

# Human Rights in Islām

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## Human Rights in Islām<sup>1</sup>

Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn 'Abdullāh Āl al-Shaykh<sup>2</sup>  
[Grand Muftī for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia]

**S**ervants of Allāh! Allāh created life. He created the entire universe for a great goal and a profound wisdom, which is not in vain. Allāh said,

**“Do they not contemplate within themselves? Allāh has not created the heavens and the earth and what is between them except in truth and for a specified term.”** [Sūrah al-Rūm 30:8]

And He said,

**“Then did you think that We created you uselessly and that to Us you would not be returned?”** [Sūrah al-Mu'minūn 23:115]

And He mentioned that from the supplication of the Believers is their statement,

**“Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You above such a thing; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.”**

[Sūrah āli-'Imrān 3:191]

He made this creation (i.e. human beings) the noblest and most excellent of all created things. He created man in the best form and in the best appearance. And He granted him the intellect by which he would distinguish – through the guidance of Allāh – the truth from falsehood, guidance from misguidance, goodness from evil and benefit from harm.

**“And We have certainly honoured the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with definite preference.”** [Sūrah al-Isrā' 17:70]

From the manifestations of this preference is that Allāh created our father, Ādam, with His Hand and He blew life into him from His spirit. And the Angels prostrated to him.

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<sup>1</sup> **Translator's Note:** This is a slightly adapted translation of a Friday sermon delivered by the author on the 11<sup>th</sup> of *Ṣafar*, 1430H, at the al-Imām Turkī Ibn 'Abdullāh congregational mosque, in the city of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

<sup>2</sup> **Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn 'Abdullāh Āl al-Shaykh:** He is currently the Grand Muftī, the senior religious authority in Saudi Arabia. He was born in 1941CE and he completed memorization of the entire *Qur'ān* at the age of twelve years. He became a member of the Council of Senior Scholars in 1986CE and he was consequently made a member of the Permanent Committee for Islāmic Research and Religious Verdicts and he was appointed deputy to the Grand Muftī of the time, Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn 'Abdullāh Ibn Bāz (d.1420H), in 1995CE. He currently serves as the highest religious authority for the country, in addition to taking part in the Islāmic radio program, *Nūr 'alā al-Darb* and he delivers lectures, sermons and classes alongside his *da'wah* (Islāmic propagation) work in the cities of Riyadh and Taif.

**“What prevented you from prostrating to that which I created with My Hands?”** [Sūrah al-Ṣād 38:75]

Allāh created him with His Hands and blew into him with His spirit. And the Angels prostrated to him. And Allāh taught him the names of all things and made him a vicegerent in the earth.

**“Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority.”**

[Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:30]

And He made the entire universe subservient to him,

**“And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth – all from Him.”** [Sūrah al-Jāthiyah 45:13]

He produced from this human race Prophets and Messengers who were sent for the guidance and success of mankind in their worldly lives and in their Hereafter. Indeed, Islām is concerned with the human being with a fully sanctioned concern. So the prescribed laws (*Sharī'ah*) of Allāh have come to purify the servant (i.e. the human being) and they have come for his success in his worldly life and in his Hereafter. So what are the acts of worship, except a refinement for the soul, purification for it and an education for it upon correct manners and higher ideals? So these five Prayers prevent one from immorality and wrongdoing.

**“Indeed, Prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing.”**

[Sūrah al-'Ankabūt 29:45]

This Prayer is the connection between the servant and his Lord and it expiates the sins and the wrongdoings with the arbitration of Allāh. The Prophet (*ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, “Do you see that if there was a river near the door of one of you and he were to bathe in that river five times a day every day; would there remain any dirt upon him?” They replied, “No – O Messenger of Allāh.” He said, “So likewise, Allāh removes the sins and the wrongdoings with the five daily Prayers.”<sup>3</sup>

And what is the fast of *Ramaḍān*, except an exhortation to *taqwā* (righteousness) and an incitement to patience and it cultivates a sense of responsibility. And what is the *zakāt* (obligatory alms), except a purification for the soul, an increase and an expansion for one's wealth and a charity for his brothers in need. And what is the *Hajj* (pilgrimage), except a great Islāmic conference which the Muslims attend and it benefits them and increases their brotherhood and it fortifies the unity of the *Ummah* (nation) of Islām. Indeed, the *Qur'ān* addresses mankind and commands them to ponder upon Allāh's creation.

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<sup>3</sup> Related by Muslim (no. 1071), al-Tirmidhī (no. 2794), al-Nisā'ī (no. 458) and Aḥmad in *al-Musnad* (no. 8569), from the *ḥadīth* of Abī Hurayrah (*raḍiyallāhu 'anhu*).

**“O mankind, what has deceived you concerning your Lord, the Generous, who created you, proportioned you, and balanced you? In whatever form He willed has He assembled you.”** [Sūrah al-Infīṭār 82:6-8]

And the *Qur‘ān* addresses mankind in order to clarify to him his end result, his outcome and that he will ultimately return to Allāh.

**“O mankind, indeed you are labouring toward your Lord with great exertion and will meet it.”** [Sūrah al-Inshiqāq 84:6]

## Emancipation from the Worst Form of Slavery

And from Islām’s concern for mankind is that it has granted him rights as a favour from Allāh upon him. So the greatest blessing from Allāh upon him is that Islām has liberated man from the slavery, the disgrace and the degradation of *Shirk*.<sup>4</sup> Since, *Shirk* (associating others with Allāh in worship) is as Allāh said,

**“Indeed, *Shirk* is a great injustice.”** [Sūrah Luqmān 31:13]

And *Shirk* is slavery. Since, the *mushrik* (i.e. one who commits *Shirk*) is a worshipper of other than Allāh. He has humbled himself in front of other than Allāh and he has subjugated himself in front of other than Allāh. However, Islām came to invite mankind to the worship of Allāh and to make the Religion purely and solely for Allāh. And Islām called for the hearts to be attached to Allāh with love, fear and hope. Indeed, *Shirk* enslaves the person and disgraces him and the callers to idolatry, who call the people to the worship of other than Allāh, believe that these idols control their affairs, but the idols have veiled them from their Lord and the idols have come between them and their Lord. Indeed, Allāh – the Sublime and Exalted – commanded us to direct our humility and our submission to Allāh. Our humility and our submission must be directed towards Allāh and there must be no intermediary between us and our Lord in supplication and hope.

**“And when My servants ask you, (O Muhammad), concerning Me – indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me.”** [Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:186]

**“And your Lord says: Call upon Me; I will respond to you.”**

[Sūrah Ghāfir 40:60]

Indeed, the callers to idolatry have veiled the people from their Lord and they have called them to being attached to the souls of the dead, those who are absent, those who do not hear their pleas and they cannot answer; and they have called the people to the

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<sup>4</sup> **Translator’s Note:** Shaykh Ṣāliḥ Ibn Sa’d al-Suḥaymī - ḥafīzahullāh – says, “*Shirk* is to place someone other than Allāh at the same level as Allāh in that which is the sole right of Allāh. Meaning, it is to direct anything from the various types of worship towards other than Allāh.” Refer to *Mudhakkarah fī al-‘Aqīdah* (p. 30) of Ṣāliḥ al-Suḥaymī.

misguided *Ṣūfī* paths. They have veiled the servants from their Lord and they have claimed that there is no path that will lead them to Allāh, except for the path of these misguided callers to evil (i.e. the *Ṣūfīs*). And from Islām's concern is that it did not cause one person to carry the burden of someone else's sin, or someone else's error, as long as he was not the cause for that sin or error. So Allāh said,

**“Every soul earns not blame except against itself, and no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another.”** [Sūrah al-An'ām 6:164]

## Equality in Islām

And also from Islām's concern for mankind is that in front of the *Sharī'ah* of Allāh is that the people have equal rights with the rest of their brothers from mankind, in a general sense.

**“O mankind! Indeed, We have created you from a male and a female and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may know one another.”**  
[Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt 49:13]

And the people are of various levels with regards to *īmān* (faith). So the best of the people are the Believers and the worst of them are the disbelievers. And the people of *īmān* (i.e. the Believers) vary in levels due to *taqwā* (righteousness), some of them are strong and some of them are weak in terms of righteousness.

**“Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allāh is the most righteous of you.”** [Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt 49:13]

## Personal Safety in Islām

And from Islām's concern for mankind is that it has made aggression unlawful upon him. So Islām affirms his right to life and it affirms that life is a right for him. No one is allowed to take a life, except for the One who granted it (i.e. Allāh), and He is capable of all things. So Allāh has made it unlawful to spill the blood of another human being and He said,

**“And whosoever kills a believer intentionally – his recompense is Hell, wherein he will abide eternally, and Allāh has become angry with him and has cursed him and has prepared for him a great punishment.”**  
[Sūrah al-Nisā' 4:93]

And Allāh said,

**“And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you.”** [Sūrah al-Isrā' 17:31]

And He said,

**“And do not kill the soul which Allāh has forbidden to be killed except by legal right.” [Sūrah al-An'ām 6:151]**

And there occurs in a *ḥadīth*, “Indeed, your blood, your wealth and your honours are unlawful to each other.”<sup>5</sup> And there occurs in another *ḥadīth*, “The servant will not cease to be upon an elevated rank in his Religion, as long as he does not spill blood that is unlawful.”<sup>6</sup> And there occurs in another *ḥadīth*, “Every sin has the possibility of being forgiven by Allāh except a man who dies as a *mushrik* (polytheist), or a man who kills a Believer without due right.”<sup>7</sup> And there also occurs in another *ḥadīth*, “If all the people in the heavens and the earth were to unite together upon killing a Muslim without due right, Allāh would throw all of them into the Fire of Hell upon their faces.”<sup>8</sup>

## Women's Rights

And from Islām's concern with mankind is that it has honoured the woman and paid great attention to her. And Islām has from both the polar opposites of extremism and neglect. It has liberated her from those who seek to oppress her, whether they do it by depriving her of her rights, or by trying to deprive her of her Religion and sense of honour. Islām has safeguarded her honour and protected her nobility. So Islām respects the woman as a mother, a wife, a daughter and a sister. And Islām has protected her body from the looks of those who are not related to her and Islām has designated a *maḥram*<sup>9</sup> to carry out her affairs for her. And Islām has made it unlawful for a non-relative male to be alone with her, and it has prohibited her from mixing with people of the opposite gender as a protection for her honour and a safeguarding of her nobility. Since, the woman is the one who lays the first brick in the education and success the society. Islām has affirmed her right to the inheritance and it has affirmed her right to seek an education. And Islām has affirmed her right to grant her own approval for marriage. So Islām has granted her the freedom to either accept or reject a marriage proposal. All of that is from Islām's concern for her, none of this began with those who cry out for her to corrupt her character, destroy her nature and abandon her nobility – and they make her into an object of pleasure in the hands of men who play with her however they want. They (i.e. those who promote feminism) do not look after her nobility, her Religion, nor her honour.

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<sup>5</sup> Related by al-Bukhārī (no. 1623), Muslim (no. 3180), Ibn Mājah (no. 3046), al-Tirmidhī (no. 2085), al-Dārimī in *al-Sunan* (no. 1836) and Aḥmad in *al-Musnad* (no. 18198).

<sup>6</sup> Related by al-Bukhārī (no. 6355), Abū Dāwūd (no. 3724) and Aḥmad in *al-Musnad* (no. 5423).

<sup>7</sup> **Ṣaḥīḥ:** Related by Abū Dāwūd (no. 3724), al-Nisā'ī (no. 3919) and Aḥmad in *al-Musnad* (no. 16302). It was authenticated by al-Albānī in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'* (no. 4524).

<sup>8</sup> Refer to *Kanz al-'Ummāl* (no. 45993) of al-Hindī.

<sup>9</sup> Shaykh al-Islām 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn Bāz (d.1420H) said, “The *maḥram* is a man who is forbidden for marriage to the woman because of blood ties, such as her father or brother; or a *maḥram* through marriage, such as her husband, husband's father or husband's son; or a father or son through breastfeeding (i.e. the father or son of the woman who breastfed her) and so on.” Refer to *Majmū' al-Fatāwā wa Maqālāt al-Mutanawwi'ah* (8/336) of Ibn Bāz.

## Rights of the Family

And from Islām's concern for mankind is that it has preserved the rights of the family. So it gave the parents their rights, and the wife her rights and the husband his rights and to the children their rights. And in Islām the neighbours have rights. And Islām has concern for the neighbours, concern for the relatives and the close companions. And Islām has counselled us to preserve the ties of kinship and to keep the society united through the bond of *īmān* (faith), "The Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. He does not oppress him, nor lie to him, nor hold him in contempt. The blood, wealth and honour of a Muslim is unlawful to every other Muslim."<sup>10</sup>

## True Human Rights are Found in Islām

Indeed, human rights in Islām have originated from the sound *'aqidah* (creed), which has come with the truth and justice.

**"We have already sent Our Messengers with clear evidences and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may maintain their affairs in justice."** [Sūrah al-Ḥadīd 57:25]

These are human rights in Islām. These are the true rights, they are not the rights proclaimed by those who have gone to extremes concerning human rights. So they have transgressed against human beings in the name of human rights. The true rights are found within Islām, because Islām safeguards a human being's spirituality, his intellect, his body and his soul to the highest degree. Such is not the case with those ones who cry out proclaiming rights, yet they are oppressive liars.

The rights are not a favour granted by human beings. Rather, they are from the favour of Allāh. There are rights within Islām that mankind in general deserves, rights with regards to politics, economics, education and societal rights. These rights have been affirmed by Islām and they do not change, because they have been issued by the *Sharī'ah* of Islām.

Do not pay any attention to these ones who call out for human rights. Indeed, they have oppressed people and dealt with them badly. They have been merciful with the criminals and they have disregarded their crimes in the name of human rights. So they have been complicit in affirming oppression and injustice in the name of human rights. Indeed, the true human rights are comprised within the fair and just *Sharī'ah* of Islām, which is the last of all systems of prescribed laws, as Allāh said,

**"We have not neglected anything in the Book."** [Sūrah al-An'ām 6:38]

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<sup>10</sup> Related by al-Bukhārī (no. 6437), Muslim (no. 4677), Abū Dāwūd (no. 4248), al-Tirmidhī (no. 1850) and Ahmad in *al-Musnad* (no. 7402).

**“And the Word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and in justice. None can alter His Words, and He is the Hearing, the Knowing.”** [Sūrah al-An'ām 6:115]

## False Claimants to Human Rights

These are the true human rights. These human rights are found within Islām, they emanate from the deep-rooted *'aqīdah* (belief) and they are brought to life through *īmān* (faith). These rights contain the utmost limits of justice and fairness. Human rights are not a cause for the downfall and elimination of virtues. Human rights do not come from libertinism and agnosticism in the name of freedom. Human rights do not come from those who seek to break down the natural differences between genders, which the *Sharī'ah* of Muḥammad has come with, in order to corrupt the Muslim woman and eliminate her modesty and her character. And human rights are not that we must consider the *Sharī'ah* punishments no longer appropriate and that we must describe them as barbaric and merciless. So we are hurt by the thief when he steals and we are hurt by the corruption of the immoral one, but we cannot seize the shameless one, the liar and the immoral one. Indeed, human rights in this evil form are oppression and injustice. The just and fair human rights are only found in what the *Sharī'ah* of Muḥammad has come with. How many systems of regulation cry out about human rights and call to human rights, as they claim, but we see that they have differing opinions concerning this affair. Where are the human rights with regards to the usage of destructive lethal weapons? Where are the human rights with regards to those who bomb buildings with people inside? And where are human rights with regards to those who blow up mosques and Islāmic schools? And where are human rights with regards to those who split up and divide the nations? And where are the human rights with regards to those who overpower the weak, disgrace them and deprive them of their freedom? The human rights are only on paper in treaties and contracts, which have been thrown into waste baskets. However, the true human rights are those that were brought by Muḥammad Ibn 'Abdullāh (*ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*).

O people! Indeed, your Lord is one and your father (i.e. Ādam) is one. A non-Arab is no better than an Arab, nor is an Arab any better than a non-Arab. And there is no excellence for a black person over a white one, nor is there any excellence for a white person over a black one, except due to *taqwā* (righteousness). The Religion of Islām has preserved human rights in truth; it has preserved them in all aspects of life. However, the aggressors and the oppressors accuse Islām of every evil. That is because they have a disease and misguidance in their hearts. And they disbelieve in the *Qur'ān* and the *Sunnah* (traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad). And if the Muslims were to ponder carefully upon the Book of Allāh and the *Sunnah* of His Prophet, they would surely see that the truth and justice is within these two – always and forever.