



# THE OTHER WAYS OF *Expressing Condolence*

*(other than R.I.P.)*

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As one of the longest reigning monarchs, many grew up recognising her as the head of state of the UK and the Commonwealth. The demise of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has saddened many people including fellow Malaysians. Thus, it is natural for people from all over the world and walks of life to express outpouring of condolence wishes to her family and the people of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. One of the common wishes is RIP, which is *requiescat in pace* in Latin or stands for Rest in Peace in English, often engraved on gravestones or written in obituaries.

The use of 'rest in peace' has somewhat sparked a debate in the country - whether Muslims can offer such condolence to deceased non-Muslims. Mustafa Akyol, a Turkish scholar, asserts that Muslims can say "rest in peace" to non-Muslims who have passed away, adding that God's mercy is not confined to Muslims. According to Akyol, his viewpoint, which was also shared by other prominent theologians, was founded on two almost similar passages in the Quran, in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 62 and Surah Al-Maidah, verse 69 where Allah says, "Indeed, the believers, Jews, Christians, and Sabians—whoever truly believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good will have their reward with their Lord. And there will be no fear for them, nor will they grieve".

There are many ways to express sympathy to the family members of the deceased. If possible, attend the funeral or memorial service. Send kind words and messages by calling them or sending a text message or a condolence card stating, "I am sorry for your loss", "My deepest condolences to you and family", "You are in my thoughts", or share a meaningful memory of the person who died; "S(he) (cite the name of the deceased) was a wonderful person". Next, offer your support and inquire as to how you may be of assistance. Sending funeral flowers as a gift of condolence is a way to show your sorrow and say goodbye to the deceased. Listening emphatically to the mourning individual allows them to express what is on their mind and aid the healing process. Finally, donating to a charity or organisation that your loved one supports leaves a legacy for the deceased.

Islam encourages Muslims to express condolences in accordance with the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) Sunnah. It is improper to weep and grumble with the intention of expressing unhappiness with Allah; mourners should maintain their patience, saying a few words and recite a *dua* (prayer) for the departed. One of them is a phrase from Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 156, "Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un" to mean "Surely we belong to Allah and to Him we shall return". Other ways include performing *janazah* (funeral) prayer and *sadaqah* (donating) on behalf of the deceased.

There are many things you may say or do to help, but it is important to keep in mind that the grieving process is unique to each individual. In the wake of a loss, some of the above words of condolence and appropriate actions can be a tremendous solace.