to the title of the above issues, however generally. As regards each of the desired communication advances, the issues can also be liable to the investigation in a special form. Consequently, specific code of ethics certificates ought to be proposed for virtual space.

### 3- Stake Holders

Ethical behavior in virtual space is in keeping with the role each individual can have in space. For this reason, by separating the recipients of virtual space, their ethical obligations can be specified. Although numerous stake holders may be considered for virtual space, the beneficiaries of great consequence in virtual space may be, generally speaking, outlined as follows:

- 1- **Policy-makers:** They comprise individuals who designate the strategies and macro plans in designing of a virtual space. Order for designing a virtual space is placed in accordance with the policies laid down by policy-makers, who specify all the executive stages for uploading a piece of space. As the result, investors finance the project. Obviously, governments can also be among policy-makers in order to realize their duties.
- 2- **Designers of virtual space:** They consist of persons engaged in designing and downloading software and hardware of communication technologies based on the policies ordered.
- 3- **Officials and owners of virtual space:** They comprise people in charge of virtual space on The Internet. To put it in legal parlance, they hold the material and spiritual rights of space as their own.
- 4- **Incumbent:** The incumbent consist of officials holding a position to facilitate rendering service to users after downloading and installing the said software and hardware.
- 5- **Users to transmit and receive information:** Some of the users only receive information and some others receive information and transmit it as well. The most noticeable of such users are members of social media.
- 6- **Government supervisions:** Governments are involved in some ethical issues commensurate with their social responsibility. Evidently, in this section, simply the supervisory role of governments over the state and private functions is highlighted. Foregoing this, governments can have other roles as do the policy-makers or officials in charge of virtual space.

Classification of beneficiaries into the above groups is based on deductive reasoning and the most important of them have been cited. Foregoing this, in virtual space, other officers engaged in cyberspace can be considered, but the investigation into them is beyond the scope of the present attempt. Remote from the distinction of ethical duties for various officers involved in cyberspace, the type of relationship of beneficiaries can also be effective in the type of ethical order. Therefore, each of the blogs, chats, news sites, emails, social media, search engines, mobile communication, Internet advertising, data sites and so on can have a code of ethics exclusive to them. In this written work, these activities have been classified under three general headings somehow covering the said types of activities. The classification has been conducted based on the procedure of individuals' interactions in virtual space. Hence, all these activities will be highlighted in the following three categories:

- A- Code of ethics for unilateral activities in virtual space such as news sites, blogs, search engines, data sites and some computer games.
- B- Code of ethics for mutual interactions in virtual space such as emails, WeChat and so on.
- C- Code of ethics for multi-lateral interactions such as social media including viber, Facebook, WhatsApp, telegram, Instagram and etc.

#### **4- Fundamental ethical principles for virtual space**

Fundamental ethical principles in virtual space may be categorized under the following headings:

- 1- Sincerity,
- 2- Protection of privacy and refusal to backbite,
- 3- Security and refusing to inflict material and spiritual loss on others,
- 4- Safekeeping and respecting the rights of others,
- 5- Protection of customary and religious norms,
- 6- Correct ethical intent.
- 7- Rendering interest and assistance to the growth and elevation of other people.

- 1- **Sincerity:** Any type of activity in virtual space on the part of designers, incumbents and users should be done in a way that highlights sincerity. Presentation of any form of information running counter to actuality and deceit or information that triggers misunderstanding should be withheld.
- 2- **Protection of privacy and refusal to backbite:** Each of the officials engaged in virtual space have private information which cannot be accessed without their conscious knowledge. Preferably, it will not be possible to transmit or disseminate private cases. This means that no one can enter the privacy of other users. Preponderantly, one cannot disseminate and rehearse private information of other users without their consent or in Islamic parlance backbiting. In the case of doing it, one should win the victim's gratification.
- 3- **Protection of security and refusing to inflict material and spiritual loss on others:** All the measures taken in virtual space should not harm the security of users and incumbents and designers in individual and social form. This rule may be ignored according to law in cases the virtual activities causes considerable loss to society and others. Virtual space cannot be used to inflict loss on others property, prestige or one's spiritual morale.
- 4- **Safekeeping and respecting the rights of others:** In virtual space, everyone should respect the rights of others and refuse to dishonor it. Therefore, intellectual property rights should be respected.
- 5- **Protecting social and religious norms:** Every society in conformity with the conditions it grows and nurtures suggests cultural norms and values and activities in virtual space should not invalidate these norms (in case they contradict religious rules). Also, religious boundaries of each society should be respected and any form of behavior trying to dishonor these norms is banned.
- 6- **Correct ethical intention:** The officers engaged in virtual space have a different incentive for their activities in virtual space, normally forming their intention of performing the activities. These incentives and intentions should not contrast ethical principles. The activity that is accomplished with good ethical and spiritual intention is worthy of praise.
- 7- **The principle of rendering interest and supporting others grow and elevate:** The main purpose of using virtual space should be valuable in ethical terms. Since

in virtual space interplay of users is of paramountcy; therefore, ethical interactions should fixate on rendering interest to others and availing them grow and elevate.



## **5- Ethical codes of stake holders involved in virtual space:**

(For unilateral activities in virtual space)

### **A- Policy-makers:**

Policy-makers of different activities in virtual space should:

- 1- Remember that commitment to ethical principles in virtual space overwhelmingly take after the basic moral standards in real lifestyle.
- 2- Survey the outcome of their policies in ethical context; if incorrect ethical results emerge, they ought to overhaul their arrangement so that those strategies would not achieve eager or disinclined quandaries. Policy-makers ought to demonstrate that they have led the audits.
- 3- Declare the weak points, frail focuses and dangers of their arrangements sincerely and with a sense of responsibility. However great a strategy producer in virtual space, one will have imperfections and in this way plausibility of a few diseases in one's approaches can't be precluded.
- 4- In all one's measures, the policy-maker should appreciate sincerity and evade actions that cause designers and later proprietors and users of virtual space to endure duplicity.
- 5- They ought to consider the protection of clients' privacy and abstain behavior causing damage to privacy realm of users. Obviously, here just the arrangements are specified that basically cause rupture of security, not inadmissible utilization of clients.
- 6- Take into account the rights of designers; they ought to come to terms mutually concerning their rights.
- 7- Follow policies that do not pose a threat to people and groups and are not set down to deliver harm to others.
- 8- Follow approaches not bringing about harm to cultural and religious norms of society.
- 9- Eschewing non-ethical incentives for their actions and apply correct intention in their works.

- 10- In their approaches they should behave in a way that makes clients mindful of the harms of using virtual space such as Internet addiction, experiencing dual personality, lacking necessary movement, inadmissible physical impacts, social harms especially in the public eye, getting away from the general public, informational overload and informational apprehensiveness, and accommodating solutions to abate these harms.
- 11- In their policies, they should consider the growth of ethical and spiritual values of individuals and society and draw up the accordant policies.
- 12- They should consider the material and spiritual growth of individuals and the society and avail of the virtual space for the elimination of historical backwardness of some of the nations like African countries.
- 13- They should consult the scholars of ethics, theologians and polymaths of other branches of Humanities regarding their suggested policies.

### **B-Designers of Virtual Space:**

#### Designers of Virtual Space should:

- 1- Bear in mind that commitment to ethical principles in virtual space overwhelmingly takes after the basic moral standards in real lifestyle.
- 2- Observe sincerity, safekeeping and respect for common norms sanctioned by religion norms, not to mention deference for religious limits in their designs.
- 3- Observe sincerity and safekeeping towards their employees and let them perceive any birthmark in the system.
- 4- Devote great care for the preservation of secret affairs related to proprietors of websites.
- 5- Employ all one's efforts for technical promotion of websites and software and abstracting their quandaries in order to protect the user's private information and privacy.
- 6- Lay out the site in a way that if a virtual space coupled with exceptionable commercial of goods, services, information and advice pop up, users can perceive the advertisement. More efficient is to plan out appropriate measures allowing users to pick out the advertisement by using specific contrivances.

- 7- If in his design, one will face some ethical bottlenecks, one should resolve it with a different design.
- 8- Carefully consider the security and peace of mind of users in your design.
- 9- Pay attention to users' ethical security in your designs.
- 10- By designing different software programs to teach specific layers such as the blind, the deaf and mentally and physically disabled people provide the ground for their material and spiritual growth.
- 11- To remove backwardness of some countries and facilitating their easy and cheap access to resources of virtual space on the road to social justice.

Designers of virtual space ought not:

- 1- Use disgusting and dingy materials of their outlines.
- 2- Observe unethical regulations of proprietors of sites.
- 3- Do their outlining in a way that the insights obtained from clients may be put at the transfer of various sites, people, offices and clients without his cognizant assent.

**C - Proprietors of virtual space:**

Proprietors of virtual space ought to:

- 1- Bear in mind that commitment to ethical principles in virtual space overwhelmingly takes after the exceptionally basic moral standards in everyday life.
- 2- Observe sincerity, safekeeping, protection of others privacy, mental and economic security of others in their environment and avoid any act that hurts these elements or disregards the rights of some individuals.
- 3- Not only avoid insult and slander to others but also prevent any form of insult and slander by users.
- 4- Supply sound settings for authentication of individuals.
- 5- Eliminate feigned personal profiles and invalid user accounts.
- 6- Accept responsibility for all materials in it and take action to remove any loss brought about by others.

- 7- Observe the intellectual property right of others and refuse to republish the materials provided by others without citing its source or reference. One should not under any condition provide real or legal users or persons with a user's secret and personal information including email, password and so on.
- 8- Keep away from any undue discrimination such as race, gender and nationality towards users.
- 9- Demonstrate essential transparency of your measures and remain dedicated to impartiality and equity.
- 10- Give priority to ethical and spiritual growth of users.
- 11- Show sensitivity to any form of felony, obscenity, immoral acts of users in their websites and stop their spread.
- 12- Respect the widespread commonplace religious norms and limits and avert any form of propaganda efforts against them.
- 13- Bear in mind special contrivances in authentication of users and famous persons such as artists, politicians, athletes, etc.
- 14- React to complaints of users and government against persons disrupting security and peace of users in virtual space and physical environment, pursue the case and take action to rectify the situation within one's range of authorities.

Proprietors of virtual space ought not:

- 1- Use any form of propaganda practice in one's space for felony, crime, pornography, theft and doing acts opposite to moral norms.
- 2- Display ill-intention about one's activities; rather, one should consider pure clean intentions that gratify God in one's activities.

**D-Users:**

Users of virtual space should do the following:

- 1- Bear in mind that commitment to ethical principles in virtual space overwhelmingly takes after the same normal moral standards in everyday lifestyles.
- 2- Observe sincerity, safekeeping, protection of privacy, material and spiritual security of other users in using virtual space.

- 3- Pay cautious regard for the preservation of private data and privacy and evade utilizing them as a part of virtual space however much as could reasonably be expected or utilize the whole assets composed of sites for protection of their privacy.
- 4- In their policies they should behave in a way that makes users aware of the harms of using virtual space. These harms include an addition to The Internet, suffering from a dual personality, lacking necessary movement, unsuitable physical effects, social harms particularly in society, escaping the society, informational overload and informational anxiety. The policy maker should provide solutions to reduce these harms.
- 5- Respect the material and spiritual rights of officials of the virtual space and refuse to spoil their rights.
- 6- In cases deemed necessary by website administrators to declare a user's personal data transparently for the use of virtual space, only in case an individual can use unreal specifications, one is to inform the proprietors and other users that the specifications are not real but bogus or pseudo or quasi (sham, spurious, fictitious). Obviously, all moral obligations to be performed by these individuals are binding as is the case with regard to others.
- 7- Admire the material and religious rights of officers engaged in virtual space and refuse to wreck their rights.
- 8- Respect material and spiritual rights of others in virtual space and while observing intellectual property rights being violated refuse to inflict a loss on others.  
8-Reverence the customary norms of religion, intellect and religious limits of society and eschew any form of norm-breaking and an insult to sanctities in society (by way of writing, photographs, film and voice).
- 8- Observe secrecy and transparency in essential cases and elude fomenting any form of tribal, religious and cultural prejudices.
- 9- Avoid using websites promulgating fabrication, backbiting, slander, theft, breach of trust, an insult to social sanctities, deviating religious materials, derision of individuals or tribes, the disclosure of secrets of people and transgression upon the privacy of people.
- 10- Avoid creation of personal profiles and user accounts in the name of others.

- 11- Use your real identity for any activity in virtual space.
- 12- Use virtual space for material and spiritual growth of people and do not spare offering correct consultation to individuals needing them.
- 13- Place attention to human, spiritual and moral principles such as combat against oppression and dispensation of justice on top of the list of your activities in virtual space.

Users of Virtual Space ought not:

- 1- Disseminate materials of whose accuracy and correction they are not sure (such as drug or medical prescriptions, security measures or religious and behavioral recommendations) not having been substantiated by an official ascendancy.
- 2- Use virtual space for performing affairs opposite to morality or conducting felonies, malefactions, pornography, larceny, insult, slander, fabrication, backbiting and derision.
- 3- Use websites in which pictures, films or written materials running the country to chastity and disseminating fornication and sexual aberration and in the case of facing such websites take any action to obviate their spread.
- 4- Using virtual space for engendering enmity and strife and pessimism among individuals and societies. They had better employ virtual space to develop love and affection, sodality and elimination of grudges.
- 5- Endeavor for accessing others' private and secret information in whatever way possible.

**E- Governments:**

Governments ought to:

- 1- Remember that commitment to ethical principles in virtual space overwhelmingly take after the basic moral standards in real lifestyle.
- 2- Take legal measures to protect individuals in proportion to their vulnerability because the substance of virtual space can expose vulnerable people, especially children, to threat.
- 3- Like their duty in the physical environment, they should take legal action to prevent any form of felony, crime, murder, indecency, spread of fornication,

encouraging drug, theft, hypocrisy, fraud in virtual space, treating the violators and culprits according to law.

- 4- Struggle for the protection of the users' privacy and their secret information and advice that individuals cannot be put under pressure for access to their personal information unless under conditions when a major loss may pose a threat to individual or society in which case one can access the information merely with the verdict of judicial authorities.
- 5- Make utmost efforts to give reality to the free flow of thought in virtual space.
- 6- Work out suitable strategies for the creation of healthy and safe virtual space and actualize guidelines for useful utilization of virtual space and for the economic, scientific, cultural, religious and ethical growth of society.
- 7- Struggle for the promotion of digital literacy in society and put into operation written and effective programs to this end.
- 8- Provide a program for protection of material and spiritual rights of individuals and security and their welfare and comfort in virtual space and think out a way and take necessary measures for attending to complaints in this respect and restoration of the rights of individuals.
- 9- Make utmost use of virtual space to support vulnerable layers such as individuals with little literacy level, physically or mentally crippled persons.
- 10- Struggle for the advancement of computerized education in the public arena and put into operation composed and viable projects to this end.

Governments ought not:

- 1- For inspection of users' conceptions utilize the accounts of real and legal persons or press the proprietors of websites.
- 2- Use virtual space for pressing their opponents.

## **6- Specific code of ethics for mutual interactions in virtual space (consisting of emails)**

Electronic mail has rendered yeoman services to clients. Email confronts particular moral issues because of its unique elements. These ethical standards ought to be recognized and applied as the establishment by every one of those occupied with it. The officers involved in electronic mail may be classified as follows:

- 1-Proprietors of pristine email servers presenting email accommodations.
- 2-Email users who sign up inside the servers to enjoy the applicable offerings.
- 3-Governments and judicial ascendant entities.

### **A- Proprietors of original email servers**

As regards the proprietors of servers of email administrations and those offering digital messages, some ethical standards applied by pristine ethical standards of owners of virtual space cited with regard to every virtual space should be pursued. However, except for the cases cited, the accompanying moral bearings ought to be respected:

#### Owners of pristine email servers ought to:

1-Since they obtain their email outlays through commercials and earn income in that way, they should convey to users the ways of using the individuals' information in emails merely for transparent trade affairs. They should use the users' email and content of their emails within the circumscriptions sanctioned.

2-Respect the human dignity of the users' emails and treat them with sincerity in every case.

3-Show regard for rational impartiality and fairness regarding users of emails. If they offer the services in specific limits, they should not apply any form of discrimination of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, religion, etc. If they offer services inside of worldwide extension, they ought not to hold such separations.

4-They ought not to use their advertisements for the insult to individuals or tribes and for invalidating their sanctities and abstain from any form of propagation for immoral acts and practices contrasting common usage among people in societies.



5-Think out contrivances to mete out appropriate treatment for complaints against those who use their emails for immoral practices. In the case of repetition of the indecent acts, the users' account should be disabled.

Owners of servers ought not:

- 1- Spoil or invalidate the information of users without their consent or somehow take action to deceive them.

**B- Email Users**

Users of emails should comply with the following moral cases regarding emails in addition to ethical rules cited with regard to users of virtual space in general:

Email users ought to:

- 1- Respect the privacy of other users and evade sending emails impairing the rights of individuals and their human dignity.
- 2- In the case of sending bulk emails to various users, this right should be preserved for recipients so that they can easily get their name removed from the delivery list. Therefore, in such cases, in the emails sent, the recipient has been reminded of this right, making it possible to easily remove his/her name from the list of email address sent.
- 3- If the recipient of the email is not interested in receiving an email by another person, the sender will be notified not to send email for him/her any longer.
- 4- In sending email, give regard to the point that since some individuals are not willing their sent emails to be forwarded to others bearing their name on the forwarded email; therefore, all emails of an individual should be forwarded in a way that their name would be omitted in the email.
- 5- Notice that since all the materials sent are subject to the ethical rules in conversation; therefore, all ethical rules of conversation such as sincerity, avoiding backbiting and slander and accusation, insult and derision, harassing others is applicable to it. In this case, the email is subject to the rule of what is due to men and in the case of violating, it should be recompensed.

- 6- Avoid sending PC infections through messages in whatever way that could be available.
- 7- Respect the laws of their general public and decline to act as opposed to it.

Email users ought not:

- 1- Open user account in the name of another person and send and receive an email in his/her name.
- 2- Take action to get the passwords of others and somehow access others' account. If they haphazardly get access to the content of others' emails, read the emails and being inquisitive.
- 3- By sending email engender enmity and strife among individuals or make a few individuals show negativity about a few others.
- 4- Use email for transfer of secret materials.

**C- Governments:**

In addition to ethical rules cited regarding virtual space in general terms, governments should do the following:

- 1- Make an utmost effort to respect the freedom of individuals in sending and receiving email.
- 2- Because the content of emails can expose vulnerable individuals, particularly children, to threat take the necessary measures to protect them commensurate with the level of the vulnerability without entering the privacy of users of emails.
- 3- Indicate sensitivity towards the use of emails for commit any form of a felony, crime, murder, immoral acts, the spread of fornication, encouragement of drugs, theft, hypocrisy (guile), fraud (cheat roguery) and think out solutions to provide for security and health of information exchange.
- 4- Strive to protect the users' privacy and their secret information in emails and cannot put them under pressure for access to personal information of individuals. This effort is except under conditions when a major loss poses a threat to the individual or society; they can access information merely with the verdict of judicial authorities.

- 5- To develop programs for protection of material and spiritual rights of individuals and security and their comfort in exchange of emails and think out solutions to attend to complaints in this respect and restoration of the rights of individuals and taking necessary measures to this end.

Governments ought not:

- 1- Press its opponents by sending an email.
- 2- For inquisition of people, use the user accounts of real and legal persons or press the proprietors of websites.

## **7- Ethical codes documents for multilateral interactions in virtual space (such as social media)**

**Stake holders in cyberspace and the beneficiaries:** The main officers involved in social networks may be divided into three major groups: 1) Proprietors and producers of social media, 2) users and 3) governments.

### **A- proprietors and producers of social media:**

Proprietors and producers of social media ought to:

- 1- Remember that commitment to ethical principles in virtual space overwhelmingly takes after the basic moral standards in real lifestyle.
- 2- Prevent the production, dissemination and reproduction of spurious contents opposed to reality in whatever way possible.
- 3- Make utmost efforts for technical enhancement of websites and removing the technical problems of websites and software programs for protection of private information and privacy of users.
- 4- React to complaints of users and government against persons disrupting security and peace of users in virtual space and physical environment, pursue the case and take action to rectify the situation within one's range of authorities.
- 5- Exert all efforts to remove technical problems and enhance technical efficiency to provide the users' security, welfare and comfort.
- 6- Provide safe arrangements for authentication of individuals.
- 7- Delete fake personal profiles and invalid user accounts.
- 8- Consider special measures for authentication of individuals and famous personalities such as artists, politicians, athletes and so on.
- 9- Be committed to rendering service to laws and international agreements accepted by Islam regarding civil and political freedoms.
- 10- In the case of alteration in the content of agreements reached by proprietors of social media with users immediately notify them transparently.

11- Necessary action should be taken to deal with cases in which the users use social media for fraud, theft, murder, slander and spread of fornication and fostering discord and enmity and if the need arises personal profile and user accounts of individuals should be disabled.

Proprietors and producers of social media ought not:

- 1- Put the secret and personal information of users such as email, password and ... at the disposal of users and real and legal persons.
- 2- Use under any conditions personal and secret information of users for their purposes by acts such as data analysis, processing the private message and storage of unwritten materials.
- 3- Cooperate with local governments and officials as a source of information for discovery of the crime, location allocation, rejection or confirmation of claims and disclosure of personal and private information unless with the supervision of concerned authorities and in specific and defined cases.
- 4- Exercise discrimination in rendering services to users, among religions, tribes, governments and different groups.

**B- Users:**

Users of social media ought to:

- 1- Bear in mind that commitment to ethical principles in virtual space overwhelmingly take after the basic moral standards in real lifestyle.
- 2- Remember that Internet milieu has a long term memory and that mere elimination of information from their profiles does not necessarily mean that their personal information has been wiped out. As such, in a time of transfer of personal information, pay sufficient attention to this issue.
- 3- Use all settings provided by social media for the protection of private and secret information (such as privacy check-up).
- 4- Block individuals disrupting their security and peace.
- 5- Provide security and comfort for themselves and other users by application of principles of security settings of social media.

- 6- Follow the law of copyright (intellectual property right) in production and reproduction of content.
- 7- Treat in a responsible way towards the harms caused by production and reproduction of content.
- 8- Treat respectfully in expressing materials and one's views on the content of other users and elude insulting others.
- 9- Be completely mindful of the substance of repeated materials.
- 10- Register their real personal information (including name, email, date of birth, country and so on) for creating an account and entering social media. They should keep away from picking any sham or pseudo name.
- 11- Avoid interaction with users who refuse to disclose their real identity.
- 12- Avoid creating personal profiles and user accounts for other persons.
- 13- Take action for creating economic and trade activities in social media with their real identity.
- 14- Avoid production, publication and reproduction of any content (be it text, film, voice or picture) against religious sanctities, particularly Abrahamic religions.
- 15- Avoid production, reproduction and use of any content (be it text, film, voice or picture), negating decency and public morality such as the proliferation of fornication and sexual aberrations.
- 16- Take action to produce, publish and reproduce your materials and views sincerely, secretly, knowingly and in documented, respectful and responsible manner.

Users of social media ought not:

- 1- As much as possible put private and secret information and personal pictures and films in social media.
- 2- Disclose private and secret information of their friends or other members of social media.
- 3- Distribute private and secret information of real and legal persons outside of social media in the networks.
- 4- Make efforts in whatever way to access private and personal information of other users.

- 5- Put other users into inconvenience by using any one of the social media functions such as the call for friendship, sending a private message, poking and leaving stickers suggesting like image or thumbs up sign in a telegram and so on for other users.
- 6- Publish content of a text, film, voice and vision to threaten or intimidate other users or individuals outside of social media.
- 7- Engage in publishing data or software materials, distribute and trade in them or put them at the disposal of users- programs to be merely applied to undermine the security and peace of Internet users and social media in particular.
- 8- Produce, publish and reproduce spurious contents and rumors countering realities.
- 9- Use social media milieu for the perpetration of criminal acts such as cheating, theft, murder and so on in society.

C- **Governments:** Ethical rules of social media for governments are the same common ethical rules of virtual space.