

Protection of Minority Rights in Islam: Insight from The Quran and Sunnah

Hafiza Rabia Jamil

Research Scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities, Hamdard University Karachi.

Email: rabiajamil286@gmail.com

Dr. Muhammad Atif Aftab

Head of Department Islamic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities, Hamdard University Karachi.

Email: atif.aftab@hamdard.edu.pk

Fozia Shaheen Wazir Ali

Research Scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities, Hamdard University Karachi.

Email: fauziawazeer@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study examines an important area of Islamic law, concentrating on how minorities' rights are protected within the guidelines of the Quran and Sunnah. A thorough investigation of the connection between Islamic teachings and defending minority rights is necessary. Because it's a big problem in today's diverse societies. This research attempts to clarify the key ideas that underpin how minorities of various religions, nationalities, and cultures should be handled in Islamic society by closely examining pertinent Quranic passages and Prophetic traditions. The research also explores the interpretation and application of these concepts in the context of contemporary legal systems. It offers advice on how to strike a balance between traditional Islamic principles and the demands of a just and inclusive society. The findings of this study aid in promoting a greater comprehension of the connection between Islam and minority rights to promote discussions and aid various groups of people in coexisting peacefully. The study also makes suggestions for how to strike a balance between traditional Islamic principles and the requirement to build a just and inclusive society. The research aims to promote a more inclusive and peaceful society by illuminating how Islamic ideals can coexist with the defense of minority rights.

Keywords: Islam, minority rights, Quran, Sunnah

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INTRODUCTION:

The Qur'an is regarded by Muslims as being the Word of God and was given to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) by the angel Gabriel. In Islamic tradition, the Qur'an is held in the highest regard among all other sources. For comprehending and observing Islam, it is regarded as the primary and most reliable source. Because these rights are closely related to our human nature, the Qur'an highlights the fundamental rights that everyone should possess. These rights, according to the Qur'an, were made by God at the same time as humanity in order to assist us in realizing our respect and dignity (Hassan, 2003). Recently, there has been a lot of discussion on human rights. People all throughout the world are fighting for their basic human rights, which for a decent and quiet life, are necessary. The idea of human rights was first presented in Islam in the 7th century, although in the West, it is frequently associated with the Magna Carta, which was signed in England in 1215. Although Western academics may claim credit, the first-ever human rights charter can be found in the Holy Prophet's final sermon. With the passage of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" by the United Nations in 1966, the West later institutionalized these rights. Although the majority of democratic nations now have human rights listed in their constitutions, minority rights are regrettably not often explicitly stated (Khalid and Anwar, 2018).

In contrast to the majority, the larger group, the word "minority" denotes membership in a smaller group. It emerged as a political phrase in Europe during the democratic era, where it was used in opposition to the "majority." It was perceived as an alternative term for a group that did not make up the majority. The term "minority" in the context of Islam refers to individuals from a variety of racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Islamic societies have accepted and profited from a variety of minority communities over time. It is equivalent to eroding or degrading what makes us human when these rights are denied or violated. Compared to the dominant culture, people from other religious, racial, or cultural backgrounds have different experiences. The goal of this study is to thoroughly examine the Quranic passages and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad that guide the ethical treatment of minorities. It tries to clarify how these principles are applicable in the legal and social contexts of the present (Basri, 2015).

Islam is a religion based on love, care, kindness, and compassion. Islam is a staunch advocate of religious freedom for this reason. It is written in the Quran that there is no compulsion in religion. From the erroneous route is evident the right one (Al-Baqarah). This passage clearly states that no one should be coerced into accepting Islam, and those who attempt to do so are transgressing the law. It's vital to note that this verse instructs Muslims to respect other people's fundamental rights, particularly their right to freedom of religion. People are free to decide whether or not to practice Islam. Islam invites people to examine and comprehend the faith using their own logic and research. Important values like justice, equality, and kindness are taught in the Quran as the cornerstones of Islamic ethics. How to put these ideas into practice is also demonstrated by the Sunnah or the words and deeds of Prophet Muhammad. The Quran goes into detail in accounts of interactions between various communities and the Prophet's treatment of non-Muslims (Mehfooz, 2021).

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LITERATURE REVIEW:

Defining Human Rights:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was ratified by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, contains one of the most well-known definitions of human rights. It reads: "Human rights are the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone should have, no matter where they're from, who they are, or what they think". These rights include the right to life, liberty, and security of person; the freedom from slavery, torture, and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; the right to equality before the law; the right to a fair trial and public hearing; the right to apply for asylum from persecution; the right to work and education; and a host of other rights that are crucial for maintaining one's dignity and allowing one's personality to develop freely (Moosa, 1998). The core of human rights is summed up in the following clause of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: It emphasizes that everyone has a fundamental right to dignity and equality, regardless of background. It emphasizes the need to treat everyone with respect and compassion, which is a key human rights principle.

Human Rights in Islam:

Islam actively promotes higher levels of interpersonal interaction. Islam views the rights bestowed as blessings from God in exchange for the duties expected of each individual. Islam emphasized human rights and so recognized the worth and sanctity of human life long before modern human rights movements. It is one of the religions that places a strong emphasis on this feature (Muhammad, 2021).

Islam values respect, dignity, and tolerance highly, and its tenets are comparable to a proclamation of human rights. Islam encourages peace and brotherhood. Regardless of whether they are Muslims or not, it shows charity to everybody.

The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was sent as a source of mercy, as stated in the Holy Quran: 'We sent thee not, but as a mercy for all creatures' (Al-Anbiya).

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Two significant documents in the Muslim world underline the value of human rights that are grounded in Sharia law. The Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights (UIDHR), which was created at a UNESCO summit in 1981 by eminent scholars, jurists, and Islamic intellectuals, emphasizes that Islam offered a thorough system of human rights more than 1400 years ago. With the elimination of exploitation, tyranny, and injustice, these rights seek to uphold humanity. This declaration states that the foundation of Islamic human rights is the conviction that the only legitimate source of law and human rights is God. As a result, since these rights are believed to originate from a heavenly source, no ruler, government, or authority has the power to restrict or otherwise violate them. The Cairo Declaration of

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Human Rights in Islam, which was approved by the Organization of the Islamic Conference members in 1990, is another significant piece of writing. This declaration emphasizes the importance of Islamic society historically and culturally, as well as its aim to strike a balance between this life and the hereafter. It makes an attempt to contribute positively to worldwide initiatives to defend human rights, stop exploitation and persecution, and guarantee people's freedom and dignity in accordance with Islamic law (Muhammad, 2021).

Defining Minority:

The term "minority" was first applied to a smaller group in opposition to the majority in Europe during the era of hegemonic democracy. Today, it describes smaller, less numerous groupings inside a nation that are based on characteristics like religion, nationality, or culture. These minority communities generally cohabit with larger, more numerous groups and share a common language, religion, or nationality (Basri, 2015).

The term "minority" has no universally recognized definition. Depending on a person's religion, language, nationality, or culture, a country or community may view a person as a "Minority" in a different way. A minority is a group of people who speak a different language from the majority of the population in a certain area (Ghazi, 2009). A minority, according to Dr. Ghazi, is a group that differs significantly from the dominant group in regard to the state. According to Capotorti, a minority is a smaller group in an unruly nation whose members differ from the majority in terms of things like language or religion. Minorities also cooperate to preserve their culture, traditions, religion, or language, even if they don't always discuss it openly.

Islamic principles on Minority Rights:

Islam is a religion based on love, compassion, kindness, and mercy. Islam significantly contributes to upholding and defending minorities' rights. All world religions, including those practiced in the Arab world, Africa, America, China, India, Indonesia, Italy, Malaysia, and elsewhere, are accepted under the umbrella of Islam. These religions are treated equally and are seen as the forerunners of Islam. Respect for all religions and for all people is emphasized in the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Sunnah. As a result, disparaging remarks about other religions or their adherents are severely forbidden. In essence, Islam places great importance on respect, decency, and tolerance, and its tenets are comparable to a statement of human rights. Islam has compassion for everyone, regardless of their religious beliefs. The Quran says, "We sent thee not, but as a mercy for all creatures." The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is referred to as a symbol of mercy. This passage emphasizes the message of the Prophet's being applicable to all people, regardless of their faiths or backgrounds, and encourages kindness and generosity toward all living things (Basri, 2015).

Minority rights are highly valued in Islam, as are its precepts as seen in the Quran and Hadith. It offers specific instructions on how to treat people fairly. The idea that everyone deserves to be treated with justice and respect, regardless of where they are from or what they believe, is one of the main guiding principles. This means that regardless of background, everyone deserves to be treated kindly. The right to follow one's faith without suffering discrimination is another essential principle. Islam places a high value on fairness, which extends to how

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minorities are treated. Islam seeks to establish a community where individuals from various backgrounds can coexist in peace and harmony, celebrating their diversity and growing in mutual understanding. This focus on minority rights is a component of Islam's larger mission to advance justice and peace throughout the world (Sheikh, 2013).

Quranic perspective on the rights of minorities:

Islam advocates strongly for religious freedom. The Qur'an states, "There is no compulsion in religion. The right path is distinct from the wrong one" (Al-Baqarah). This verse makes it clear that no one should be forced to accept Islam against their will, and those who do so commit a sin. Importantly, this verse also emphasizes the importance of Muslims respecting the fundamental rights of others, including their freedom to practice their own religion. Islam stresses the value of understanding, tolerance, and compassion towards others (Mehfooz, 2021).

The Quran encourages dialogue with people of other faiths and religions, emphasizing the importance of respectful and constructive communication. It's not just about sharing information but also about how we interact and speak to build better relationships: "Don't argue aggressively with the People of the Book, except when necessary due to wrongdoing. Instead, say, "We believe in the revelation sent to us and to you" (Al-Ankabut, 29:46).

"Invite the People of the Book to find common ground: that we worship only Allah, without partners, and that we don't appoint lords or patrons besides Allah. If they don't accept, declare that you, at least, follow the path of Islam" (Ali-Imran).

In essence, the Quran promotes peaceful and understanding dialogue as a means to foster mutual respect and cooperation with people of different beliefs (Sheikh, 2013).

Another verse of the Quran says: "O you who believe, be firm in justice, as witnesses for Allah, even against yourselves or your parents or your relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of them both. So, follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allah is Acquainted with what you do"(Al-Maida). In this specific verse, believers are urged to stand firmly for justice, especially when it pertains to the rights of minorities, even when it may be challenging or uncomfortable. They are called upon to bear witness to the truth and protect the rights of minorities for the sake of Allah, regardless of any personal biases or relationships, whether with themselves, their parents, or their relatives.

(Al-Kafiroon): "Say, O disbelievers, I do not worship what you worship. Nor do you worship what I worship. And I will never worship what you worship. Nor will you ever worship what I worship. For you is your religion, and for me is my religion." This verse teaches us about religious tolerance It says that everyone should be free to follow their own beliefs without being mistreated. In Islam, this means that people of different faiths should be respected, and their right to practice their religion should be protected. This verse encourages peaceful coexistence.

Prophet's (S.A.W) perspective on the rights of minorities:

Muhammad (SAW), the Prophet of Islam, demonstrated in practice the creation of an Ummah in Madina following his migration (Hijrah) from Makkah (622 A.C.), in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an. A non-Muslim Jewish minority lived in Madina and made up the bulk

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of the Ummah. According to Sheikh (2013), the effective formation of this pluralistic society, or Ummah, was made possible by obedience to the Quran. This was reinforced by a treaty that provided a constitutional and legal framework and was reached following a lengthy process of consultation and creative thinking.

In Madina, the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) once witnessed a funeral procession for a Jew who had been his rival. He rose and gave his respects despite their differences. The Prophet (PBUH) said in response when someone muttered that the deceased was an enemy, "Isn't it a human soul?" This straightforward deed demonstrated that everyone deserved respect and acknowledgment as a fellow human being, regardless of their beliefs or personal circumstances (Ghazi, 2009).

The following is a hadith that Abdullah ibn Amr (R.A.) narrated:

If you harm others, Allah will also harm you; if you oppose others, Allah will also oppose you, according to the Prophet (SAW). Source: Sunan Abu Dawood This Hadith demonstrates unequivocally that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) told his disciples that injuring a non-Muslim is equivalent to harming him, and harming him is equivalent to harming Allah. This Hadith serves as a reminder to Muslims that it is their responsibility to defend the rights of everyone, regardless of their religion. It serves as a reminder for Muslims to treat everyone with kindness and compassion, even those who are different from them. According to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), "The best of people are those who are most beneficial to people" (Shahihul Jami).

Rights of Minorities in Islam:

Muslim jurist: "Non-Muslims are treated similarly to Muslims when it comes to civil matters and worldly dealings." This is the best way to sum up the position of non-Muslims in a Muslim culture. This essentially indicates that non-Muslims are likewise entitled to the same rights and benefits as Muslims with regard to their possessions and riches. On the other hand, any constraints or prohibitions that apply to Muslims in these subjects also apply to non-Muslims. Regardless of one's religious convictions, this principle emphasizes the notion of equality and justice in social and economic interactions within a Muslim society (Ghazi, 2009). Islam affirms and respects a number of minorities' rights, including:

Right to Religious Freedom: According to the Quran (Al-Baqarah), "There is no compulsion in religion." The freedom of individuals to select and practice their faith is emphasized in this verse.

Life and property protection: According to the Quran (Al-Ma'idah), "And whoever saves one [life] it is as if he has saved mankind entirely." The sacredness of all human life, especially minority groups, and their freedom to live in safety are emphasized in this verse.

Equal Protection Under the Law: According to the Quran (Al-Hujrat), "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female, and made you into peoples and tribes that you may know one another. The person who is most virtuous among you is, in fact, the most honorable in Allah's eyes." This verse emphasizes the equality of all people before Allah, regardless of their ethnicity or background.

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Protection of Places of Worship: According to a hadith (Sahih al-Bukhari), the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) demonstrated the value of protecting the places of worship of minorities when he defended a Christian monastery in the Najran region.

Right to Legal Recourse: The verse "And do not wish for that by which Allah has made some of you exceed others" (An-Nisa) in the Quran emphasizes the significance of creating justice and fairness. Men receive a share of their earnings, and women receive a share of their earnings. This verse emphasizes that under Islamic law, minorities have a right to pursue justice and fairness.

Right to Participate in Public Affairs: In the Medina Covenant, Muslims, Jews, and other Arab tribes who had been living in Medina at the time joined forces with other tribal and religious organizations there. These tribes used to approach the Prophet (SAW) for guidance, and the Prophet (SAW) also used to consult them on issues pertaining to the city's and its citizens' safety. This demonstrates that the Prophet (SAW) gave minorities the freedom to take part in the governance of the society in which they reside.

Right to Cultural Identity: Minorities have the right to uphold their cultural identity and history within the larger Islamic society because the Quran (Al-Hujrat) emphasizes the diversity of peoples and tribes.

Right to Participate in Public Affairs: The Medina Covenant was an agreement that united the numerous Arab tribes and religious movements that were in Medina at the time, including Muslims, Jews, and other groups. These tribes used to consult the Prophet (SAW), who would also consult with them on issues pertaining to the city's and its people's safety. This demonstrates that the Prophet (SAW) gave minorities the freedom to take part in societal issues where they live.

Right to Cultural Identity: The Quran (Al-Hujrat) places a strong emphasis on the variety of peoples and tribes, which represents the right of minorities to uphold their cultural identity and legacy within the larger Islamic society.

Right to Marry and Create Families: Under Islamic law, people of color are permitted to wed freely as long as they abide by Islamic morals and rules, protecting their ability to start families and integrate into the Muslim community.

Right to Social Welfare: According to Islam, the idea of Zakat (charitable giving) is meant to help the less fortunate, especially minorities, by offering them support and financial aid (At-Tawbah).

Right to Personal Safety and Security: According to Islamic law, minorities must be kept secure in society by being protected from harm to their lives, property, and dignity (Khel, 2013).

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These rights, which protect justice, equality, and the welfare of all societal members regardless of their religion or ancestry, are profoundly founded in Islamic teachings. In defending the rights and dignity of minorities, they demonstrate the inclusive and kind essence of Islam. These rights demonstrate Islam's dedication to justice, equality, and the protection of minority rights and are based on verses from the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) teachings as recorded in reliable Hadiths.

CONCLUSION:

Islam's tenets, as stated in the Quran and upheld by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), offer a strong framework for safeguarding and advancing the rights of minority populations in a variety of ways.

First, Islam teaches that regardless of one's religion, race, ethnicity, or any other characteristic, all people are created equal in God's eyes. The defense of minority rights is predicated on the equality principle.

Islam places a strong emphasis on the value of justice and fairness. This implies that Muslims are obligated to appreciate everyone, regardless of differences. Additionally, it means that Muslims must struggle to defend everyone's rights, particularly those of minorities.

Third, Islam encourages diversity and tolerance. This implies that Muslims are urged to appreciate and tolerate those who practice other faiths and civilizations. Additionally, it implies that Muslims should defend minorities' freedom to pursue their faith and culture.

Fourthly, Muslims are taught to have compassion and kindness for all individuals. This includes being nice and compassionate to others who are different from ourselves, such as minorities.

These rules provide direction for building a just and inclusive society where everyone, regardless of their background or beliefs, can flourish. They are consistent with universal human rights values.

Examples of how Islam defends and supports the rights of minority groups include the following:

Forced conversion is forbidden by the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This implies that Muslims cannot coerce non-Muslims into converting to Islam.

Discrimination against minorities is forbidden by both the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). As a result, Muslims are not permitted to treat minorities differently according to their faith or any other reason.

The right of minorities to freely exercise their faith is likewise guaranteed by the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). As a result, minorities are free to construct places of worship, maintain their religious traditions, and commemorate their religious holidays.

Islam also teaches its adherents to aid the needy and the disadvantaged. This includes providing aid to minorities who require it.

Muslims can contribute to the development of a society in which everyone is treated with respect and dignity regardless of their background or beliefs by adhering to Islamic values.

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

Promoting education and awareness of human rights and minority rights is crucial, both inside countries where Muslims predominate and globally. Muslim-majority countries should review and reform their legal systems to make them compliant with international standards for human rights. Encourage and facilitate interfaith dialogue to enhance tolerance, respect, and peaceful coexistence among religious leaders and communities. Governments and communities should ensure the security of places of worship for all religious organizations, regardless of their size or affiliation. Ensure that minorities have equal access to the law and the justice system. Providing minority communities with the opportunity to grow economically and start their own enterprises will help them integrate more successfully into society. Develop and put into action social welfare policies that benefit everyone, but notably minorities. Encourage and support minority groups' participation in political decision-making at all levels of government. Encourage participation in international campaigns to safeguard human rights, including those of minorities, with other countries. Nations can take a step toward creating a society where minorities' rights and dignity are respected and protected by putting these measures into practice.

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