

# Religious Minority Rights in the Arab World

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## 1 Introduction

This paper endeavors to give a brief and general introduction to the issue of *Dhimmitude*<sup>1</sup> and the present status of minority rights in the Arab World. We will first, briefly, look at the *Qur'ān* and some of statements about Christians and Jewish minorities. Then we will look at some examples of how in early Islamic history religious minorities were treated by the Islamic prophet Muḥammad. We will then look at how minorities have been treated in early Islamic history (640-750), and also at the rules stipulated in the *Pact of 'Umar*. We will see how for over 1000 years the negative views of non-Muslims did not change in the Arab World, but how the Arab Renaissance of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with its concomitant European-style nationalism, gave hope to these minorities. We will look briefly at Pan-Arabism, and we will see how Islamism seems to have won the day and how presently most minorities in the Arab World have lost hope in being treated as equal citizens.

## 2 Qur'ān

Because Muslims consider the Qur'ān as the verbal dictation by Allāh, anything that is said in the Qur'ān about minorities has become a guideline for Muslims. It is not necessary to enter into a debate about the intended meaning of words, about proper exegesis, and about the history of how the Qur'ān historically came into existence. All that is interesting

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<sup>1</sup> The word *Dhimmitude* is coined by Bath Ye'or in 1983; it describes the legal and social conditions of Jews and Christians subjected to Islamic rule. The word comes from *Dhimmi*, an Arabic word meaning 'protected'. *Dhimmi* was the name applied by the Arab-Muslim conquerors to indigenous non-Muslim populations who surrendered by a treaty (*Dhimma*) to Muslim domination.

from the perspective of how the edifice of Islam has been erected, and in the scientific search for the ‘historical Muḥammad’, but not so much for understanding how Muslims have historically dealt with non-Islamic minorities in their midst.

The Qur’ān has, throughout Islamic history, been a source of inspiration and justification for how Muslims dealt with their minorities. Muslims have always been able to find ‘proof-texts’ in the Qur’ān for helping them decide about, or justify, their treatment of Jews and Christians. Therefore, I present a small selection of quotes from the Qur’ān (translated by Yousef Ali) that have been important for Muslims in deciding how to treat their *Dhimmīs*.

Qur’ān 3:118 "O you who believe! Take not into your intimacy those outside your religion. They will not fail to corrupt you. They only desire your ruin. Rank hatred has already appeared from their mouths. What their hearts conceal is far worse. When they are alone, they bite off the very tips of their fingers at you in their rage. Say unto them: 'Perish in your rage.'"

Qur’ān 5:51 "Believers, take not Jews and Christians for your friends. They are but friends and protectors to each other."

Qur’ān 5:73 "They are surely infidels who blaspheme and say: 'God is one of three in the Trinity for there is no Ilah (God) except One, Allah. If they desist not from saying this (blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall them - the infidels will suffer a painful doom.'"

Qur’ān 5:82 "You will find the Jews and infidels [defined as Christians in 5:73] the most vehement in hatred for the Muslims."

Qur’ān 9:29 "Fight those who do not believe in Allah or the Last Day, who do not forbid that which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, or acknowledge the Religion of Truth, (even if they are) People of the Book (Christians and Jews), until they pay the *Jizyah* tribute tax in submission, feeling themselves subdued and brought low." [Another translation: "...until they pay the tax in acknowledgment of our superiority and their state of subjection."]

A fair summary of these verses seems to be that Christians and Jews are not to be taken as friends, as they are unbelievers who hate and corrupt Muslims. They have to be militarily conquered and they must pay a special tax so that they will feel subdued.

### 3 Khaybar and Najrān

Muslims base their behavior on the Qur'ān, and mostly so as seen through the *Ṣunnah* (habits) of their prophet. His behavior is considered exemplary in Islam. Therefore it is important to see what Muslims believe about the actions of Muḥammad related to Jews and Christians. The conquests of the Jewish oasis of Khaybar and the Christian area of Najrān and the subsequent treatment of the subdued populations have become very important cornerstones in the Islamic view of minority rights.

Muḥammad's policy towards the Jewish and Christian tribes in Arabia was to try to convert them to Islam. If they did not comply he was prepared to create treaties whereby these tribes were allowed to keep their synagogues, churches and religious leaders while having to pay

tribute and render certain services to Muslims.

*Khaybar! Khaybar!* and slogans mentioning Khaybar became a traditional Muslim chant during attacks on Jews and in demonstrations. One such chant is *Khaybar Khaybar ya Yahūd, jaysh Muḥammad sawfa ya'ūd*, meaning "Khaybar, Khaybar, O Jews, the army of Muhammad will return". The Hizbullah version is *Khaybar, Khaybar ya Saḥyūn, Hizbullah qādīmūn*, meaning "Khaybar, Khaybar O Zionists, Hizbullah is coming soon." Hizbullah renamed one model of their rockets, used in the 2006 Lebanon war against Israel, 'Khaybar II'.

In 628 Muḥammad conquered Khaybar and put many leaders to death. He took a wife, Saffiyah, from Khaybar, after beheading and torturing her husband. Accompanied by a formal pact, Muḥammad allowed some Jews to stay in Khaybar, exacting a tribute of 50 percent of their crops. The prophet told them that he would still be entitled to drive them out of the oasis anyway.<sup>2</sup>

In 642, Caliph 'Umar expelled many of the Jews from Khaybar, but a Jewish community persisted there at least until the twelfth century.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibn Ishāq (704-767), the earliest biographer of Muḥammad, wrote this in *al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah* (Prophetic Stories). See Wim Raven, *Ibn Ishaq, Het Leven van Mohammed: De vroegste Arabische verhalen* (Amsterdam, 1980), pp. 202-206.

<sup>3</sup> See the online Zionism-Israel dictionary, [www.zionism-israel.com/dic/Khaybar.htm](http://www.zionism-israel.com/dic/Khaybar.htm) (28 September 2009).

The Christians of Najrān, in North Yemen, as well as other Christian tribes, became subject to similar, though less rigorous, rules.<sup>4</sup> It is not easy to know the historical truth behind the existent documents, especially as they are almost per definition an expression of Islamic satisfaction with how it arranged matters. About Najrān, we have conflicting stories. One story says that Muḥammad, in 632, sent an army to Najrān. The city had a large Cathedral and counted many Christians, and Muḥammad wanted to convert them to Islam. Khālīd, the Islamic army leader, offered them the option of conversion or death. Muḥammad congratulated Khālīd that in the end, actual war was unnecessary; terror was enough to convert the Najrān. Another story speaks of the bishop of Najrān who refused to accept Islam; on behalf of his people he agreed to pay the *Jizya* tax to escape regular Muslim invasion in their territory. Muḥammad accepted their decision and the Christian delegation returned to Najrān. The *Jizya* was set as one dinar (or its substitute in clothes) for every adult, male or female, free or slave. If the Jews and the Christians would fail to pay *Jizya*, then they would become the enemies of Allah, meaning, liable to be killed.

Many Muslims, until today, see this treatment of minorities by Muḥammad as a clear sign of his generosity. It is also interesting that Muslims believe that Christians are truly glad to be treated as ‘protected’ minorities. The valid question in this respect is of course, against whom they must be protected, and what their own view of their status is. For Bedouins who were dependent on the meagre produce of an oasis, paying a tribute of 50 percent meant starvation. Treaties of this sort were devastating for the minorities that did not convert to Islam. In the harsh climate of Arabia, the choice was between becoming Muslim and slow starvation. It is dubious why in spite of this, many scholars continue to speak about the Jewish and Christian tribes in Arabia as ‘protected’ tributaries, while in reality they were subjected and exploited.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4 Early Islamic History (ca. 640-750)

After Muḥammad died, the Arabian Peninsula was permanently subdued by the Islamic armies, and immediately these armies continued their

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<sup>4</sup> Fred McGraw Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, 1981), p. 76.

<sup>5</sup> For instance Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, p. 76.

raids into surrounding lands. These Arab armies were large enough to defeat the Byzantine and other armies, but not for dominating the societies they conquered. The Coptic- and Syriac-Orthodox Churches were now liberated of the Byzantine persecutions, while the Muslims were not able yet to interfere in their ecclesiastical life. In Egypt the Arab armies were based in Fuṣṭāṭ, which is part of present Cairo, and in the harbor of Alexandria. It took 40 years before the Muslim Arab soldiers were allowed to settle wherever they wanted in Egypt.<sup>6</sup>

For many Churches that fell under the rule of Islam, the freedom for Christian witness in the public domain increased. They had suffered deeply from the Byzantine legal oppression, as formalized in the Justinian Codex.<sup>7</sup> Muslims began to develop their own minority policies in a way that was not very different from the manner in which Byzantium arranged these matters.

Initially, relations with the subjected Christians were rather cordial, as evidenced at the court of Caliph Mu'āwīyá (d. 680) in Damascus. Damascus had a well-established cultural and administrative tradition with able local officials who made it possible to control the remote areas of Arabia, Egypt and Iraq. Mu'āwīyá relied on Syrian Christians, including Christian Arabs, to run the administration. The chancellor of Mu'āwīyá was a Christian, Maṣṣūr ibn Sarjūn, whose family had brought to power some of the financial controllers of Byzantium before Islam came to Syria.

John (Yūḥanná) of Damascus, the grandson of Maṣṣūr ibn Sarjūn, was brought up at the court of Caliph Mu'āwīyá, after having enjoyed a classical Greek education. John was good friends with Mu'āwīyá's son and

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<sup>6</sup> M. Shaban, 'Conversion to Early Islam', in Nehemia Levtzion (ed), *Conversion to Islam* (New York, 1979), pp. 28-29.

<sup>7</sup> Justinian's religious policy reflected the Roman imperial conviction that the unity of the Empire unconditionally presupposed unity of faith; and it appeared to him obvious that this faith could be only the Orthodox. Initially he tried to reintegrate the Miaphysites back into Nicene Orthodoxy, but as that did not work, he used harsher means and became a persecutor of Churches. His Codex contained two statutes that decreed the total destruction of paganism, even in private life; these provisions were zealously enforced. Contemporary sources tell of severe persecutions, even of men in high position. Paganism was actively suppressed. In Asia Minor alone, John of Ephesus claimed to have converted 70,000 pagans. The Jews, too, had to suffer; the authorities restricted their civil rights, and threatened their religious privileges, but the emperor also interfered in the internal affairs of the synagogue, and forbade, for instance, the use of the Hebrew language in divine worship. The recalcitrant were threatened with corporal penalties, exile, and loss of property.

heir Yazīd. John inherited his father's office of chancellor for Syria. He wrote the first Christian tract against Islam, of which he had a fairly accurate picture. In the *Disputes* John treated, among other themes, some issues that were discussed among Muslims at the Umayyad court; he seems to have participated in public religious debates in the Caliphal palace. John, for instance, freely participated in the dispute between those who held that the Qur'ān was created and those who supported the view of an uncreated Qur'ān.<sup>8</sup>

Under Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (685-705) conversions were discouraged for fiscal reasons. Initially, the structure of the Arab Empire was based on the assumption that a minority of Arab Muslims would rule a majority of tax-paying non-Muslims. The new converts to Islam assumed they did not have to pay these taxes, but that assumption was problematic for the Arab Muslims. They did not want them to have a tax break, and they looked down upon non-Arabs, and did not want to integrate them into their *Ummah* (community).<sup>9</sup> The economic equalization of the non-Arab Muslims would have meant a simultaneous decrease of revenue and increase in expenditure. That could have only resulted in complete breakdown.<sup>10</sup>

'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, Caliph from 718, wanted to reconcile the non-Arab converts with the Arab Muslims. Those non-Arabs who converted to Islam formed a growing class of people refusing to pay anything but the lower rates of Muslim tax which was originally reserved for Arabs only. 'Umar granted these converts most of their wishes, for example, Jizyah was only to be paid by the Dhimmīs. This decision crippled the finances of the state. As the number of Arab landowners also grew, the income from tax diminished even further. These arrangements were of course a great financial encouragement for people to become

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<sup>8</sup> Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (Houndsmills, New York, 2002, first edition 1937), pp. 194-5.

<sup>9</sup> Lewis, *Arabs in History*, p. 72.

<sup>10</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History* (Oxford, New York, 1993, first edition 1950), p. 72. The 'last thing the Muslims wished was to exterminate or to convert them all', Neill generalizes for the whole period from 500-1000 CE. He tries to correct the 'tragic picture' that Christian tradition has drawn of the Islamic conquests, a picture that focuses on two options: death or apostasy. Whereas that picture is indeed incorrect and one-sided, Neill seems to underestimate the lasting impact of those periods in Islamic history when Christians were indeed forcefully driven to the fold of Islam. Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Harmondsworth, New York, 1979, first edition 1964), pp. 63-64.

Muslims.<sup>11</sup> During his reign the first mass movement of conversion to Islam took place. Muslim historians stress his piety, justice, and his role in spreading the faith.<sup>12</sup>

The Jewish and Christian minorities were at the same time subjected to fiscal and other humiliating, restrictions under ‘Umar. The *Pact of ‘Umar* contains a set of rather draconic measures to legalize the minority status of Christians and Jews in the Muslim empire.<sup>13</sup> [See attachment 1] These rules were strictly implemented at various times but often they were not. During the eighth century, four successive Caliphs so persecuted Christians that some bishops left their see and many Christians became Muslim. During that century the Copts often rose in revolt and each time their rebellion was suppressed.<sup>14</sup> This shows that by then, the Islamic rule over the Christian Middle East had become more severe than the Byzantine rule had ever been; under the Byzantines, there were never any large defections of Coptic-Orthodox bishops or mass conversions for being relieved of the pressure by the authorities.

Christians continued to serve in the administration of the Empire for centuries. One reason why it was difficult to implement the rules of ‘Umar II was that under the Umayyads non-Muslims still formed the vast majority of inhabitants; Jews and Christians were needed for running the administration and the sciences of the Empire. Because of this, Christians could still play an important role in public life and enjoy certain freedoms. Except in the Arabian Peninsula, Muslims formed less than ten percent of the population in the total realm they ruled in the Umayyad period.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout Islamic history, these rules were often rather loosely implemented. Christians and Jews were needed in the administration and their important role created some measure of protection against these draconic laws. However, among the Muslim masses, there were often

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<sup>11</sup> Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, p. 219.

<sup>12</sup> See for instance Hassan Ibrahim, *Islamic History and Culture* (Cairo, 1969?), pp. 96-97. He speaks about the ‘bright page’ and a ‘glorious period’ in Muslim history, without mentioning the fate of the *Dhimmi*s under ‘Umar II.

<sup>13</sup> Many Muslims believe that the Pact of ‘Umar dates from the first Caliph ‘Umar, but that is certainly untrue. It is even questionable whether it was ‘Umar II who created the Pact. It was possibly, during the 9<sup>th</sup> century, attributed to him, as he was known for similar arrangements for his minorities.

<sup>14</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, 1976, first edition 1956), p. 303.

<sup>15</sup> Albert Hourani, *History of the Arab Peoples* (London 2002, first ed. 1991), pp. 29, 43.

strong feelings of resentments against Christians – who for instance were often the administrators of taxations, even into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Especially as more Jews and Christians became Muslim, it became easier for the authorities to please the masses by implementing the Pact of ‘Umar, or worse, to persecute Jews and Christians. The lesson learned by Christians in the Arab World from the sporadic but regular bloodbaths, was that as small minorities they had to be very careful to not displease the majority. Most Christian Arab were therefore satisfied to play a minimal role in public life; their numbers had become insignificant in most parts of the Arab World.

## 5 Lasting role of *Dhimmitude* and the Pact of ‘Umar

At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottomans Turks had conquered most Arab lands, and they had installed their governors everywhere. In 1535, France and the Ottomans signed the Capitulations Treaty. This guaranteed French traders safety of their persons and property, and freedom of worship in the Ottoman Empire. It also gave France the right to act as a representative and defender of the Christian *Dhimmīs*. This enabled France to penetrate rapidly into the Ottoman Empire, constructing trading posts and consular missions. The English (1580) and the Dutch (1612) signed similar treaties, as did some other countries thereafter. In the wake of European businessmen came missionaries, teachers, and travelers.<sup>16</sup>

Legally, the Ottomans did not implement the Pact of ‘Umar, although their *millet* system (of ruling their Empire by treating the different religious groups as separate nationalities) did have some comparable discriminatory aspects. But on the level of Arab society and in the religious consciousness of many Muslims, the Pact of ‘Umar was still normative, as can be seen from the *fatwá* of an 18<sup>th</sup> century Egyptian ‘alim, Shaykh Ḥaṣṣan al-Kafrāwī, professor of canon law in Cairo.<sup>17</sup> When asked about the ‘problem’ of the many foreign Christians living in Egypt and that many Copts behaved as if they had similar rights as Muslims, the Shaykh replied with a *fatwá* that underlined that Christians should behave very humbly and never assume equality with Muslims. The document [See

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<sup>16</sup> Neill, *History of Christian Missions*, p. 210.

<sup>17</sup> One reason for its lasting impact was probably that most believed that this Pact was created by ‘Umar I, immediately after the death of Muḥammad.



attachment 2] gives interesting insights in the feelings and opinions about religious minorities among the population of Egypt, and it shows how Islamic scholars continued to use the Pact of ‘Umar as foundational in their legal views of minorities.

## 6 The Arab Renaissance

In 1798 France invaded Egypt, beginning a new era of European-Arab relationships. Philip Hitti credits the French invasion with the beginning of renewal in the Arab World:

Until that time the people of the Arab World were generally leading a self-contained, traditional, conventional life, achieving no progress and unmindful of the progress of the world outside. Change did not interest them. This abrupt contact with the west gave them the first knock that helped to awaken them from their medieval slumber.<sup>18</sup>

The backwardness of the Arab World could not be denied any longer. Many wanted to modernize society through renewing religion. One of the earliest and most influential advocates for pan-Islamic unity and for Islamic revitalization was Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838-1897). His political career began in Afghanistan and India, but he came to Cairo in 1870. In 1876 he founded a Masonic lodge, which included many of the later politicians of Egypt. When he was involved in the circulation of a Nationalist Manifesto in 1879, he was deported from Egypt. He settled in Paris for a while, but eventually he ended in Istanbul.<sup>19</sup>

One of the followers of al-Afghānī, who visited him in Paris, was Muḥammad ‘Abdū. He was to become one of Egypt’s most respected reformers, especially as he became *mufīī* of Egypt in 1899. ‘Abdū and other Muslim modernists demanded the right to personally interpret the sources of Islam for modern life. In that respect they have, during the past century, been better able to speak to the needs of Arabs than the vast majority of conservative religious leaders who rejected any new way of looking at the sources of Islam and its interpretation.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Arab World witnessed the beginning of renewal. The increasing role of Europeans in the Arab World and the growing realization of Arab backwardness by many Arab intellectuals,

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<sup>18</sup> Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, p. 745.

<sup>19</sup> Joan Wucher King, *Historical Dictionary of Egypt* (Cairo, 1989, first edition 1984), pp. 108-109.

led to a desire for a renaissance. That desire developed parallel with the growth of Western-style nationalism in the Arab World. The initial thesis of Arab nationalism was that all Arabic speaking peoples were one nation. It developed as an Arab reaction to Turkish domination in the first place, but also to the increasing Western presence.<sup>20</sup> Arab nationalism was especially strong among the Christian Arabs, who were least susceptible to ideals of Muslim unity and the most open to new Western ideas of nation building based on a shared language.

In most Arab countries the desire to rid themselves of foreign influences expressed itself in popular political parties that spoke in nationalist terms as developed in Europe. In Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Iraq, anti-colonial politics, directed against the Ottomans, France and Great Britain, had nationalist and secularist overtones. That was logical, as much of the nationalism had first developed against the centralizing powers of the Ottoman Empire, which was the bulwark of Islamic orthodoxy. Hence, nationalism had a local flavor, or it was Pan-Arab, but not Islamic. This enabled the Christians in those lands to play an important role in their various nationalist movements.

## 7 Different ‘Pan-Arabisms’

Jamāl ‘Abd al-Nāṣir became president of Egypt in 1953, one year after he participated in deposing King Farūq with a small group of army officers. The dominant political ideology in the Arab World during the 1950s and 1960s was that of Pan-Arab nationalism as proclaimed and embodied by Nāṣir. This entailed the ideal of a close union of all Arab

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<sup>20</sup> Western ideals of nationalism were also strong among the Ottoman Turks; many believed that the weakness of their Empire was mostly the result of non-Turks living in their ‘heartlands’. Successive Turkish governments between the 1890s and the 1920s wanted to rid themselves of as many Armenians as possible. In 1890 there were some 2.5 million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Between 1894 and 1896, *Sulṭān* ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd II had mass killings organized, leading to approximately 200,000 victims. The Young Turks regime that in 1915 succeeded the *Sulṭān*, used the war as a pretext for mass killings of the Armenians on a nation-wide scale in 1915-1916. Mustapha Kemal *Atatürk*, who built Turkey as a secular state, organized more killings in the early 1920s. The total death toll between 1915 and the early 1920s was between 500,000 and 1½ million, both through direct killings and through organized death marches. The motivation behind the killings was a combination of extreme nationalistic and Islamic *jihād*ist fervor coupled with a strong desire for racial and religious purity in Turkey.

states, independence or even autarky from outside forces, social reforms that would bring greater equality and an acceptable minimum of economic wellbeing for all citizens.

The new, independent, governments of the Arab world mostly maintained the relatively secular Western legislation that had been introduced under colonialism. This meant among other things that, at least on paper, minorities had basically similar rights as the Muslim majorities.

Nāṣir's view entailed a central role for Egypt in the Pan-Arab movement. However in Syria and Iraq, the other potential centers of power in the Arab World, different forms of Pan-Arabism developed. The *Ba'th* (resurrection) ideology and *Ba'th* parties of these countries were inspired by Miṣhāl 'Aflaq (1910-1989), a Greek-Orthodox Christian from Damascus. 'Aflaq studied in the 1930s at the Sorbonne in Paris. He was impressed by the nationalism and socialism that he saw in Europe, especially in Germany, whose political philosophy he considered an important bulwark against the main enemy, which 'Aflaq saw in Communism with its anti-nationalist overtones.<sup>21</sup>

In Syria and Iraq, the *Ba'th* ideology became preponderant in the politics of the 1970s up until the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Ba'th* nationalism believed in one single Arab nation that should live in one state. The *Ba'th* ideology was much more clearly defined than Nāṣir's Pan-Arabism which pivoted around him personally. *Ba'thism* was socialist and secular and had a strong following among the many minorities of the Middle East, including the Christians. In contrast Nāṣir's dreams included the language of reformist Islam and used Islam as a rallying point for the Arab World.<sup>22</sup>

Under Nāṣir's government, the position of Christians in Egypt was undermined through his policies of nationalization and sequestrations. The Copts were overrepresented among the large landowners and therefore they suffered more from Nāṣir's policies than Muslims did. Christian Egyptians were able to play a role in Egyptian politics but they were always underrepresented in government and they were only able to hold minor posts. This policy was exemplified in Buṭrus Buṭrus Ghālī, a Coptic-Orthodox Christian. After the 1960s he played a leading role in the ruling Egyptian political party and institutes of the state and from 1977 to 1991 he was the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. That was a position *under* the foreign minister. Ghālī was never promoted beyond this,

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<sup>21</sup> Maxime Rodinson, *Israel and the Arabs*, (New York, 1982, first edition 1968), p. 74.

<sup>22</sup> Hourani, *History of the Arab Peoples*, pp. 404-406.

as the general political opinion in Egypt was that a Christian could not be a foreign minister of Egypt. His abilities were later recognized by the United Nations when they elected him as their secretary-general.<sup>23</sup> In this context it is of interest to note that his grandfather, Buṭrus Ghāfi *Pasha*, was prime minister of Egypt from 1908 to 1910, reflecting the retreat from the climate of secular nationalism of that time.<sup>24</sup>

The countries that became the main proponents of Pan-Arabism after Nāṣir's death (1970) were Iraq and Syria. The *Ba'th* ideology was the only acceptable political viewpoint. Both countries had regimes that were feared and unpopular. Their harsh rule over their peoples did not allow any opposition. For the Christians, these dictatorships were not especially detrimental as long as they toed the party-line. Both countries dealt decisively with radical Muslims. The most publicized strike was by Syria during a rebellion by the Islamic Front in the city of Ḥammā in 1982. Large parts of the city were bombed and destroyed by the Syrian air force.<sup>25</sup>

In Syria, Iraq, as well as in the Palestinian liberation movement, Christians could play a major role in national politics. They were usually overrepresented in government and bureaucracy. In Syria and Iraq this was related to the fact that the governments depended on religious minorities in these countries. For example Ṭāriq 'Azīz, a Chaldean Christian, was able to hold the important position of foreign minister in Iraq.

## 8 Growth of Islamism

Shortly after Nāṣir came to power all political parties were forbidden because his political philosophy dictated that his regime was the direct representation of the masses. The Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn*), founded in 1928, was technically not a party and perhaps because of its popularity, the organization was allowed to continue functioning.

After a number of incidents, relations between the regime and the Brotherhood broke down irrevocably when a member tried to assassinate

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<sup>23</sup> United Nations Press Release: Biographical Note SG/2015/ Rev.7-BIO/2936/ Rev.7 (15 November 1996).

<sup>24</sup> Wucher King, *Historical Dictionary of Egypt*, pp. 217-218.

<sup>25</sup> R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World* (Syracuse, New York, 1985), p. 118.

Nāṣir on 26 October 1954. Thousands of members were imprisoned and badly tortured. Six leaders of the Brotherhood were hung on 9 December 1954.<sup>26</sup> One of the imprisoned members was Sayyid Quṭb. In prison he was atrociously tortured; during this time he wrote some tracts and books. In 1962 he produced *Signposts on the Road (Ma‘ālim fī al-Ṭarīq)*, a seminal book which was to become the handbook for many groups more radical than the Brotherhood. Many sympathizers met secretly and studied Quṭb’s thinking. He argued that as Nāṣir’s regime did not implement the *Sharī‘ah* (Islamic law) and acted as barbarians, it placed itself, and thereby also Egyptian society, outside the pale of Islam. He suggested how the regime should be toppled.<sup>27</sup>

In 1965 the Egyptian regime struck hard at this Islamic movement by rounding up thousands of sympathizers. They were routinely tortured and under those circumstances some of the leaders of the Brotherhood confessed their aim to topple Nāṣir. The police claimed that they found Quṭb’s *Signposts* everywhere among all the cells of the movement, thus further proving that there was a plot against Nāṣir. On 29 August 1966 Quṭb was hanged but he had left an important legacy. Whereas in 1954, the Islamic movement did not have a philosophy of how to counter the Pan-Arab regime of Nāṣir, it now had *Signposts*. It would inspire millions of Muslims in the years to come.<sup>28</sup>

Quṭb’s view’s of Egypt’s regime were inspired by Islam, but it is no coincidence that the increasing popularity of radical Islam in the Arab World was related to Egypt’s waning role in the liberation of the Arabs, to the lack of development of the ‘socialist’ economies of the Arab world, and to the military defeats of Egypt. Egypt’s war against the royalist troops of Northern Yemen (1962-1967) was not successful. It took the Egyptian army five years to achieve only a partial victory over the unruly troops of Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The war made Nāṣir an easy target for criticism by conservative Arab states like Saudi Arabia, as the proponent of Arab unity was now fighting other Arab countries with the support of the atheist Soviet Union. The following devastating defeat of Egypt against Israel in 1967 was another blow to the popularity of the Pan-Arab dream as propagated by the Egyptian authorities.

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<sup>26</sup> Gilles Kepel, *The Prophet & Pharaoh: Muslim Extremism in Egypt* (London, 1985), pp. 26-28.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36-67, where Kepel gave a long summary of the content of *Signposts*.

<sup>28</sup> Kepel, *The Prophet & Pharaoh*, pp. 31-35.

Nāṣir's death in 1970 was a defining moment for the Arab World as he was the only leader that had been able to captivate people from all over the Arab World. He embodied the vision of Pan-Arabism. No charismatic leader of his competence stood up to lead the Arabs. Most other Arab regimes that had been tolerated for their role in decolonization began to lose popularity at the expense of the radical Islamic movements.

All over the Arab World, chapters of the Muslim Brotherhood were opened. In spite of the fact that Pan-Arabism had been a popular philosophy and that Nāṣir and the other regimes had played the main role in the decolonization of the Arab World, Islamic opposition increased quickly. The 1960s were the formative years for many radical groups all over the Arab World; during the 1970's many of these radical groups began to use violence.

President Muḥammad Anwar al-Sādāt (1970-1981) brought Egypt fully into the camp of the USA. In order to defeat the leftist forces in Egypt, he actively supported the Islamic groups on university campuses. He was killed in 1981 by a radical Muslim organization called *Excommunication and Emigration (Takfīr wa al-Hijrah)*.

The murderers of Sādāt were motivated by a pamphlet of its group's main thinker, the electrician 'Abd al-Salīm Faraj, titled *The Forgotten Duty (al-Fariḍah al-Ghā'ibah)*. The booklet argued that because Sādāt did not implement Islamic law, Egypt was as bad as any non-Islamic society. Therefore the duty of every Muslim was to personally withdraw from that evil society and wage *Jihād* against it. Many young people as a result felt justified to live as outlaws and finance their activities by robbing banks or jewelry shops, preferably those of Christians.

After Sādāt's death, the Egyptian army suppressed a rebellion of radical Muslims in the southern city of Asyūṭ. These radical groups never threatened the stability of Egypt although they were a continuous irritant with their threats and crimes. Many radicalized groups of young people followed this approach, until they were crushed with an iron fist in the early 1990s.<sup>29</sup>

In the 1970s the economic disparity between the Arab countries increased dramatically. In 1973 the Arab Gulf states became the owners of their own oil reserves and were able to ask market prices for that com-

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<sup>29</sup> Kepel, *The Prophet & Pharaoh*, pp. 191-218. J.J.G Jansen, 'The Creed of Sadat's Assassins: The Contents of "The Forgotten Duty" analyzed', in *Die Welt des Islams* Band XXV (Leiden, 1985), pp. 1-30.

modity. This created new patterns of financial dependency in the Arab World as most Arab countries became clients of the wealthier countries bordering on the Arabian Gulf. Many of these countries in turn invested their new wealth on the stock markets of the USA and Europe, creating a sort of inter-dependency that would later be vilified by radical Muslims like Usāmá bin Lādin. The new wealth of the Gulf was also used for supporting the Islamic movements all over the Arab World. The conservative Gulf countries, with Saudi Arabia at the helm, believed they were the guardians of Islam. They did not tolerate secularism in the Arab World.<sup>30</sup> Oil-wealth from the Arabian Peninsula was also used for subsidizing the construction of mosques in many Western capitals.

The emergence of militant Islamic opposition movements and the general Islamization of society has been the most remarkable phenomenon since the 1970s throughout the Arab region. It resulted from the thwarted hopes of secular ideologies to achieve both socio-economic progress and a strong international role for the Arab nations. Millions of young people adopted radical, politicized forms of Islam and began to call the Arab authorities to adopt the Sharī‘ah as the main source for legislation and to implement it.

Many Arab countries, including Egypt, have since the 1970s adopted constitutions that stipulate that the Sharī‘ah is one of the pillars of national law. Egyptian law stipulates that ‘Islam is the religion of the state (*dīn al-dawlah*) [and] the principles of the Islamic Sharī‘ah are the principal source (*al-maṣḍar al-ra‘īsī*) for the legislation’.<sup>31</sup> Though the constitutions of most Arab countries also guarantee freedom of expression and the freedom of religion, the Sharī‘ah and its manifold interpretations can always be invoked against Christians.

An Islamic scholar like the Egyptian Yūsif al-Qaradāwī (b. 1926), well-known from his programs on television in the Arab World, argues that Christian minorities in Muslim states must accept the right of the Muslim majority to be ruled by Sharī‘ah, including its Dhimmī legislation. When the rights of the minority run counter to those of the majority, majority rights must win, he argues. When the non-Muslim minority insists on equal rights and freedoms, it is actually imposing a dictatorship of the minority on the majority, which is totally unacceptable, ac-

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 351.

<sup>31</sup> Article 2 of the Egyptian Constitution.

ording to al-Qaradāwī.<sup>32</sup> With these arguments he comes close to the traditional view that considered any Dhimmī demands for equality as arrogance demanding punishment and humiliation. This is a concept that has gained much momentum in the Arab World in the past 30 years.

The meddling of the USA in internal Arab affairs strengthened the resolve of the Islamic opposition movements in the Arab World. Since the fall of Communism by the end of the 1980s, the USA was the only superpower left. In the words of Lewis:

Islam now stands face to face with an alien civilization that challenges many of its fundamental values and appeals seductively to many of its followers [The] challenge of today is incomparably more radical, more aggressive, more pervasive – and it comes not from a conquered, but a conquering world. The impact of the West [...] has shattered beyond repair the traditional structure of life, affecting every Arab [and] demanding a readjustment of the inherited social, political, and cultural forms.<sup>33</sup>

The destruction of the World Trade Center in New York on 11 September 2001 by Usāmā bin Lādin was the most visible form of Islamic resistance against American hegemony. The USA, under President George W. Bush, began its ‘War against Terrorism’ by first attacking Afghanistan. It then occupied Iraq in 2003. The Iraqi President Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, who as the leader of the *Ba’th* party was the last symbol of secular nationalism in the Arab World, was sentenced to death by hanging. Christians in the Arab World were often blamed for the actions of the Americans especially as Bush proclaimed himself to be an Evangelical Christian. It is also obvious that the downfall of the *Ba’th* regime in Iraq has resulted in the brutal attacks on the Christians of Iraq, who are seen as strangers in their own land; hundreds of thousands have left Iraq in the past years.

The increase of Islamic radicalism in most Arab societies made many Christians feel threatened. From Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Sudan, Jordan, and the Palestinian Territories, many Christians have emigrated to the USA, Canada and Australia, further decreasing the percentage of Christians in those countries. The civil war in Lebanon (1975-1990) convinced hundreds of thousands of Maronite Christians to emigrate. Christians

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<sup>32</sup> Yūsif al-Qaradāwī, *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*, pp. 192-197, quoted in ‘The Dhimmī: non-Muslims under Islam - Humiliation and contempt’, by The Barnabas Fund.

<sup>33</sup> Lewis, *Arabs in History*, p. 207.



formed a majority in Lebanon in 1946; by 2007 their numbers had dwindled to 25-30 percent.<sup>34</sup>

The dream of Arab nationalism had not come to fruition. Many Arabs had achieved access to education and health care but, for a lack of general development, vast segments of the fast growing populations were still unable to find meaningful work with reasonable salaries. National independence did not bring political freedoms either. Arab states were usually ruled by dictators and most were in many respects forced to follow the dictates of the USA. The foreign policies of the USA have definitely strengthened the Islamic radicalization in the Arab World, though it drew its main inspiration from Islam's own history and theology.

## 9 Conclusion

The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century saw Arab intellectuals using two distinctly different explanations and solutions for the state of the stagnation, dictatorship and dependency evident in the Arab World. The Islamists viewed the cause of the problems to be that the Arabs had been following Western ways instead of returning to truly Arab and Islamic solutions that should be applied to modernity. The modernist approach was to see the main problem as the adherence to traditional ways that had become degenerate and corrupt. For this later group, the solution lay in openness and freedom in the economy, society and the state, if not in religion itself.<sup>35</sup> These two approaches seem to be mutually exclusive.

For the Christian presence in the Arab World, the modernist approach appears to give most hope. However, since the defeat of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn it seems that, for the foreseeable future, political Islam will be the focal point of the Arab World. In 2004 Shibley Telhami researched the self-perception of people in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates. His survey showed that Arabs increasingly defined themselves as Muslims first, and as Arabs, or natives of their own country, second. His findings also showed major dif-

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<sup>34</sup> There are no official figures for the number of Christians in Lebanon by 2006; the figure given here is based on estimations of different Lebanese Christians Church in interviews in February 2007 in Lebanon. The author of this study received these interviews on 24 February 2007.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 207-208.

ferences between the attitudes in those countries. In Egypt and Lebanon, most respondents identified themselves primarily as Egyptians and Lebanese. In the remaining countries, the majority cited their Islamic identity above anything else.<sup>36</sup> This illustrates how Islam is playing an increasingly important role in the self-perception of the Arab World. This is a reversal from the 1950s and 1960s, when most Arabs considered themselves Arabs above anything else.

Generally speaking, Christian Arabs do not participate in the Arab discourse about Islamic radicalization; they usually side with their authorities. Whereas Christians often played a public role in the anti-colonial struggles before independence, a Christian witness in regard to the lack of democracy and the weak adherence to basic human rights by the dictatorial regimes on the one hand and the Islamic radicalization of society on the other hand, was notably absent. And though the laws of most Arab countries have remained reasonably 'modern' in regard to the equality of all of its citizens, the tendency in legislation is toward more implementation of Islamic law. Probably more important is, that on the level of society, the tendency to treat Christians as second-class citizens has seemed to increase since the 1970s.

Only a radical re-interpretation of Islam and a dramatic change in social *mores* among Arab Muslims will enable Christians in the Arab World to enjoy true liberty and equality, which is a prerequisite for their full Christian witness. In spite of the fact that most Arab countries have inherited rather liberal legislation from their colonial powers, it is to be feared that Christians in the Arab World will continue to be treated as less-than equal citizens.

Truly free and democratic elections as demanded by the USA might lead to further implementation of Sharī'ah law in most countries of the Arab World. Most regimes and political parties would be assured of massive popular support if they promised the implementation of Sharī'ah laws as part of their platform. To speak out against this could easily be interpreted as being against Islam. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, for the Christians of the Arab World, it would seem that benign dictatorships are, one way or another, a better safeguard for a measure of equality and security, than governments elected by truly democratic popular vote. Up until 2009, this thesis has not been put to the test.

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<sup>36</sup> Sibley Telhami, 'Arabs increasingly define themselves as Muslims first', in the Lebanese newspaper *The Daily Star* (Friday 16 July 2004), p. 10.

## Attachment 1 – Pact of ‘Umar

We heard from 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghanam [died 697] as follows: When ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, may God be pleased with him, accorded a peace to the Christians of Syria, we wrote to him as follows:

In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate. This is a letter to the servant of God ‘Umar, Commander of the Faithful, from the Christians of such-and-such a city. When you came against us, we asked you for safe-conduct for ourselves, our descendants, our property, and the people of our community, and we undertook the following obligations toward you:

We shall not build, in our cities or in their neighborhood, new monasteries, Churches, convents, or monks' cells, nor shall we repair, by day or by night, such of them as fall in ruins or are situated in the quarters of the Muslims.

We shall keep our gates wide open for passersby and travelers. We shall give board and lodging to all Muslims who pass our way for three days.

We shall not give shelter in our churches or in our dwellings to any spy, nor bide him from the Muslims.

We shall not teach the Qur'an to our children.

We shall not manifest our religion publicly nor convert anyone to it. We shall not prevent any of our kin from entering Islam if they wish it.

We shall show respect toward the Muslims, and we shall rise from our seats when they wish to sit.

We shall not seek to resemble the Muslims by imitating any of their garments, the qalansuwa, the turban, footwear, or the parting of the hair. We shall not speak as they do, nor shall we adopt their kunyas.

We shall not mount on saddles, nor shall we gird swords nor bear any kind of arms nor carry them on our- persons.

We shall not engrave Arabic inscriptions on our seals.

We shall not sell fermented drinks.

We shall clip the fronts of our heads.

We shall always dress in the same way wherever we may be, and we shall bind the zunar round our waists

We shall not display our crosses or our books in the roads or markets of the Muslims. We shall use only clappers in our churches very softly. We shall not raise our voices when following our dead. We shall not show lights on any of the roads of the Muslims or in their markets. We shall not bury our dead near the Muslims.

We shall not take slaves who have been allotted to Muslims.

We shall not build houses overtopping the houses of the Muslims.

(When I brought the letter to ‘Umar, may God be pleased with him, he added, "We shall not strike a Muslim.")

We accept these conditions for ourselves and for the people of our community, and in return we receive safe-conduct.

If we in any way violate these undertakings for which we ourselves stand surety, we forfeit our covenant [Dhimma], and we become liable to the penalties for contumacy and sedition.

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb replied: Sign what they ask, but add two clauses and impose them in addition to those which they have undertaken. They are: "They shall not buy anyone made prisoner by the Muslims," and "Whoever strikes a Muslim with deliberate intent shall forfeit the protection of this pact."

## Attachment 2 – Fatwa of Shaykh Ḥaṣan al-Kafrāwī

In 1772 a Muslim scholar in Cairo was asked how Jews and Christians should be treated. This answer is not law, but only the opinion of a conservative Muslim. The opinion is in Arabic:

Question:

What do you say, O scholars of Islam, shining luminaries who dispel the darkness (may God lengthen your days!)? What do you say of the innovations introduced by the cursed unbelievers [Jewish and Christian] into Cairo, into the city of al-Muizz [founder of Cairo, 969] which by its splendor in legal and philosophic studies sparkles in the first rank of Muslim cities?

What is your opinion concerning these deplorable innovations which are, moreover, contrary to the Pact of ‘Umar which prescribed the expulsion of the unbelievers from Muslim territory? [This is exaggerated. ‘Umar exiled the infidels only from Arabia.]

Among other changes they have put themselves on a footing of equality with the chiefs, scholars, and nobles, wearing, like them, costly garments of cloth of India, expensive silk and cashmere fabrics, and they imitate them even in the cut of these very garments.

In addition, whether through necessity or otherwise, they ride on saddles which are of the same type as those of chiefs, scholars, and officers, with servants at their right, at their left, and behind them, scattering and pushing back Muslims for whom they thus block the streets.

They carry small batons in their hands just like the chiefs. They buy Muslim slaves, the offspring of Negro, Abyssinian, and even white slaves; this has become so common and so frequent among them that they no longer consider this offensive. They even buy slaves publicly, just like the Muslims.

They have become the owners of houses and build new ones of a solidity, durability, and height possessed by neither the houses nor mosques of the Muslims themselves. This state of affairs is spreading and is extending beyond all proportions. They contribute for the extension of their churches and convents; they seek to raise them higher and to give them a strength and a durability which even the mosques and the monasteries themselves do not have.

Christian foreigners, foes who solicit our tolerance, settle in the country for more than a year without submitting themselves thereby to taxation and without renewing their treaties of protection. The women of the tolerated non-Muslim natives liken themselves to our women in that they deck themselves in a garment of black silk and cover their faces with a veil of white muslin with the result that in the streets they are treated with the consideration due only to respectable Muslim women.

Ought one to allow these things to the unbelievers, to the enemies of the faith? Ought one to allow them to dwell among believers under such conditions? Or, indeed, is it not the duty of every Muslim prince and of every magistrate to ask the scholars of the holy law to express their legal opinion, and to call for the advice of wise and enlightened men in order to put an end to these revolting innovations and to these reprehensible acts? Ought one not compel the unbelievers to stick to their pact [of 'Umar]; ought one not keep them in servitude and prevent them from going beyond the bounds and the limits of their tolerated status in order that there may result from this the greatest glory of God, of His Prophet, and of all Muslims, and likewise of that which is said in the Qu'rān?

Be good enough to give us a precise answer, one based on authentic traditions.

The Answer of Shaykh Ḥaṣan al-Kafrāwī, the Shafiite [Professor of canon law in Cairo, d. 1788 CE]:

Praise be to God, the guide of the right way!

The decision given by the Shaykh al-Ramfī [a great Cairo legal authority, d. 1596], by the Shaykh al-Islām [the Muslim religious authority in Constantinople], and by the learned scholars whose decrees can hardly be written down here, may be worded as follows: "It is forbidden to the tolerated peoples living on Muslim territory to clothe themselves in the same manner as the chiefs, the scholars, and the nobles. They should not be allowed to clothe themselves in costly fabrics which have been cut in the modes which are forbidden to them, in order that they may not offend the sensibilities of poor Muslims and in order that their faith in their religion should not be shaken by this. [Poor Muslims may regret their faith when they see how well-dressed the Christians and Jews are.]

"They should not be permitted to employ mounts like the Muslims. They must use neither saddles, nor iron-stirrups, in order to be distinguished from the true believers. They must under no circumstance ride horses because of the noble character of this animal. The Most-High has said [Qu'rān 8:62]: 'And through

powerful squadrons [of horses] through which you will strike terror into your own and God's enemies.'

"They should not be permitted to take Muslims into their service because God has glorified the people of Islam. He has given them His aid and has given them a guarantee by these words [Qu'rān 3:140]: 'Surely God will never give preeminence to unbelievers over the true believers.' Now this is just what is happening today, for their servants are Muslims taken from among men of a mature age or from those who are still young. This is one of the greatest scandals to which the guardians of authority must put an end. It is wrong to greet them even with a simple 'how-do-you-do'; to serve them, even for wages, at the baths or in what relates to their riding animals; and it is forbidden to accept anything from their hand, for that would be an act of debasement by the faithful. They are forbidden while going through the streets to ape the manners of the Muslims, and still less those of the cities of the religion. They shall only walk single-file, and in narrow lanes they must withdraw even more into the most cramped part of the road.

"One may read that which follows in Būkhārī and Mūsliḥ [religious authorities of the ninth century]: 'Jews and Christians shall never begin a greeting; if you encounter one of them on the road, push him into the narrowest and tightest spot.' The absence of every mark of consideration toward them is obligatory for us; we ought never to give them the place of honor in an assembly when a Muslim is present. This is in order to humble them and to honor the true believers. They should under no circumstances acquire Muslim slaves, white or black. Therefore they should get rid of the slaves which they now have for the), have no right to own them. If one of their slaves who was formerly an infidel, becomes a Muslim, he shall be removed from them, and his master, willingly or unwillingly, shall be compelled to sell him and to accept the price for him.

"It is no longer permitted them to put themselves, with respect to their houses, on an equal footing with the dwellings of their Muslim neighbors, and still less to build their buildings higher. If they are of the same height, or higher, it is incumbent upon us to pull them down to a size a little less than the houses of the true believers. This conforms to the word of the Prophet: 'Islam rules, and nothing shall raise itself above it.' This is also in order to hinder them from knowing where our weak spots are and in order to make a distinction between their dwellings and ours.

"They are forbidden to build new churches, chapels, or monasteries in any Muslim land. We should destroy everything that is of new construction in every place, such as Cairo, for instance, founded under the Muslim religion, for it is said in a tradition of 'Umar: 'No church shall be built in Islam.' They shall no longer be permitted to repair the parts of these [post-Islamic] buildings which are

in ruins. However, the old buildings [of pre-Islamic times] which are found in a land whose population had embraced Islam need not be destroyed. They shall not, however, be enlarged by means of repairs or otherwise. In case the tolerated peoples [Jews, Christians, etc.] act contrary to these provisions we will be obliged to destroy everything that has been added to the original size of the building. [Only pre-Islamic churches and synagogues may be repaired; new ones must be torn down.]

"Entrance into Muslim territory by infidels of foreign lands under the pact guaranteeing protection to the tolerated peoples is permitted only for the time necessary to settle their business affairs. If they exceed this period, their safe-conduct having expired, they will be put to death or be subject to the payment of the head-tax. [Jews and Christians of foreign lands must pay a special head-tax if they wish to remain permanently in Muslim lands.] As to those with whom the ruler may have signed treaties, and with whom he, for whatever motive, may have granted a temporary truce, they form only the smallest fraction. But they, too, must not pass the fixed limit of more than four months [without paying the tax], particularly if this occurs at a time when Islam is prosperous and flourishing. The Most-High has said [Qu'rān 2: 234]: 'They should wait four months,' and he has again said [47:37]: 'Do not show any cowardice, and do not at all invite the unbelievers to a peace when you have the upper-hand and may God be with you.'

"Their men and women are ordered to wear garments different from those of the Muslims in order to be distinguished from them. They are forbidden to exhibit anything which might scandalize us, as, for instance, their fermented liquors, and if they do not conceal these from us, we are obliged to pour them into the street."

This which precedes is only a part of that which has been written on this subject, and if we should wish to mention it all here it would take too long. But this brief recital will be sufficient for those men whose intelligence God has enlightened, to whom he has given the breath of life, and whose inner thoughts he has sanctified. Now let us beg the Sovereign Master of the world to extend His justice over humanity universally, in order that they may direct all their efforts toward raising with firmness the banner of the religion.

In a tradition of the sincere and faithful [Caliph 'Abu Bakr, 632-634] it is likewise said: "The abolition of a sacrilegious innovation is preferable to the permanent operation of the law." In another tradition it is also said: "One hour of justice is worth more than sixty years of ritual." The verses of the Qu'rān and the traditions are very numerous on this subject, and they are known by all the faithful. God has cursed the former nations because they have not condemned scandalous things; and He has said [Qu'rān 5:82]: "They [the children of Israel] seek



not at all to turn one another from the bad actions which they have committed. 0 how detestable were their actions. But He has punished these men because of their obstinate conduct." The Most-High has also said [Qu'rān 9: 1 131: "Those who bid what is right and forbid what is wrong, who observe the divine precepts, will be rewarded. Announce these glad tidings to the Muslims."

May the Most High God admit us to the number of this company and may He lead us in the paths of His favor. Certainly God is powerful in everything; He is full of mercy to His servants; He sees all.

*Written by the humble Ḥaṣan al-Kafrāwī, the Shafiite. [1772 CE]*