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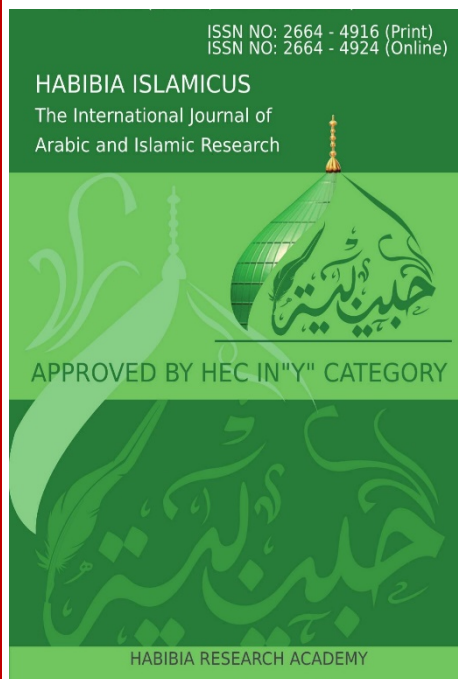
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TOPIC:

**PROTECTION OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN THE PROPHETIC STATE:
LESSONS FROM THE SEERAH OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH)**

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**PROTECTION OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN THE PROPHETIC STATE:
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ABSTRACT:

The right of religious minorities is a critical part of justice and social peace in heterogeneous societies. The Seerah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) provides a close framework in upholding the rights, safety and dignity of the religious minorities in an Islamic state. This paper will discuss the virtues and customs that the Prophet (PBUH) used to protect the rights of non-Muslims in the early Islamic state of Madinah. The study examines the legal, social, and ethical basis of minority protection within the Prophetic model of governance by using qualitative analysis of primary Islamic literature such as the Quran, the Hadith literature, as well as classical Seerah texts. Special emphasis is made on the Constitution of Madinah, the treaties with Jewish and Christian people, and illustrations of justice and tolerance that were shown by the Prophet (PBUH). The results show that the Prophetic state created a model of coexistence founded on the religious freedom, legal protection and the mutual responsibility of the various religious groups. The paper concludes that the leadership of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) offers an important historical illustration of pluralistic leadership and ethical leadership. These values are quite applicable even to the modern societies that aim to advance the ideals of religious tolerance, peaceful co-existence, and safeguarding the rights of minorities in multicultural settings.

KEYWORDS: *Prophet Muhammad (PBUH); Seerah Studies; Religious Minorities in Islam; Religious Freedom; Constitution of Madinah; Interfaith Relations in Islam; Islamic Governance; Minority Rights in Islam; Pluralistic Society; Prophetic Leadership*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The religious diversity has been one of the characteristics of the human societies since the time immemorial. In most regions of the world, societies that subscribe to various religious backgrounds have coexisted in the same social and political structure. Security of the religious minorities, preservation of their rights has thus become a necessary part of the preservation of peace, social stability and respect among the pluralistic societies. Contemporary discourse on human rights, religious freedom and the rights of minorities highlights the need to ensure equality and justice among all persons irrespective of their religious convictions through legal and ethical platforms.¹

In the Islamic tradition, the safeguarding of religious minorities takes up a prominent position in the law and teachings of ethics. According to the Quran, justice, compassion, and respect of human dignity are the key values in social relations. These are the principles that were practically illustrated in the leadership and governance of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) especially when he was founding the first Muslim community in Madinah. The Prophetic state was formed in a socially diverse setting that accommodated Muslims, Jews and other tribal communities. To address this diversity, the Prophet (PBUH) established a

system of government which upheld the rights of the various religious groups and provided peace in the land.²

The focus on justice and minority rights (protection) was one of the most significant aspects of the Prophetic model of governance. The Prophet (PBUH) was able to create a system under which non- Muslim groups were guaranteed safety, religious freedom and peace through the signing of agreements, treaties and administrative policies. An example is the Constitution of Madinah, which formed a community of cooperating political fellowship on the defense and stability of the city with Muslims and Jews sharing responsibilities despite their religious differences. This kind of arrangement shows how inclusive and pluralistic the early Islamic state was.³

This study is mainly aimed at analyzing the safeguarding of religious minorities in the Prophetic state as it is contained in the Seerah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The study aims to find out how Islamic teachings and Prophetic practices guaranteed that non-Muslim communities enjoyed justice, security and religious freedom. It also answers the main research questions: How were the minority rights preserved in the early Islamic state? Which legal and ethical values dictated the Prophet in his relationships with other religions? And how may such principles inform the modern debate on religious coexistence and protection of minorities?

The paper is divided into a number of sections. With this introduction, the paper addresses the issue of the minority rights and the concept of religious freedom in Islam. It subsequently analyzes the safeguarding of religious minorities in the Prophetic state, importance of the Constitution of Madinah in interfaith relations and instances of justice to the non-Muslim peoples in the Seerah. Lastly, the paper outlines the lessons of Positive Prophetic model that apply to the modern pluralistic societies.

2.The Religious Freedom and Minority Rights in Islam:

The idea of religious liberty and the right to minority protection is an essential place in the Islamic doctrine. Since the time when the Islamic religion began, the Quran included the principles highlighting the dignity of humans, justice, and belief freedom. These were the moral and juristical principles of interaction between Muslims and the representatives of other religions. Instead of promoting homogeneity in religious issues, Islamic teachings acknowledged the existence of the religious diversity in the society and offered the guidelines of the peaceful coexistence of various communities.⁴

Among the most popular Quranic principles of religious freedom is the verse where it is written that there should be no compulsion in religion. This is what the Islamic conception of faith entails as it has to be founded on honest belief and not on the use of force. The Quran also recognizes the presence of various religious groupings and stresses that the divergent religious beliefs are among the wider human experiences. As a result, Islam

promotes dialogue, respect and fairness when interacting with individuals of other religious orientations .⁵

Non-Muslim communities residing in the Muslim societies are also incorporated in the Islamic legal and ethical teachings as rights holders, historically known as ahl al-dhimmah (protected communities). The Islamic state provided these communities with the protection of life, property and practicing religion. Classical Islamic jurists pointed that it was a moral and legal responsibility of Muslim authorities to protect such communities. They were to respect and protect their places of worship, religious institutions and their communal practices.⁶

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) expressed these values in his dealings with other religious groups in the course of his life. Madinah was the home of the early Muslim community that comprised Jewish tribes and other communities that had different religious practices. The rule of the Prophet provided a system according to which these communities were allowed to preserve their religious identities and to be included in the overall social and political life of the city. This strategy was a representation of a model of existence together on the basis of mutual commitments and shared civic duty instead of coercive assimilation.⁷

Moreover, the Islamic doctrines focus on justice and fair treatment of the non-Muslims. The Muslim leaders were told to treat the members of the minority groups with dignity and justice and not oppress or treat them unfairly. These ideals identify the ethical roots of minority protection in Islam and show that the model of coexistence between religions was a natural part of the administration that was created in the Prophetic age.⁸

To sum up, the Islamic understanding of religious freedom and minority rights is based on the teachings of Quran and the example of Prophet. Islam founded a system that enabled different religions to live harmoniously in a common social and political system by acknowledging freedom of faith, protection of minority religions by the law and ethical treatment of these minorities.

3.The Religious Minorities in the Prophetic State Protection:

The formation of the Islamic state in Madinah led by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) contributed to the creation of political and social organization where other religious communities existed in one civic structure. As opposed to several political structures of the previous world, which were founded on tribal control or religious formidable selection, the Prophetic state provided a model of governance, which focused on fairness, safeguarding, and mutual coexistence of various religious communities. Muslims, Jews, and other groups of people who lived in Madinah became a part of the larger political order and retained their unique religious identities. This was an inclusive dimension that formed the basis of the safeguarding of religious minorities in the early Islamic society.⁹

3.1 The Seerah has the following principles of religious toleration.

Tolerance and respect to other religious believers were also the values that were constantly encouraged by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). His leadership acknowledged the existence of religious diversity as a social fact and aimed at dealing with it based on justice and collaboration and not coercion. The Quran promoted an amicable approach towards other religious folks and stressed the fact that the disparity in belief did not mean that one should oppress the other or hostility. Prophet (PBUH) used these principles and transformed them into a viable governance by creating agreements and regulations that ensured the minority groups rights were upheld.¹⁰

Some of the most notable non-Muslim peoples, who resided on the territory of the early Islamic state, were the Jewish tribes of Madinah, including Banu Qaynuqa, Banu Nadir, and Banu Qurayzah. These communities were first identified as belonging to the larger politics of Madinah and were permitted to have their religious practices, inner affairs, and institutions. Prophet (PBUH) recommended harmonious interdependence and coexistence among Muslims and these communities, hence bringing about stability and collective security in the city.¹¹

3.2 The Non-Muslim Communities, which are given protection by the law:

One key aspect of Prophetic model of governance was the lawful protection given to the non-Muslim communities. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) made sure that the lives, property and even the religious institutions of the minority communities were not jeopardized. The concept of dhimmah (a covenant of protection) was later elaborated in the Islamic legal traditions and ensured the security and civil rights of the non-Muslim people living in the Muslim lands. Even though the elaborated legal system was developed later in the life of Islamic jurisprudence, the principles of the system may be traced to the policies and ways of doing things in the life of the Prophet.¹²

Even fairness and justice in the disputes among non-Muslims was stressed by the Prophet (PBUH). The representatives of the minority communities were also entitled to justice in the legal system of the Islamic state, and the right to justice was their right in the judicial proceedings. This dedication to law sheltering showed that Prophetic state governance was informed with moral duty and not religious preferential treatment.¹³

3.3 Minority Community Security and Social Stability:

In addition to the rights, the Prophet (PBUH) aimed at the social security and stability of the minority communities in the Islamic state. Alliances and agreements were formed to ensure that various groups in Madinah were able to defend and collaborate with one another. Such arrangements formed a collective security system whereby different religious communities were given the duty of ensuring peace and keeping out the city of the influences of external attacks and threats.

The policies of the Prophet towards the minority groups thus had a wider understanding of social well-being and fairness. The Prophetic state created the atmosphere where the minority rights would be preserved and the religious diversity would be acknowledged, as a result, the communities could peacefully exist within the same political community. This method shows that the rule of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had a mixture of morality and practical policies that favored the stability, equality and respect between various communities.

4.Madinah Constitution and Interfaith Relations:

The Constitution of Madinah (Sahifat al-Madinah) is one of the earliest written documents to create a multi-religious political community. Following the migration (Hijrah) of prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to Madinah in 622 CE, the city was composed of different groups, such as the emigrants of Makkah who were of the Muslim faith, the local tribes of Aws and Khazraj and a number of Jews tribes. It was necessary to have a political structure that could manage the relationship between these groups that would provide security, collaboration and justice to all communities. In a bid to overcome this challenge, the Prophet (PBUH) drafted the Constitution of Madinah that founded the principles of governance in the newly-emerging Muslim state.¹⁴

4.1 Historical Brief of the Constitution of Madinah:

Tribal wars and political instabilities defined on pre-Prophet (PBUH) Madinah. Aws, Khazraj had been engaged in a long rivalry, whereas Jewish tribes were separate allied and interested. The migration of the Prophet gave the possibility to restructure the political system of the city on the foundations of joint responsibilities and common collaboration. The madinah constitution was a social contract and was the one that brought the diverse groups together as a single political community whilst maintaining their religious and tribal identity.¹⁵

4.2 Rights and the Responsibilities of the Religious Communities:

The understanding of the rights and duties of various religious groups was another significant provision of the Constitution of Madinah. It stated in the document that the Muslims and the Jewish tribes formed a single political community (ummah) in the allocation of the security and collective defense but each group had its own religion. This agreement ensured that the Jews of Madinah could freely exercise their religion and also to run their internal affairs without interference.¹⁶

There were also mutual obligations described in the constitution among the participating groups. It was the duty of each community to make contributions towards the defense of the city in case of any external aggression. Also, the Prophet as a leader was to solve disputes and conflicts by means of justice and mediation. These guidelines contributed towards keeping the various communities residing in Madinah stable and cooperative.

4.3 The Constitution as a Model of Pluralistic Government in the Early Days:

The Constitution of Madinah is considered by many historians and scholars as a prime example of a pluralistic government. This agreement also recognized that there were many religious groups within the same political framework unlike other systems that enforced homogeneity. It put in place a structure whereby multicultural religious differences were tolerated without compromising on security, justice and the common good.¹⁷

The paper further demonstrates how the Prophet believed in justice and co-existence. Ensuring the rights of various religious communities and encouraging their collaboration, the Constitution of Madinah contributed to the establishment of a stable political background on the basis of which various communities would coexist. This order corresponds to the entire Islamic standards regarding fairness, respect to one another, and ensuring the minorities their rights.

To conclude, the Constitution of Madinah is an important milestone in the history of the relationship of religions and pluralistic governance in the history of Islam. This document led to the creation by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) of a political structure that was able to balance unity and diversity and provide justice and safeguard to all communities of the early Islamic state.

5. Entitlements and Liabilities of Non-Muslim Society in the Prophetic State:

The form of governance that was developed by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Madinah guaranteed the non-Muslim communities the clear-cut rights and responsibilities in the wider social and political environment of the Islamic state. These sections were meant to uphold justice, social peace and co-operation between the various religious groups. The policies of the Prophet showed that the religious minorities are not only tolerated but also were accepted as members of the society with their rights and dignity that should be respected. Such a democratic system of rights and responsibilities enabled the various societies to live together harmoniously and be part of the stability of the state.¹⁸

Freedom of worship and religion was one of the most essential rights that were granted to non-Muslim groups in the Prophetic state. Minorities in terms of religion were free to exercise their religious faith and to hold on to their religious institutions, places of worship and communal practices. The Quran highlights that individuals of other faiths must be free to worship as they believe without having to force them. This value was echoed in the Prophet relations with the Jewish and Christian communities; they were allowed to maintain their religious character and legal custom.¹⁹

Besides the freedom of religion, the populations of non-Muslim faith were provided with the right to life and property protection. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) underlined that it was a great injustice to kill people who lived under the shelter of Islamic state. In classical teachings of Islam, the Prophet had cautioned that whoever mistreated a protected non-

Muslim wrongly would be answerable under God. These teachings gave a high moral responsibility to the Muslim authorities to keep the minority communities in their jurisdictions safe and well.²⁰

The other notable thing about minority rights in the Prophetic state was the fair treatment under the law system. Other non-Muslims could also receive justice and present their conflicts before the courts. The Prophet (PBUH) acted as the judge most of the time in issues concerning the Muslims and non-Muslims, and in doing so, the judgment was made based on fairness and evidence. In other instances, non-Muslim communities were also allowed to solve some of their internal conflicts under their own religious laws in regards to the respect accorded to their legal autonomy.²¹

Accompanied by these rights, there were also some responsibilities that the minority communities had in the large political community. They had to obey the laws of the state, peaceful coexistence with other groups, and to play a part in society as far as securing and maintaining the stability. In exchange to the security and services of the state, non-Muslim residents got involved into the civic order of the community. These plans formed a balanced mechanism that stressed on cooperation, justice and social responsibility among the members of the society.²²

Conclusively, the Prophetic governance model provided an all-inclusive system of safeguarding the non-Muslim communities. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) established a framework that facilitated harmonious co-existence and respect among the various religious communities by ensuring that citizens had the freedom to worship and socialize as well as sharing responsibilities with others and ensuring that the state allowed the various religious groups to exist peacefully through the provisions of the law.

6-Justice to Religious Minorities in the Seerah:

The Seerah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), is full of instances which demonstrate his devotion to justice and justice when addressing religious minorities. All his dealings with the non-Muslim societies were informed by moral values that upheld the principles of respect, protection, and co-existence. These are illustrations of how the Prophet applied these general Islamic lessons about justice and rights of minorities into the real world of governance and inter-social interactions.

The case of the Prophet dealing with the Christian delegation of Najran is one of the major instances of justice towards religious minorities. This group of people had gone to Madinah to negotiate about the issues of faith and relations with the Muslim community. The Prophet (PBUH) respected them and gave them the opportunity to discuss theology issues. The records of the past show that the delegation was even allowed to conduct their prayers in the mosque of Prophet and there was a sense of tolerance and respect toward one another. The resulting talks led to the signing of an agreement that ensured the safety of the Christians in Najran as well as their lives, property, and religion.²³

The other significant example is under the different treaties and agreements made with non-Muslim tribes and communities by Prophet (PBUH). Such agreements were usually characterized by the clauses of the security, freedom of religion, and fair treatment under the rule of the Islamic state. The Prophet always stressed that the rights of these communities should be respected and their contracts should be honored. These treaties assisted in creating a cordial relationship between the Muslim community and the other groups, which led to the stability and collaboration of the region.²⁴

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also exhibited justice to the non-Muslims not only on legal but also social issues. History tells us that in the cases of disagreement between Muslims and individuals of other communities there was a minority, the Prophet made sure that judgments were conducted without any discrimination. Justice was to be administered based on evidence, morale and not on the religion or social status. This objective methodology helped to build confidence among various communities and the thought that it was a state of governance founded on fairness and accountability.²⁵

One more evidence of the Prophet care about the minority rights is the idea of his teaching about the treatment of non-Muslims that lived under the Islamic protection. He cautioned against inflicting damage or the oppression of those who were members of communities that were under protection and their rights needed to be preserved. The teachings developed a powerful moral code that helped Muslims to deal with the representatives of other religious groups with respect and compassion.²⁶

Such instances reveal that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was not just a supporter of tolerance in his theory but rather exercised fairness and justice in his relations with the religious minorities. He left his leadership that inspired a precedent where different societies could co-exist within a system that upheld their rights and encouraged social peace and unity.

7-Morals to Modern Pluralistic Societies:

The Prophetic model of preserving religious minorities can be of great help to the modern society which becomes more and more characterized by the cultural and religious diversity. Social stability is still a challenge in most parts of the world today as tension associated with religious identity, discrimination, and minority rights, continue to be raised. The Seerah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) shows that the existence of peaceful coexistence of various religious groups is possible in situations where governance is founded on justice, mutual respect, and moral responsibility. The ideals that were practiced in the Prophetic state can thus teach a great deal to the contemporary pluralistic society that wants to achieve harmony without being disrespectful to diversity.

Among the most important lessons of the Prophetic example is the need to protect the law and equal treatment within the law to every member of the society irrespective of religion. Prophet (PBUH) made sure that the non-Muslims populations residing in the Islamic state

were not discriminated and treated unjustly. The modern societies can borrow the same ideals through the formulation of legal frameworks that can ensure that all people have equal rights and that the religious minorities are not oppressed or harassed. These policies reinforce social unity and develop trust between various communities.

The other lesson that is significant is the importance of religious tolerance and mutual respect. The Prophet had contact with the Jews and Christians among others, which also show that dialogue and cooperation are key to peaceful co-existence of various groups. In contemporary multicultural societies, interfaith dialogue and the creation of understanding between the various religious groups can be encouraged which, in turn, will help to reduce tensions and introduce the culture of respect and co-existence.

The Prophetic model as well focuses on how the leadership is ethical and helpful in safeguarding the rights of the minority. A leader is expected to make sure that every individual in the society feels safe and appreciated irrespective of his or her religious affiliation. The case of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) indicates that leaders should be at the forefront to propagate justice and fairness and discourage intolerance and discrimination. These principles of ethical leadership can play an important role in the formation of inclusive and stable societies.

Lastly, the Prophetic model of governance emphasizes the need to have shared civic responsibility. The various communities in Madinah worked together in ensuring the security and stability of the city without losing their religious identities. On the same note, the societies of the modern world can foster cohesion by motivating every citizen to contribute to the social growth and common good despite their religious affiliation.

To sum it up, the principles that have been exemplified in the Seerah offer the eternal guideline in the management of the religious diversity. In the name of justice, tolerance and collective responsibility, the modern societies meant to be inspired by the Prophetic example and build the conditions under which the religious minorities can be respected, secured and enabled to make a positive impact on the overall community.

8-Conclusion:

This paper has analyzed how the Prophetic state protects the religious minorities by analyzing the Seerah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It can be seen that the model of governance developed by the Prophet was based on the principles of justice, tolerance, and respect towards human dignity. In the multicultural community of Madinah, the Muslims, Jews and other people were given a common political framework which guaranteed their security, legal safeguarding and their right to exercise their religion. The Prophet (PBUH) developed a system that facilitated peaceful co-existence as well as mutual cooperation through such policies like the Constitution of Madinah and numerous treaties with other non-Muslim community groups.

The paper also points out that the leadership of the Prophet transcended more than just the teachings of the theory and applied practically in his encounters with religious minorities. Life, property, and religious institutions protection was considered both as a moral and legal duty. Non-Muslim populations were given the freedom to preserve their religious character and internal organization and be part of the overall civic life of the state. These policies represent a form of governance which was a representation of unity and diversity in the society.

Besides that, the Prophetic model of minority protection offers some valuable lessons to modern societies that struggle with such issues as the diversity of religions and social unity. The values exhibited in the Seerah including justice, observance of religious liberty, and ethical leadership are very relevant in an ever-globalized world. Through these values, the contemporary societies have the capacity to formulate governance systems that encourage tolerance, stability, and respect of diverse communities by each other.

To sum up, it can be concluded that the case of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) presents a classical example of dealing with religious diversity and defending the rights of minorities. His leadership proves that with a regime that is led by justice, compassion and focus on the dignity of every member of the society, peaceful coexistence and social harmony are achievable.

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