
Guardianship of Life: Islam's Stand on Human Sanctity

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Abstract

The foundational principles of human rights in Islam are inherently linked to essential entitlements such as the right to life, protection from forced labour, the right to own property, and freedom of expression. Both religious and secular worldviews have historically influenced the legal frameworks that govern human rights. Despite being regarded as inherent and inviolable, these rights have been frequently violated, resulting in the suffering and death of countless individuals through acts of cruelty and injustice. In response to the atrocities of World War II, the United Nations General Assembly formulated and adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), marking a significant step in the global acknowledgement of these rights. However, the Western approach to human rights has often differed in terms of interpretation, implementation, and access. The evolution of human rights is, in essence, a continuous discourse on what constitutes the inherent dignity and rightful entitlements of the human being. Ideally, such rights should be considered universal and beyond dispute. Recognizing this, I found it imperative to emphasize the significance of human dignity and property rights from an Islamic standpoint.

Keywords

Individual rights; Property Rights; Slavery; UDHR; Freedom of Speech and Justice

Abstract

Prinsip dasar hak asasi manusia (HAM) dalam Islam inheren dengan hak hidup, perlindungan dari kerja paksa, kepemilikan harta, dan kebebasan berekspresi. Secara historis, pandangan dunia religius dan sekuler turut memengaruhi kerangka hukum HAM. Meskipun kodrati dan tidak dapat diganggu gugat, pelanggaran HAM kerap terjadi hingga memicu penderitaan dan kematian akibat kejahatan serta ketidakadilan. Merespons kejahatan Perang Dunia II, Majelis Umum PBB mengesahkan Deklarasi Universal Hak Asasi Manusia (UDHR) sebagai tonggak pengakuan global. Namun, pendekatan Barat sering kali berbeda dalam penafsiran, implementasi, dan aksesnya. Pada hakikatnya, evolusi HAM adalah diskursus berkelanjutan mengenai martabat kodrati dan hak sah manusia yang idealnya bersifat universal tanpa perdebatan. Menyadari hal tersebut, saya menilai sangat penting untuk menekankan signifikansi martabat manusia dan hak milik dari sudut pandang Islam.

Keywords

Hak Individu; Hak Kepemilikan; Perbudakan; UDHR; Kebebasan Berpendapat dan Keadilan

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Introduction

In Islamic teachings, the sanctity of human life is a fundamental value, deeply rooted in both the Qur'an and the Sunnah (the sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad, SAAS). Life is considered a divine trust, a sacred gift from Allah, and its protection is regarded as a paramount religious obligation. This core principle not only forbids unlawful killing but also emphasizes a holistic commitment to safeguarding both physical health and mental well-being.

The term *nafs* in Islamic thought refers to the 'soul', 'life', or 'individual self' and derives from the root verb (na-fu-sa), which connotes the notions of being 'precious', 'honored', or 'invaluable'. This etymology highlights the profound significance Islam places on human life. By understanding these nuanced meanings, we can better appreciate why life is held in such high esteem and protected within the Islamic worldview. Human life is universally recognized as one of the most cherished and irreplaceable assets shared by all, making its preservation an absolute necessity within Islamic doctrine.

Shari'ah, from this perspective, encompasses a comprehensive framework that goes beyond legal prescriptions to include beliefs, ethical values, moral conduct, and fundamental principles that govern various aspects of life—be it economic, political, cultural, or civilizational. It extends not only to Muslims but to the broader human experience, addressing the collective well-being of all. In this sense, Shari'ah is synonymous with religion itself, guiding every facet of human existence¹.

In human discourse, *nafs* (soul) represents the inner aspect of a person, encompassing both virtuous and sinful inclinations. It reflects humanity's dual nature—the capacity for good and the susceptibility to evil. The importance of *nafs* in understanding human morality and spirituality is clear, as it is mentioned 295 times in the Qur'an². Throughout history, the core philosophy of human rights has focused on ensuring peace, security, and dignity for all, irrespective of race, religion, or status. Various theories, codes, and ethical frameworks have emerged to uphold these values. However, as Thomas Hobbes pointed out, "human beings are fallible"³, meaning these constructs often fall short in practice, riddled with flaws. Today, systems designed to uphold justice are increasingly vulnerable to corruption and manipulation. The roots of human rights can often be traced back to ancient Greece and Rome, where natural law influenced governance, though these early concepts lacked formal codification in law."

¹Mohammad Akram Laldin and Hafas Furqani, The Objective of the Shari'ah in Islamic Finance: Identifying the Ends and the Means, ISRA, p. 27

²Alpaqih Andopa et.al, The Meaning of Nafs in the Qur'an Based on Quraish Shihab's Interpretation, AJIS: Academic Journal of Islamic Studies vol. 3, no. 1, 2018, p.139

³Steven Aicinena, Sport as War or a Means to Peace? Thomas Hobbes' Laws of Nature, International Journal of Business and Social Science Vol. 1 No. 1; October 2010, pp.25-30

Similarly, while England's Magna Carta (1215) is celebrated as a landmark in the history of legal rights, it too contained significant limitations and structural flaws⁴. Judicial precedents have ensured that Jews and Sikhs are fully protected under the Race Relations Act, yet similar protections are lacking for other religious groups, particularly Muslims, who often experience exclusion and bias. This highlights a broader trend of ethnocentrism and preferential treatment toward certain groups. Despite the existence of formal human rights frameworks, substantial discrimination continues in the United States, particularly based on race, caste, and religion, revealing a gap between the ideals of equality and their practical application⁵.

A historical review reveals that the Islamic perspective on human rights and its practical implementation has often been overlooked or marginalized. However, in truth, Islam, being divine in nature revealed upon Prophet Muhammad (SAAS), has entrenched human rights as a foundational principle, promoting values that address the legitimate needs, interests, and claims of individuals within society. These rights span both the private and public spheres and are intrinsically tied to a framework that balances rights with responsibilities. In Islamic thought, rights and duties are inherently interdependent; one cannot exist without the other. Law, therefore, plays a crucial role in maintaining this equilibrium. It regulates conduct, imposes liability for unlawful acts, and ultimately serves to protect the rights of others⁶.

The Prophet Muhammad (SAAS), as the final Messenger, dedicated his life to the comprehensive protection and promotion of human rights. Pre-Islamic Makkan society was steeped in barbaric practices such as the burial of infant girls and the unlawful seizure of property through deceit and warfare. The Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) stood firmly against these injustices. Following his migration to Madinah in 622 CE, he established the Charter of Madinah, a pioneering constitutional document that guaranteed protection of religious freedom, life, and property for all citizens, regardless of faith or background. Despite enduring years of persecution in Makkah, the Prophet exemplified unparalleled forgiveness and magnanimity during the peaceful conquest of the city, granting amnesty to his former oppressors. Such a model of moral integrity and legal justice remains unmatched in the modern world. From the Islamic perspective, divine guidance concerning rights and obligations has been imparted to humanity since its inception. As previously emphasized, Islam does not regard duties and rights as separate entities; rather, they are interwoven within the broader ethical and legal framework of the religion. In this regard, A.K. Bohri says:

⁴ Magna Carta 1215, clauses 10, 54, 12

⁵ Carolyn Harris, *Magna Carta and Its Gifts to Canada: Democracy, Law and Human Rights* (Dundurn, Toronto: 2015) at 39-40

⁶ Hisham M. Ramadan, *Islamic Law and Governance: Theory and Practice*, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Canada, 2021, p.38

"Since under the Islamic Law, the rights of People jointly or individually are protected without any discrimination"⁷

The right to life in Islam was overly protected and emphasized that nobody has the right to violate it. In this regard, the Holy Quran says;

"Do not kill a soul, which Allah had made sacred, except through the due process of law" (al Quran; 6:15)

In another verse, Allah says:

"Nor take life which Allah had made sacred except for just cause". (Al-Quran, 17:33)

In matters of retribution for murder, such decisions must be rendered solely by a competent judicial authority. Any individual who takes the law into their own hands and unlawfully kills another outside the framework of due legal process is, in the eyes of Islamic teachings, as if he has slain all of humanity. As the Holy Quran says;

"If anyone slew a person unless it is for murder or for spreading mischief in the land it would be as if he had slewed the whole of humanity. The significance of the protection of human life is explained in the second part of the above verse. And if anyone saved a life, it would be as he saved the life of whole of humanity" (al-Quran; 5:32)

Islam gives this right to every human being to whatever race, nationality or religion he may belongs. The Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) is reported to have said,

"One who kills a man under covenant (a non-Muslim citizen of an Islamic State) not even smells the fragrance of paradise."⁸

Within the framework of Islamic teachings, human rights are broadly classified into two principal categories: Ḥuqūq Allāh – the rights of Allah upon His creation, encompassing acts of worship, devotion, and religious obligations. Ḥuqūq al-ʿIbād – the rights that human beings owe to one another.

Islam's stance on individual intellectual freedom aligns closely with its broader approach to intellectual inquiry. It does not prescribe rigid scientific interpretations or impose specific theoretical frameworks upon the human mind⁹. Rather, it encourages the pursuit of knowledge while maintaining spiritual and ethical boundaries. Meanwhile, the development of modern human rights discourse in the West did not emerge in isolation; it was shaped by historical experiences of oppression, conflict, and intellectual resistance. Many Western philosophers who contributed to this discourse were themselves victims of political barbarism and the distortion of truth. Some

⁷ Altaf Gauhar, The Challenge of Islam, Islamic Council of Europe 1978, P :176

⁸ Sahih Bukhari, Kitab al Dhimmi.

⁹ Alrashid, Bader M Sh S, Fawzi Mohamed Hamed, and Ali Ali Jubaili Saged. 2021. Freedoms and Human Rights between Islam and Heavenly Religions: A Comparative Descriptive Study. International Islamic Sciences Journal 5: 143–77.

even drew insights from Islamic legal and historical traditions in their critique of authoritarianism.¹⁰

In contrast to Western narratives that claim exclusive authorship of human rights, a substantial body of Islamic scholarship argues that Islam not only upholds human rights but is also compatible with international human rights frameworks, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and its associated conventions. Thinkers such as Abu'l A'la Mawdudi have been pivotal in articulating this view. In his influential work *Human Rights in Islam* (1976), Mawdudi asserts that the foundations of human rights are embedded within Islamic teachings, even though the modern West seeks to monopolize their origin. Scholars in this tradition identify core rights that stem directly from primary Islamic sources—the Qur'an and Hadith. These include: (1) the right to life, (2) the right to dignity, (3) the right to justice, (4) equal protection under the law, (5) freedom of choice, (6) freedom of expression, (7) the right to privacy, (8) the right to property, (9) access to basic necessities, and (10) the right to resist oppression."¹¹

Furthermore, such literature emphasizes the Islamic assertion of universal human equality, grounded in the Qur'anic declaration that all human beings are descendants of Adam, and thus equal regardless of gender or race.¹² However, while this scholarship strongly affirms Islam's commitment to protecting fundamental rights including freedom of expression—it often remains at the level of general principles. Detailed analyses of specific legal cases or nuanced textual interpretations within the Islamic tradition are comparatively rare¹³

The rights owed to Allah are often aligned with public or communal interests. Since Islamic law perceives acts of worship and devotion as ultimately serving the collective well-being of society, it is coherent within Islamic jurisprudence to regard all rights whether directed toward Allah or fellow human beings, as rooted in divine authority and intended for the benefit of humanity.¹⁴ Importantly, both categories of rights *Huqūq Allāh* and *Huqūq al-'Ibād* originate from Allah, and fulfilling them is an essential part of the believer's ethical and legal responsibility. In Islam, the obligations owed to other human beings are not independent of divine oversight; rather, they are entrusted to individuals by Allah Himself. This conceptualization is derived from divine revelation, which mandates the safeguarding of Allah's rights over

¹⁰ usailah, Zaid Saleh. 2020. Human rights in the Islamic perception and the human reality A comparative study. *Mağallaī Al-'ustād Al-Bāhīt Li-l-Dirāsāt Al-Qānūniyyaī Wa Al-Siyāsiyyaī* 4: 674–99.

¹¹ Berween, Mohamed. 2002. The Fundamental Human Rights: An Islamic Perspective. *The International Journal of Human Rights* 6: 61–79

¹² Al-Aqeel, Laila. 2020. Human rights in the Noble Quran. *International Islamic Science Journal* 4: 100–31

¹³ Muhammed, Muhammed. 2021. Human Rights and Religion: Islam in Perspective. *Lectio Socialis* 5: 25–34.

¹⁴ Abdur Rahim Mohammadan Jurisprudence, All Pakistan Legal Decision Board, Lahore, 1958, PP. 201-02

both men and women. The seriousness of these responsibilities is underscored in a well-known tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS), in which he declared that on the Day of Judgment, Allah will question individuals concerning their fulfillment of human rights signifying the profound moral and spiritual weight these duties carry in the Islamic worldview

"O children of Adam! I asked for food to you. But you didn't feed me". The man will reply, "O Allah how could I feed you when you are the sustainer of all the humen' ". Allah will say "such and such of my servants asked you for food but you did not nourish them. Do you not know that if you had given him food? You would have found that food here with me? And O children of Adam, I asked you for water and you didn't give it to me". The man will say, "O Allah how can I give you water, when you are the Lord of worlds?". Allah says "such and such of my servants asked you for water, but you did not oblige him. If you had given water to him you would have found it here with me."¹⁵

Within the domain of *Huqūq al-'Ibād*, the rights of individuals in Islam, human rights can be further categorized into two distinct sections:

a. The first category pertains to those rights that require the formal structure and authority of a state for their realization. These are often referred to as *state-sponsored* or *greater rights*, as their enforcement and protection depend on institutional mechanisms and governance.

b. The second category includes moral rights, which fall within the personal responsibility of each individual. These rights rely on personal ethical conduct, requiring individuals to actively contribute to the recognition, protection, and fulfilment of the rights of others within society.

The overarching objective of an Islamic state is to ensure the protection and restoration of the rights of those who have been denied justice or marginalized.¹⁶ This principle was eloquently emphasized by *Abu Bakr al-Ṣiddīq*, the first Caliph of Islam, upon his appointment as *Khalīfah* in Madinah, when he declared his commitment to upholding justice and safeguarding the rights of the people—underscoring the moral and political duty of leadership in an Islamic framework.

"The fragile shall be strong; in my eyes until I restore to them their rights, and the strong shall be weak in my eyes until I have restored the rights of the weak from them".¹⁷

Human rights cannot be reduced to mere by-products of socio-economic structures, as proposed by Marxist theory. Similarly, Freud's psychological assertion that humans are the result of their own internal complexities and

¹⁵ *Mishkath, Kitab al Janazah*

¹⁶ Martin de Almagro, M. (2017). Producing Participants: Gender, Race, Class, and Women, *Peace and Security. Global Society*, 32(4), 395-414; Abu-Nimer, M., & Kadayifci-Orellana, S. A. (2008). Muslim peace-building actors in Africa and the Balkan Context: Challenges and needs. *Peace & Change*, 33(4), 549–581.

¹⁷ Mohammad Husain Haykal, *Abu Bakr* (Urdu translation) Lahore 1993, P. 94

subconscious constructs offers only a partial view. Rather, human rights may be better understood as an innate necessity essential to humanity's natural inclination toward moral and existential refinement. In pursuing this evolutionary path toward higher ethical consciousness, it is critical to establish sound criteria for defining and recognizing rights.¹⁸ To do so, two fundamental principles must be acknowledged: first, the nature of human beings as inherently endowed with dignity and purpose; and second, that any standard for human rights must be universal and impartial, transcending distinctions of race, caste, colour, or creed. The only viable foundation for such a standard lies in the collective human conscience, an internal compass that must encompass both moral and ethical dimensions. For human rights to be realized, individuals must awaken their conscience and apply it in defence of the rights of others at both personal and societal levels. A person devoid of Islamic awareness and moral consciousness is no more than a lifeless object, comparable to a log, incapable of contributing to or even recognizing the essential framework of human rights.¹⁹

In the Islamic system of governance, a ruler is not an absolute monarch or authoritarian figure but a servant of divine will, entrusted with the responsibility of justice and moral leadership. His authority is not self-derived but rooted in the commandments of Allah. Governance, in this context, is a sacred duty rather than a privilege or hereditary right. Consequently, there is no place in Islam for doctrines such as the archaic English maxim, "*The King can do no wrong*," which exempts sovereigns from accountability before the law. Under Islamic political theory, caliphs are not above the law; they are bound by divine guidance and remain accountable as subjects of God's sovereignty. The Qur'an emphasizes this notion of divine kingship in the verse: "*I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind, the King of mankind, the God of mankind.*" (Al-Qur'an 114:2-4)

This conception of leadership is further illustrated in the statement of the great Muslim general, Khalid ibn al-Walīd, who addressed the Romans, who revered their emperor as the "king of kings", saying;

"Your king may rule in such a manner, but if our Caliph, appointed through collective consensus, were even to entertain the notion of acting like a monarch, he would be swiftly deposed."²⁰

This compelling example summarizes the foundational principles of Islamic leadership; it is contingent upon ethical conduct, bound by accountability, and

¹⁸ Helmut Burkhardt (1995). Priorities for a Sustainable Civilization. IEEE Proceedings, Foundations and Applications of General Science Theory; Nikhat Sattar (2014). "Ethics in Islam", Dawn News, May 23 <http://www.submission.com>

¹⁹ LaFollette, H. (2007). The Practice of Ethics. Malden (Ed.); Chowdhury, M. (2016). Emphasizing Morals, Values, Ethics, and Character Education in *Science Education and Science Teaching*. 4(2): 1-16.

²⁰ Shibli Nuamani, *al-Farooq*, (English Translation by Mohammad Saleem), Ashraf Publishers, New Delhi, 1998, p. 180

always subject to both divine law and communal scrutiny. Within the Islamic judicial framework, no individual is above the law.²¹

In a well-known incident from Islamic history, Caliph Ali once discovered that his missing armour had come into the possession of a Jewish man. Rather than leveraging his position of authority, Ali chose to seek justice through due legal process. He brought the case before a judge and presented his son, Hasan, as a witness to support his claim. However, the judge, upholding the principles of impartiality, disqualified the testimony on the grounds of familial bias, as Hasan was the caliph's own son. This impartial verdict so deeply impressed the Jewish man that he embraced Islam on the spot.²²

The Holy Qur'an places profound and unequivocal emphasis on the principle of justice. As a universal faith, Islam strictly prohibits the violation of others' rights and instructs humanity to uphold justice, irrespective of an individual's religious affiliation. The inclusive and comprehensive nature of Islam is reflected in its spirit of tolerance—it not only forgives adversaries but has also entered into treaties with non-Muslims, even in moments of military advantage. A notable instance is when the Muslim military commander, Abi Ubaida al-Jarrah, concluded a treaty with the inhabitants of Hamas and subsequently invited Caliph Hadrath Umar. The caliph affirmed:

"As per the treaty, the lives, properties and religious laws are protected under due process of Islamic law".²³

Justice in Islam stands as a core virtue—an ethical hallmark and a source of spiritual nobility in all matters of human interaction. However, within the framework of law and governance, justice assumes a dual interpretation. Firstly, it is an innate faculty of the human intellect that enables the discernment between right and wrong. Secondly, it encompasses the codified legal principles that sustain social order and uphold the rule of law.²⁴

"Islam categorically prohibits all manifestations of injustice and fervently promotes the moral and ethical refinement of humankind, underscoring the necessity of eradicating dishonest conduct. The Holy Qur'an emphatically cautions against such transgressions, declaring:

'Do not usurp the wealth of others through deceit, nor sow corruption across the land. And remain ever mindful of Allah's retribution for all acts of wrongdoing.' (Al-Qur'an, 28:180-183)"

²¹Siddiqi, M. N, Islamic Approaches to Public Finance. Jeddah: Islamic Research and Training Institute, 1988, p. 60

²²Ibn Katheer, al-Bidāyah wal-Nihāyah, (Eng. Translation) by Darussalam Publishers and Distributors, Vol.11, p.170; Abdur Rouf, *Haqooq wa Mamlat*, offset Press Gurukhpur, 1990, p. 124

²³Shibli Noumni, *al Frooq* (eng. Translation by Abu Zafar Zain) Karchi,1975, pp. 264,268

²⁴Parveen Showkat Ali, Human Rights in Islam Adam Publishers and Distributors, Delhi/1995, p. 53

"In His absolute justice, Allah deals with humanity in complete fairness, holding each individual accountable for their own moral choices. The responsibility to discern between right and wrong rests solely with the person. As the Holy Qur'an affirms;

'Whoever embraces righteousness does so for the benefit of their own soul, and whoever strays, it is to their own loss. No soul shall bear the burden of another, and We do not inflict punishment until a messenger has been sent.'" **(Al-Qur'an, 17:15)**

In another verse Allah says,

"Every soul is a pledge for its own deeds." (Al-Quran; 64:38)

Human beings operate within a system that reflects the Divine Will, and every directive given by Allah to His chosen messengers must be followed without exception. Allah holds no one accountable unless they commit acts deemed unlawful. In the governance of society, law serves as the primary mechanism for ensuring order and cooperation. Muhammad Assad explores the nuanced relationship between humanity and the Divine, stressing that divine guidance is the cornerstone of both moral and legal systems. He writes that God merely illuminates the right path but does not compel adherence to it. Instead, He endows human beings with the freedom to choose their actions. Individuals may freely follow divine guidance or disregard it—but must accept the consequences of their choice. Ultimately, the decision and its resulting responsibility rest with the individual.²⁵

Regarding verse 13 of Surah Hujurat, also known as the "Diversity Principle," which emphasises that humanity was created from two distinct sexes and then spread into a wide range of nations and tribes, not for division, but so that we might appreciate and benefit from one another's unique traits and cultures. Diversity enriches the human experience. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) embodied this Qur'anic worldview in his actions and teachings. He openly challenged the elitist mindset of his tribe, the Quraysh, declaring: "O people of Quraysh, God has stripped away from you the pride of the pre-Islamic era and its boastful tribal lineage. All people descend from Adam, and Adam was created from dust."²⁶

In light of the Prophet's teachings, no form of superiority based on race, colour, or geographic origin holds any worth. His message affirms that all human beings are born inherently free and are entitled to a life of dignity, peace, and respect, regardless of their background. The Holy Qur'an explicitly affirms that:

- i. All human beings are created free.

²⁵ Mohammad Asad, *For an Islamic Polity*, pp.180-181; Showkat, *Op.cit*, p.67

²⁶ Zayd Ibn All Al-Wazir, *Al-Fardnyah - Bahti- fi Azmat Al-Fiqh Al-Fardi Al-Sryvasl 'Inda Al-Muslim*, Virginia: Yemen Heritage and Research Center 2000, p.62.

- ii. Islam categorically denounces slavery and all forms of subjugation and colonization of human beings.

Islam upholds the sanctity of human life and ensures the inviolability of personal property. However, this protection is contingent upon the lawful acquisition of wealth through legitimate and ethical means.²⁷ Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) in his address at the farewell Pilgrimage had said:

"Your lives and property are forbidden to one another until you meet your Lord on the day of judgement".²⁸

Mr. Salahuddin outlines that individuals possess several fundamental rights under Islamic law, including the right to enjoy and utilize property, the right to invest in commerce, the right to transfer ownership, and the right to protection and exclusive occupation of their possessions.²⁹ An Islamic state is not permitted to violate these rights under any circumstances. A notable example is found during the caliphate of Umar ibn al-Khattab, when a Syrian farmer lodged a complaint that his crops had been destroyed by the Muslim army. In response, Caliph Umar immediately ordered that ten thousand dirhams be paid to the farmer from the Baitul Mal as compensation.³⁰

Furthermore, the rights of subjugated or non-Muslim citizens (Dhimmi) were afforded substantial protection. During the conquest of Syria, Caliph Umar issued a formal decree ("Farman") to Abu Ubaidah, commanding that Muslims abstain from any form of injustice toward the Dhimmis. They were strictly prohibited from causing harm, seizing property unlawfully, or violating any agreements made with them.³¹

In the first century of the Hijri era, Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab initiated significant administrative reforms, ensuring that non-Muslim citizens (Dhimmis) were granted legal protection under the state's judicial system. Their properties were secured by law, and in cases of loss or damage, the state was obliged to provide compensation.³²

The Holy Qur'an strongly advocates for justice in all dealings, mandating fairness and impartiality. It upholds that every individual, regardless of faith or status, must be granted their rightful entitlements concerning property and personal dignity.

"O ye who believe, stand out firmly for Allah as witness, to fair dealing and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve, to wrong and depart from

²⁷ Amin Ahsan Islahi, *Islami Riyasat*, Lahore, 1952, Vol.4, p.13

²⁸ *Sahih Muslim, Kitab al hajj*

²⁹ Salahudin, *Bunyad-i-Haqooq*, Delhi, 1978, p.24

³⁰ Abu Yousuf, *Kitab ul Karaj*, al Matbua al Misria, Cairo, 1968, p.82

³¹ Shibli Nuamani. *Umar The Great* (Eng. Trans.by Mohammad Sleem), p.171; *Kitab al Kharaj* of Abu Yousuf, p.82

³² Moin ud din Nadvi, *Deen-e- Rahmat*, Azamgrh, 1967, p. 249

Justice. Be just that is next to piety and fear Allah. For Allah is well acquainted with all that you do" (al Quran; 5:8)

Abdullah Yusuf Ali provides a profound reflection on this Qur'anic verse, emphasizing that while practising justice and righteousness in agreeable or neutral situations is admirable, the real test of moral integrity emerges when one must act justly toward those they dislike or who are antagonistic. Despite such challenges, Islam calls for this elevated standard of impartiality as a core ethical obligation.³³

From its outset, Islam stood in clear opposition to disbelief, offering a transformative vision aimed at eradicating injustice and restoring human rights. This fundamental divide presents two choices: embrace Islam's divinely guided principles, which uphold true human dignity, or reject them in favor of materialistic ideologies that distance one from truth. Allah has clearly distinguished right from wrong, guiding humanity toward justice and moral integrity.

"Allah set forth an example: there is a slave over whom (several) partners are differing with one another, and there is another slave wholly owned by one man. Are the two alike in condition? Surely, such a person of varying ideology will, not be able to act justly" (al Quran; 39:29)

In today's world, competing ideologies often use manipulation to suppress dissent. The so-called "war on terrorism" reflects a deeper ideological struggle—commonly termed a "clash of civilizations" aimed at replacing Islamic governance with secular regimes aligned with Western, particularly U.S., interests. Western powers view the rise of Shariah-based rule as a threat to their geopolitical dominance and exploitative policies in Muslim regions.

U.S.-led interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Palestine have resulted in widespread civilian casualties and frequent violations of international law and human rights. In stark contrast, Islamic law enforces strict ethical standards during warfare, commanding justice, protection of civilians, and restraint, even toward non-Muslim combatants. Violations of these principles are met with divine accountability.

The Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes justice: believers are commanded to uphold it even against themselves or close kin, and Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) was instructed to judge justly. A well-known incident involving Ta'imah ibn Ubayriq, who falsely accused a Jew of theft to deflect guilt, highlights Islam's unwavering commitment to justice. Despite communal bias, the Prophet ruled in favor of the innocent, exemplifying that justice in Islam transcends identity, loyalty, and personal interest.³⁴

In this regard, Allah revealed this verse:

³³ Abdullh Yousuf Ali, The Glorious Quran, American Trust Publication, USA, 1977, P.283

³⁴ Abu Yusuf, op. cit. p. 214

"We sent down to thee the book in truth, that thou mightiest judge between people by that which Allah has shown thee; so be not an advocate for those who betray their trust" (al Quran; 4:105)

Islam places great importance on personal honour, safeguarding the dignity of every individual equally under Shari'ah, regardless of social class, lineage, or status. The Qur'anic worldview affirms that all humans originate from a single pair, and true nobility lies in righteousness—not in worldly rank. Discrimination based on race, caste, or background is strictly forbidden.

The Qur'an teaches respect, mutual recognition, and the rejection of mockery, slander, and arrogance. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), in his Farewell Sermon, declared the equality of all humans—stating that no race or ethnicity holds superiority over another.³⁵

This principle of justice was upheld by the caliphs, notably by Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab. When Jabala ibn al-Ayham, a nobleman, struck a pilgrim and was struck back, Umar refused to grant him special treatment. Upholding equality, he dismissed Jabala's appeal to noble privilege, stating that such pre-Islamic customs held no place in Islam. Unable to accept this equality, Jabala renounced Islam, highlighting the uncompromising Islamic stance on justice and human dignity.³⁶

According to scholars such as Beekun (1997) and Ali (2005), Islamic leadership is not merely a fusion of spiritual values with conventional leadership paradigms.³⁷ Rather, it constitutes a theocentric model deeply anchored in *taqwa* (God-consciousness), *ikhlas* (authentic sincerity), and *shura* (consultative decision-making). These core principles reframe leadership as a sacred trust, shifting it away from purely instrumental or transactional functions toward an ethical mandate grounded in divine accountability. Within this framework, the leader's foremost obligations are the pursuit of justice (*adalah*), the safeguarding of communal welfare, and unwavering responsibility before God.³⁸

Islam unequivocally repudiates all forms of social discrimination, categorically rejecting hierarchies based on race, caste, ethnicity, or regional identity. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) not only articulated this egalitarian ethos but embodied it through decisive action. A prominent historical episode illustrates this commitment: when a woman from an elite Medinan family was apprehended for theft, efforts were made to exempt her from punishment due to her social standing. In response, the

³⁵ *Sahih Muslim, Kitb al hajj*

³⁶ Shibli Nuamani, Umar the Great, op. cit. p. 203

³⁷ Ali, A. J., Islamic perspectives on leadership: A model. International Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Finance and Management, 2005, 2(2), pp. 160–173.

³⁸ Beekun, R. I., & Badawi, J. A., Leadership: An Islamic Perspective. Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 1999, p.114; Kamali, M. H., Freedom, Equality and Justice in Islam. Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1998, pp.53, 57

Prophet (pbuh) issued a stern rebuke: “Nations before you were destroyed because they punished the weak while absolving the powerful. By Allah, even if Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad, had committed theft, I would have severed her hand.” This declaration exemplifies the Islamic imperative of impartial justice, untainted by privilege or status.³⁹

Furthermore, Islam not only permits but encourages vocal resistance against injustice and oppressive rule. The Prophet (pbuh) characterized the act of speaking truth to a tyrant as the highest form of *jihad*, underscoring the ethical obligation to challenge unjust authority.⁴⁰ This ethos was tangibly reflected during the caliphate era, where public accountability was not only tolerated but valued. A notable instance occurred under Caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who once proposed a cap on dowries. An elderly woman publicly contested his decision, compelling him to rescind the proposal. On another occasion, Umar addressed the community, asking, “What would you do if I deviated from justice?” A man rose and declared, “We would correct you with this,” gesturing to his sword. Testing the authenticity of the claim, Umar inquired, “Did you say that for me?” The man affirmed, “Yes, for you.” Umar responded with gratitude, proclaiming, “All praise is due to Allah that there remain people in this Ummah who will hold their leaders accountable.”⁴¹

Islam safeguarded the rights of the needy and instructed the wealthy to assist them. The Qur’an affirms this directive:

“And in their wealth is a due share for the beggar and the deprived” (Qur’an, 51:19).

In an Islamic state, both Muslims and non-Muslims are granted equal civil rights in worldly matters, a principle consistently upheld in Islamic history. For instance, during Abu Bakr’s (RA) caliphate, Khalid ibn al-Walid forged a treaty with the people of Hira, offering protections to non-Muslim citizens. He proclaimed:

“I have granted these rights so that if any of you becomes elderly, impoverished, or faces misfortune, his Jizyah will be waived, and he and his family will be supported by the state treasury (Bayt al-Mal) as long as they reside in the Islamic domain. Should they leave, the state’s responsibility ends.”

This reflects Islam’s commitment to social welfare and its inclusive treatment of vulnerable individuals, regardless of their faith.⁴²

³⁹ *Mishkatt, Kitb al Hadud*

⁴⁰ *Abu Daud, Trimidi Kitab al Ijarah wal Qazah*

⁴¹ Shibli Nuamani, *al Farooq*, Op.cit, p. 331

⁴² Abu Yusuf, Op.cit, p.144

Regarding slavery, a practice long marked by injustice, Islam introduced a revolutionary ethical stance. The Qur'an describes the challenging yet noble endeavor of freeing slaves.⁴³

“And what will make you know what the steep is? It is freeing someone from slavery.” (Qur'an, 90:12-13).

Several prominent companions of the Prophet Muhammad, such as Salman and Bilal, were former slaves who rose to high positions, including military leadership.⁴⁴ Islam also promoted intellectual development among former slaves, leading to the emergence of distinguished scholars like 'Atta, Mujahid, Sa'id ibn Jubayr, and Zayd ibn Aslam.⁴⁵

During the colonial period, slaves, particularly from Africa, were forcibly taken to Europe, enduring severe exploitation, degradation, and deprivation. While slavery existed in early Islam, it was neither encouraged nor left unregulated. Instead, Islam sought to eliminate it through moral reform. The Qur'an and Hadith consistently emphasize the virtue of freeing slaves, equating it with redemption and protection from the Hellfire. The Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) exemplified compassion, treating slaves with dignity and equality, setting the stage for their eventual societal integration as free individuals.

He taught:

*“They are your brothers; give them to eat what you eat, and give them to wear what you wear.”*⁴⁶

The Prophet also advised Muslims to use respectful language when referring to slaves, replacing terms like *'abd* and *ama* with more dignified alternatives such as *fata* and *fatat*⁴⁷. This guidance was widely adopted within the community⁴⁸.

When the Prophet acquired slaves, he immediately set them free, and many, moved by his generosity and kindness, chose to remain in his service out of deep respect, not coercion. Islam not only emancipated slaves but fully integrated them into society as equals, granting them the same rights as free citizens, including the freedom to marry without discrimination.⁴⁹

⁴³Kulayni, Muhammad ibn Al-Ya'qub, Al-Kafi. Tehran: Al-Kutub al-Islamiyya Publications.1987, 5:114

⁴⁴Ibn Sa'd, Muhammad, Al-Tabaqat al-kubra. Beirut: Al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya Publications, 1990, Vol.4, pp.65–66; Baladhuri, Ahmad ibn Al-Yahya, . Ansab al-ashraf. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr Publications. 1997, vol.1, p.530

⁴⁵Hosseini, Mostafa, Bardigi az nigah Islam. Tehran: Islamic Encyclopedia Foundation 1993, p.52

⁴⁶Bukhari, Muhammad ibn al-Isma'il, Sahih al-Bukhari, Mercy for Slaves

⁴⁷Bukhari, Muhammad ibn al-Isma'il, Sahih al-Bukhari. Cairo: Ministry of Endowments.1990, 4:297

⁴⁸Mez, Adam, The Renaissance of Islam. Translated by Salahuddin Khuda Bukhsh and D.S. Margoliouth. Patna: the Jubilee Printing & Publishing House.1937, 162

⁴⁹ Human Rights in Islam, Journal of Muslim World League, Dec. 1980, p. 21

The influence of Islamic teachings on slave emancipation was profound among the Prophet's (SAAS) Companions. Lady Aisha (RA) freed 67 slaves, Abdullah ibn Abbas (RA) liberated 70, Abdullah ibn Umar (RA) emancipated 1,000, and Abdur Rahman ibn Awf (RA) freed 3,000. These freed individuals were not only granted liberty but also dignity, honour, and full recognition within Islamic society⁵⁰. Islam strongly condemns forced labour, viewing unpaid servitude as both a grave injustice and a serious moral violation. It upholds the principle that no person should be exploited, affirming that all individuals deserve respect, fair treatment, and compensation for their labour.⁵¹

In the holy Quran, it is mentioned as;

“And serve Allah. Ascribe no thing as partner unto Him. (Show) kindness unto parents, and unto near kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and unto the neighbour who is of kin (unto you) and the neighbour who is not of kin, and the fellow-traveler and the wayfarer and (the slaves) whom your right hands possess. Lo! Allah loveth not such as are proud and boastful”. (Al Quran; 4:36)

Conclusion

The Qur'an stands as the ultimate source of Islamic law and moral guidance, as well as a foundational charter for human rights and dignity. Its comprehensive framework offers both spiritual direction and practical principles that guide individuals and communities toward justice, equity, and moral excellence. Rooted in divine revelation, the Qur'an transcends temporal legal systems, providing an enduring vision for ethical societal development. For Muslims, embodying Qur'anic teachings entails a sacred duty to preserve life, uphold justice, and build a compassionate, respectful global community. The Qur'an emphasizes fundamental rights, particularly the right to life and justice, as divine imperatives that shape the moral fabric of an Islamic society. These rights, not subject to human discretion, establish a transformative path for humanity, recognizing each person as both a bearer of divine trust and responsibility. By adhering to this guidance, Muslim societies have the potential to overcome divisions and injustices, fostering a world where dignity, peace, and justice become universal realities. In conclusion, the Islamic concept of human rights is unparalleled in its inclusivity and egalitarianism. It does not discriminate based on race, caste, or religion, offering an unmatched legal framework that ensures the protection of human dignity and fundamental rights. Islam not only safeguards life but also honours the dignity and chastity of

⁵⁰ Abu ala Maududi, Op.cit, p.20

⁵¹ Saied Ismail, The Relationship Between Muslims and non-Muslims, Darul Fjr al Islami, Madina 1416A.H. p.27

women, extending these protections to both Muslims and non-Muslims. More than just a safeguard of religious practices, Islam presents a comprehensive ethical and moral system that remains morally unassailable. No system, ancient or modern, has rivalled Islam's universal and profound vision for human rights. At its heart, Islam advocates for peaceful coexistence and mutual respect, promoting harmony across all of humanity.

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