

The Constitution of the First Islamic Community

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The formation of the Islamic community dates from the time of the Prophet in Madina. He created a new community there shortly after arriving in this first city-state of Islam. Ibn Ishaq in his *Sirat Rasul Allah* relates the following passage which is translated by A. Guillaume: The apostle wrote a document concerning the emigrants and the helpers in which he made a friendly agreement with the Jews and established them in their religion and their property, and stated the reciprocal obligations, as follows: This is a document from Muhammad the prophet [governing the relations] between the believers and Muslims of Quraysh and Yathrib, and those who followed them and joined them and laboured with them. They are one community (ummah) to the exclusion of all men.

The broad outlines of an Islamic state were established within this first constitution of the city-state of Madina. Through this constitution, the Prophet declared Madina to be a political unit. As depicted in article 2 of the constitution, Muslims established a "unique communication" (ummah wahida) as "distinct from all the people of the world."

The Prophet "went beyond the circle of Muslims proper and included those citizens of Madina who had not yet heeded his religious appeal in one political combination." Within the framework of the constitution it is expressly stated that all citizens, including the Jews and other non-Muslim minorities, lived under the protection of the Islamic state.

At any rate, this single ummah constituted by the Prophet was a Muslim ummah under whose political aegis many non-Muslim minorities had been given protection. In short, as Khadduri states: "The conception of the ummah or brotherhood constituted the basis of the Islamic community in whose membership alone the believer obtains prosperity in this world and salvation in the next."

The Qur'an, appreciating the wise act of the Prophet, says: "It is the milla (cult, nation) of your father Ibrahim. It is He (God) Who has named you Muslims, both before and in this revelation." Furthermore, the Prophet, in order to reinforce the position of the newly born ummah, "instituted brotherhood between his fellow emigrants and the helpers, and he said, ... 'Let each of you take a brother in God.'"

One of the aspects of the Prophet's conduct (sirah) that discourages nationalism and focuses on faith as the key-element of Muslim unity is this brotherhood between people of several nations and tribes. One may go further and say that even the wars that occurred between the

Qurayshi Prophet and the infidel tribesmen of the Quraysh were intended to discourage tribalism as well as nationalism.

The Prophet and Muslims, as depicted in the Qur'an, were allowed to defend themselves and fight against the Quraysh since he and his followers had been unjustly treated by the Quraysh simply because of their faith in Allah.

In this case, the nationalist and tribalist interests were disregarded for the sake of the monotheistic faith of Muslims in contrast to the idol-worship of the Quraysh. This means that .the faith of the ummah at that time overshadowed all other elements and aspects of life