

## Rights of Minorities under Islam

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**Abstract:** The Islam is very clear that Minorities should be treated equally by the State which follows Islam. Fundamental rights are available to the Minorities in Islamic territories. Besides it, they are having certain special rights for the protection of their culture and religion. They have full right to profess and practice religion or faith of their choice. The State will be duty bound to protect their place of worship. They will be protected from all types of violence and aggression. The Quranic injunctions and prophetic traditions guarantee a society, where all citizens of the state enjoy equal rights irrespective of their religion.

**Keywords:** Islam, Minority Rights, Human Rights, Non-Muslims, Quran, Hadith.

### INTRODUCTION

Islam is a religion of mercy to entire humankind and mankind includes both Muslims and non-Muslims. The Prophet of Islam (Peace and blessing upon him) is declared as mercy in the Quran by the Lord Himself.

*"And we have not sent you but as a mercy to all the worlds "[1].*

The Prophet (Peace and blessing upon him) provides humanity the meaning of mercy as the practical concept of Justness, Fairness and Equality. It is also one of the aspects of mercy that How Prophet provided justice to non-Muslim community.

The Holy Quran and Hadiths have made it very clear that Minorities should be treated equally by the State following Islam. Fundamental rights are available to Minorities in Islamic territories. Besides it they are having certain special rights for the protection of their culture and religion. They have full right to profess and practice religion or faith of their choice. The State will be duty bound to protect their place of worship. They will be protected from all types of violence and aggression. The Quranic injunctions and prophetic traditions guarantee a society, where all citizens of the state enjoy equal rights irrespective of their religion.

### MINORITY RIGHTS UNDER ISLAM

#### The Holy Quran declares

*If Allah so willed, He would have made you a single People, but His plan is to test each of you separately, in what He has given to each of you: so strive in all virtues as in you are in a race. The goal of all of you is to Allah. It is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute [2].* And say, *"The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills – let him believe; and whoever wills – let him disbelieve [3]."* *God does not forbid you from doing good and being just to those who have neither fought you over your faith nor evicted you from your homes..." [4]*

The scholars of the Quran have concluded that these rulings apply to all nations and followers of all faiths, As a matter of fact to it is applicable to the entire humanity [5]. In the view of the Quran, justice is an obligation. That is why the Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) was told: *"...If you judge, judge between them with justice... [7]" further the Quran says "We have revealed to you the scripture with the truth that you may judge between people by what Lord has taught you [7]."* The Quran told Muslims to discuss the common points between Muslims and non-Muslims. It directs Muslims not to fight with people of the Book. *And dispute not with the People of the Book, except with means better than mere disputation, unless I be with those of them who inflict wrong and injury, but say to them: "We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our God and your God is one; and it is to Him that we bow"[8].*

Further it discussed disputes of Jews and Christians and warns them about the Day of Judgment. The Jews say: *"The Christians have nothing to stand upon"; and the Christians say: "The Jews have nothing to stand upon."* *Yet they both have something to stand upon, they both recite the Book. Like unto their word is what those say who know not; but Allah will judge*

between them in their quarrel on the Day of Judgment [9].

Islamic rule must provide all security to minorities and, the minorities cannot be forced to participate in defence services. The Islamic rule is responsible for the protection of lives, honor and property of all including minorities. No community can get exemption from army duties except religious minorities. If they are getting exemption from defence services, they are liable to contribute financially. Therefore the Quran declares that *"There is no coercion in religion. Verily, guidance has manifestly been distinguished from error"* [10]. The Quran was sent to bring peace and harmony to humanity through Islam and Prophet Muhammad's (Peace and blessings upon him) worldwide mission was to establish universal peace under the Khilafat. The Khilafat ensured security of the lives and property of non-Muslims. Muslims can claim no superiority or privilege on any ground over non-Muslims be it Christian, Jews or Hindus. The history of Islam is full with such examples. Caliph Ali (R.A) in his capacity as judge did not punish a non-Muslim who was accused of murder because he was forgiven by paying blood money to the Muslim victim family. Caliph Ali (R.A) said *"The blood of those of our non-Muslim subjects is equal to our blood and his blood money is like our blood money [11]."* The non-Muslim were guaranteed tax exemptions during old age, during calamity-stricken time and disability. These people and their families should be helped by paying the maintenance allowance from the official treasury [12]. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings upon him) guaranteed to the bishop of Banu Al-Harith Ibn Ka'b and the bishops and priests of Najran, their followers and their monks that everything, small or great, pertaining to their churches, chapels and monasteries would remain in their possession, that Allah and His messenger would guarantee that no bishop would be removed from his see, nor any monk from his monastery, nor any priest from his office and none of their rights or powers would be changed as long as they were sincere and good, and no cruelty would be shown to them [13].

With regard to Minorities' right to freedom of belief, the Prophet (peace is upon him) says: "Whoever kills a contracting man (a non-Muslim protected by the state or an agreement) he will not smell the Paradise [14]". The Prophet (peace be upon him) warned against the injustice committed against non-Muslims and diminishment of their rights. He vowed to be the opponent of their aggressors. He said: "Beware, if anyone wrongs a contracting man, or diminishes his right, or forces him to work beyond his capacity, or takes from him anything without his consent, I shall plead for him on the Day of Judgment [15]". "Beware! Whoever is cruel and hard on a non-Muslim minority, curtails their rights, burdens them with more than they can bear, or takes anything from them against

their free will; I (Prophet Muhammad) will complain against the person on the Day of Judgment [16]". Besides, `Umar ibn Al-Khattab, the Second Muslim Caliph, concluded a treaty with the people of Jerusalem which read: This is the assurance of safety which the servant of God, `Umar, the Commander of the Faithful, has granted to the people of Jerusalem. He has given them an assurance of safety for themselves, for their property, their churches, their crosses, the sick and the health of the city, and for all the rituals that belong to their religion. Their churches will not be inhabited [by Muslims] and will not be destroyed. Neither they, nor the land, on which they stand, nor their crosses, nor their property will be damaged. They will not be forcibly converted [17].

### CONCLUSION

It has been accepted by western scholars that the people of the covenant, Christians, Zoroastrians, Jews, and Sabians, all enjoyed degree of tolerance that we do not find even today in Christian countries. They were free to practice the rituals of their religion and their churches and temples were preserved. They enjoyed autonomy in that they were subject to the religious laws of the scholars and judges [18]. Patriarch Ghaytho accepted the humility of Muslim community towards Minorities and told that 'The Arabs, to whom the Lord has given control over the world, treat us as you know; they are not the enemies of Christians. Indeed, they praise our community, and treat our priests and saints with dignity, and offer aid to churches and monasteries [19].

Thus, it can be summarized that Minority Rights exist in Islam and its leaders have practically implemented the commands of Allah and His messenger. History is witness to the fact that Islam granted special rights to the Minorities before more than 1400 years from now. The modern world recognized their Rights through United Nations only in 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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6. Quran 5:42
7. Quran 4:105
8. Surah Al-Ankabut verse 46
9. Surah Al-Baqara verse 113
10. Al Quran :2:256
11. Abu Yusuf, Kitab-ul-Khiraj, p. 187
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16. Abu Dawud

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