

Islam and Governance

The beginning of Islamic government started in Medina formerly known as Yathrib.

The first Islamic State was established by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in the year 622 CE. The foundation for this State was the Constitution of Medina also known as the Medina Charter. In this constitution the civil rights and obligations of the citizens of Medina was recorded. The constitution was written for the Muslim as well as the non-muslim citizens of Medina. The Constitution guaranteed safety to all citizens of Medina irrespective of their religion.

Some example articles of the Medina constitution:

- Non-Muslim citizens had the same political and cultural rights as Muslims
- Non-Muslim citizens had freedom of religion.
- Non-Muslim citizens were obligated to participate in the armed defense of their city as well as share in the cost of defense of the city
- Non-Muslim citizens were not obliged to participate in the religious armed struggles of the Muslims.

Following the death of Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) he was succeeded by the four Rightly Guided Caliphs: Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali.

During and after the four Rightly Guided Caliphs, Islam was spread to the Far East as well as deep into the West. The last Caliph reigned till 1924, the year that the Caliphate was abolished due to western pressures and aggression. The last Caliph was from what is known as the Ottoman Empire which ruled from 1453 till 1924.

The Ottoman Caliphate was one of the most successful Empires the Ummah (Muslim community) and the world has known, other examples of successful Islamic Empires were Andalusia, Abbasids and the Mughals.

During these successful Caliphates many valuable contributions to the advancement of mankind were made. They especially contributed in fields such as science, economy, architecture, engineering, etc, etc. The advanced level of civilization and science brought by Muslim Moors to Andalusia (Spain) were the main cause for the Age of Enlightenment in Europe, which liberated Europe from the barbaric Dark Ages into the Age of Renaissance.

The Islamic structure of government had at its core a Caliph who is considered the successor to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The Caliph is considered the leader of the Ummah (global Muslim community). The Caliphate form of government has, like its western equivalents, day to day civil administrative servants, judges, governors, advisors, etc, etc. The difference between the western and Islamic government is that the foundation of the Islamic government is the Qur'an and the Sunnah (sayings of the Prophet Muhammed pbuh). Therefore historically all the civil servants, judges, governors, advisors, etc, etc were Islamic scholars. The state treasury was handled by civil servants who were supervised by the Caliph. Caliphates were known for low taxes, higher efficiency, and the death penalty for corruption.

State Tax was divided in two categories: Zakat for the Muslims and Jizya for the non-muslim.

Besides the civil servants the Caliph has what is called a Shura, which is the Islamic equivalent of a group of advisors who advise the Caliph in a broad range of subjects upon his request.



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