

## Human Rights in Islam

*Surely Allah enjoins justice and kindness, and giving to the kinsfolk, and He forbids lewdness and abomination and wickedness. He instructs you in order that ye may take heed (16:90)*

According to Islam, all human beings are equal and form one universal community. At the centre of this community is the confession of the oneness of Allah, which, by extension, affirms the oneness and equality of all humanity. When one acknowledges that Allah is the absolute and sole proprietor of the universe, that He has bestowed dignity and honour upon humankind, and that He has breathed into him of His own spirit, it follows that all human beings are essentially the same. Any differences found between human beings must, therefore, be superficial, such as nationality, colour, or race.

The western model of human rights is founded on theories that were formulated during the enlightenment, by such thinkers as Rousseau, Mill, Kant, and Locke. According to these models, consent forms the basis for all laws. As such, a state can be established in any geographical area where the inhabitants agree to be governed by a consensual law making process. In such systems, human rights are flexible, and can change according to the whims of the people.

Islam asserts that the fundamental rights and privileges that Allah has given to humanity can never be taken away or changed, even temporarily, by anyone or for any reason. Human rights are granted by the Creator, not his creation, and apply to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The hungry must be fed, the destitute must be given shelter, and the sick must be given medical treatment regardless of their pro or anti-Islamic sentiments and activities. The Qur'an declares that human rights are universal, and that all individuals are to enjoy and observe them under all circumstances - even in war - regardless of where one is living.

Human rights are meant to be implemented and lived out; they are not meant to remain in the annals of unenforceable philosophical treatises or in United Nations declarations. Every Muslim is required to accept them and recognize the people's right to have them enforced and obeyed.

## Human Rights in an Islamic State:

### The Sanctity of Life:

Human blood is sacred and cannot be spilled without justification. Violating this rule is equivalent to killing all of humanity: *...Whosoever kills a human being not in retaliation for manslaughter nor for corruption in the land, it is as if he had killed all mankind, and whosoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind. (5:32)*

### Security of Property:

In his farewell address to his followers, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) said: "Nothing that belongs to a Muslim is legitimate to another Muslim unless it is given freely and willingly. Do not, therefore, do injustice to yourselves."

### Protection Against Slander

The Qur'an considers libel and slander to be a great offense: *O you who believe, do not let one set of people make fun of another set... Neither defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames... (49:11)*

### Security of Personal Liberty:

Islam prohibits the imprisonment of any individual before his or her guilt has been proven before a public court. This gives the accused the right to defend him or herself from any allegations and to expect fair and impartial treatment from the court.

World Muslim Population (1997)		
	Population	%
<b>Africa</b>	308,660,000	27.4%
<b>Asia</b>	778,362,000	69.1%
<b>Europe</b>	32,032,000	2.8%
<b>North America</b>	5,530,000	0.1%
<b>Latin America</b>	1,356,000	0.5%
<b>Oceania</b>	385,000	0.0%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>1,126,325,000</b>	<b>100%</b>

• By 2025, Muslims will account for more than 33% of the world's population.

### Protection from Fraud:

The Qur'an denounces fraud in all social interactions, and reprimands those who deal with their fellow human beings unjustly: *Woe to the defrauders, who, when they take the measure (of their dues) from men, they take it fully. But when they measure out to others or weigh out for them, they are deficient. Do they not think that they will be called to account? (83:1-4)*

### Right to Privacy of the Individual:

The Qur'an guarantees one's right to privacy: *O you who believe! avoid most of suspicion, for surely suspicion in some cases is a sin, and do not spy nor let some of you backbite others. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, you abhor it! And be careful of (your duty to) Allah, surely Allah is Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful.*

### Protection from Arbitrary Imprisonment:

Islam clearly states that each individual is responsible only for her or her own actions: *Whoever goes aright, for his own soul does he go aright; and whoever goes astray, to its detriment only does he go astray; nor can the bearer of a burden bear the burden of another. (17:15)* Therefore, a person cannot be arrested or imprisoned for the offenses of someone else.

### Right to Protest Against Tyranny:

In Islam, an individual's power and authority is a trust from Allah. This is an awesome responsibility, since one must use this trust in a way that is acceptable to Allah or else suffer the consequences. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) once said: "The best jiidah (struggle) is that of a right word spoken to an unjust tyrant." He also said: "Whoever is faced with a ruler who is oppressive and who permits what is prohibited by Allah, who breaks the covenants of Allah, who contradicts the Sunnah (example) of the Messenger of Allah, and who acts with wickedness towards people, if one does not oppose him either by actions or words, it would be justified for Allah to put him into the hellfire."

### Right to Basic Necessities of Life:

Islam recognizes the right of the needy to public assistance. Allah describes those who will be successful in the hereafter as *"those in whose wealth there is an acknowledged portion for the needy and the destitute."* (70:24-5)

## Rulers are Not Above the Law

According to the Islamic concept of human rights, no one is above the law, not even the rulers. This point was dramatically emphasized by Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib, the fourth caliph of Islam, when he said "Do not address me in the manner that despots are addressed. Do not adopt towards me any special behaviour, nor meet me with flattery or obsequious manners. Do not imagine that your candour will displease me or that I expect you to treat me with veneration."

## Freedom of Expression

Islam allows complete freedom of thought and expression, provided that it does not involve spreading that which is harmful to other individuals or to society at large.

## Freedom of Conscience and Conviction

The Qur'an clearly states: *There is no compulsion in religion.* This means that nobody can be forced or coerced into accepting any religion.

## Protection of Religious Sentiments

Islam affords inalienable rights to all followers of previous scriptures. Minorities living in an Islamic state must be protected from harassment and mistreatment at all times. Even their religious institutions are to be kept in tact:

*And had there not been Allah's repelling some people by others, certainly there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered; and surely Allah will help him who helps His cause; most surely Allah is Strong, Mighty. (22:40)*

## Compassionate Implementation of Justice

Unlike in the west, in the Islamic system, victims of a crime have the option of forgiving the offender:

*The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah: for (Allah) loveth not those who do wrong. [42:40]*

By encouraging victims to be forgiving, Islam elevates humanity to a plane of existence whereby humanity harbours natural feelings of sympathy for all of Allah's creatures.

## Criterion for Truth

In light of the wisdom of Islam that has just been presented, take some time to consider the following:

- Are the teachings of your belief system rationally tenable?
- Is your belief system universally applicable?
- Does your belief system enhance your progress towards spiritual perfection?
- Who is the creator of your belief system? Is he a creation or is he the Creator?
- Has your belief system been corrupted by superstitions, myths, or man-made philosophies?
- Does your belief system concur with the discoveries of modern science?
- Could a human being have invented your belief system?

To receive your copy of the Qur'an and other Islamic literature, please write to:

**Thaqalayn Muslim Association**  
info@thaqalayn.org

Or visit the nearest Islamic Centre in your area:



## Other Books Available from TMA:

The Bible, the Qur'an, and Science  
The Choice: Islam and Christianity  
Jesus -- Prophet of Islam  
Towards Understanding Islam  
The Peak of Eloquence, by Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib  
Muhammad - Man of Allah  
Inquiries about Islam  
The ABC's of Prayer

*This brochure has been adapted from material provided by the World Assembly of Muslim Youth*

# Human Rights

in Islam

*At a Glance*

**THAQALAYN  
MUSLIM ASSOCIATION**

PAMPHLET No. 3