
Human Rights in Islam

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Abstract

Islam presents a comprehensive, divinely ordained system of human rights aimed at safeguarding human dignity, justice, equality, and social harmony. This study examines the concept of human rights in Islam through an analytical and descriptive approach, drawing upon primary Islamic sources, including the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), as well as relevant scholarly literature. The paper explores the theological foundation of human rights as a Divine Trust (Amānah), emphasizing accountability before Allah and the moral obligation to uphold justice and prevent oppression. It analyzes key rights guaranteed by Islam, such as the right to life, equality, justice, freedom of religion, and the rights of women, children, parents, neighbors, the poor, workers, and minorities. The study also highlights the practical implementation of these rights through the life and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), particularly his Farewell Sermon, which serves as a universal charter of human rights. The findings demonstrate that Islamic human rights are universal, permanent, and balanced, harmonizing individual freedoms with social responsibilities. The paper concludes that reviving authentic Islamic teachings and promoting awareness can play a vital role in addressing contemporary human rights challenges and fostering a just, peaceful, and compassionate society.

Keywords: Human Rights in Islam, Islamic Concept of Human Rights, Qur'an and Sunnah, Human Dignity, Justice and Equality, Divine Trust (Amānah)

Introduction

Human rights are the fundamental rights and freedoms that every individual is entitled to simply because they are human beings. These rights are essential for

maintaining dignity, equality, justice, and peace in society. In the modern world, human rights are often discussed in the context of international declarations and laws. However, Islam introduced a complete and comprehensive system of human rights more than fourteen centuries ago.

Islam is a divine religion revealed by Allah (SWT) for the guidance of mankind. It does not only deal with acts of worship but also provides clear guidance regarding social, political, economic, and moral life. One of the most important aspects of Islamic teachings is the protection of human dignity and rights. The Qur'an and Sunnah emphasize justice, compassion, equality, and respect for all human beings.

Unlike man-made laws, human rights in Islam are granted by Allah, which makes them permanent, universal, and unchangeable. Islam considers all humans as members of one family descended from Prophet Adam (AS), and therefore, deserving of respect and honor.

The Concept of Human Rights in Islam

In Islam, human rights are based on divine guidance rather than human desires. Allah (SWT) is the Creator of mankind and knows best what is beneficial for humanity. Therefore, Islamic human rights aim to create balance between individual freedom and social responsibility.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

“And We have certainly honored the children of Adam.” (Qur'an 17:70)

This verse clearly establishes that honor and dignity are granted to every human being without discrimination. Islam does not allow oppression, exploitation, or injustice in any form.

Human rights in Islam are not limited to Muslims only; they extend to non-Muslims, minorities, women, children, the elderly, the poor, slaves, and even prisoners of war.

Human rights in Islam are an essential part of its divine system, as Islam recognizes the dignity, equality, and worth of every human being regardless of race, color, gender, or religion.

These rights are granted by Allah (SWT) and therefore cannot be taken away by any individual or authority. The Qur'an declares that all children of Adam have been honored, which establishes the principle of human dignity as the foundation of Islamic teachings. Islam strongly protects the right to life, considering it sacred, and strictly forbids unjust killing, oppression, and exploitation.

It promotes justice and fairness in all matters, commanding believers to stand firmly for justice even if it is against themselves or their close relatives. Islam also upholds equality among human beings, teaching that no one is superior to another except in piety.

The rights of women, children, parents, neighbors, the poor, workers, and non-Muslims are clearly defined and protected, ensuring social harmony and mutual respect. Freedom of religion is guaranteed, as Islam does not allow compulsion in matters of faith.

The teachings and practice of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), especially as expressed in his Farewell Sermon, provide a practical and comprehensive example of how human rights should be implemented in society. Overall, Islam presents a complete, balanced, and universal concept of human rights that aims to establish justice, peace, and compassion for all humanity.

Human rights in Islam are firmly rooted in the Qur'an and were practically demonstrated by the life of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), who served as the greatest example of respect for human dignity, justice, and compassion. Islam teaches that all human beings are honored by Allah and are equal regardless of race, color, or social status, a principle clearly practiced by the Prophet (ﷺ) when he declared that no Arab is superior to a non-Arab except by piety. He protected the right to life and dignity by forbidding injustice, cruelty, and oppression, and he showed mercy even

to his enemies, such as when he forgave the people of Makkah at the conquest of the city instead of taking revenge.

The Prophet (ﷺ) ensured justice by treating everyone equally before the law, stating that even his own daughter would be punished if she committed a crime. He strongly upheld the rights of women by teaching kindness toward wives and giving women rights to inheritance and consent in marriage, and he personally helped with household work to show respect.

He cared deeply for the poor, orphans, and slaves, encouraging their kind treatment and freeing of slaves, and he emphasized timely payment and fairness to workers. He also respected the rights of non-Muslims, granting them protection and freedom of religion, as seen in the Charter of Madinah. Through these examples from the life of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), Islam presents a complete and practical system of human rights aimed at establishing justice, peace, and dignity for all humanity.

Human Rights as a Divine Trust (Amānah) in Islam

In Islam, human rights are not granted by governments or societies; they are a Divine Trust (Amānah) bestowed by Allah upon humanity. This means that respecting, protecting, and fulfilling human rights is a religious obligation, not a matter of choice or convenience. Allah says in the Qur'an:

“Indeed, We offered the Trust (Amānah) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they declined to bear it... and man undertook it.” (Qur'an 33:72)

This Amānah includes responsibility for justice, morality, and the rights of others.

Accountability before Allah

Since human rights are a Divine Trust:

- Every person is accountable before Allah for how they treat others
- Oppression (ẓulm) is a major sin
- Justice is mandatory, even against oneself or loved ones

“O you who believe! Stand firmly for justice, even against yourselves or parents and relatives.” (Qur'an 4:135)

Equality as a Divine Principle

Islam teaches that all human beings are equal in dignity:

“O mankind! We created you from a single male and female...”(Qur’an 49:13)

No superiority exists based on race, wealth, or status—only taqwa (God-consciousness).

Protection of Fundamental Human Rights

Islam safeguards essential human rights, including:

- Right to life
- Right to honor and dignity
- Right to justice
- Right to property
- Right to freedom of belief

Violating these rights is considered a betrayal of the Divine Trust.

The Prophet ﷺ as the Perfect Example

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ demonstrated the fulfillment of this trust through:

- Mercy toward all people
- Protection of minorities
- Emphasis on justice and accountability

In his Farewell Sermon, he declared:

“Your lives, your property, and your honor are sacred”.

Sources of Human Rights in Islam

The primary sources of human rights in Islam are:

The Holy Qur’an

The Qur’an is the final revelation of Allah and contains numerous verses that emphasize justice, equality, mercy, and human dignity.

Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)

The life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) provide practical examples of how human rights should be implemented in society.

The Farewell Sermon

The Farewell Sermon is considered the first universal declaration of human rights in history.

Right to Life

The right to life is the most fundamental human right in Islam. Human life is sacred and must be protected at all costs. Islam strictly prohibits murder, suicide, and unjust killing. Allah says:

“Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption in the land – it is as if he had slain mankind entirely.” (Qur’an 5:32)

Islam also forbids honor killing, abortion without valid reasons, and violence against innocent people. Even during war, Islam lays down strict rules to protect civilians, women, children, and the elderly.

Right to Equality and Brotherhood

Islam promotes complete equality among human beings. No one is superior to another based on race, color, language, wealth, or nationality.

The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said in his Farewell Sermon:

“All mankind is from Adam, and Adam was from dust.”

The only criterion for superiority in Islam is taqwa (piety). Allah says:

“Indeed, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you.” (Qur’an 49:13)

Right to Justice

Justice is the foundation of Islamic society. Islam commands Muslims to be just in all matters, even if justice goes against their personal interests.

Allah says:

“O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even though it be against yourselves or parents or relatives.” (Qur’an 4:135)

Islam strictly forbids corruption, bribery, favoritism, and false testimony.

Right to Freedom of Religion

Islam guarantees freedom of belief. No one can be forced to accept Islam.

Allah says:

“There is no compulsion in religion.” (Qur’an 2:256)

Non-Muslims living in an Islamic state are allowed to practice their religion freely and are provided protection for their places of worship.

Rights of Women in Islam

Islam raised the status of women at a time when they were treated as property. Islam gave women the right to education, inheritance, consent in marriage, and dignity.

Right to Education

The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said:

“Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim.”

This includes both men and women.

Right to Inheritance

Allah clearly states women’s inheritance rights in the Qur’an (Surah An-Nisa).

Right to Respect and Kind Treatment

The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

“The best of you are the best to their wives.”

Rights of Children

Islam places great importance on the rights of children, even before their birth.

Children have the right to:

- Life and protection
- A good name
- Education
- Love and care
- Moral and religious training

The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) showed immense love and kindness to children and forbade harsh treatment.

Rights of Parents

Islam strongly emphasizes kindness and respect toward parents.

Allah says:

“And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents.” (Qur’an 17:23)

Serving parents is considered a great act of worship in Islam.

Rights of Neighbors

Islam teaches Muslims to respect and care for their neighbors, regardless of their religion.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

“He is not a believer whose neighbor is not safe from his harm.”

Rights of the Poor and Needy

Islam establishes a strong system of social welfare through Zakat, Sadaqah, and charity. Allah says:

**“And in their wealth there is a recognized right for the needy and the poor.”
(Qur’an 70:24–25)**

Rights of Workers and Employees

Islam commands employers to treat workers fairly and pay wages on time.

The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said:

“Give the worker his wages before his sweat dries.”

Rights of Slaves and Prisoners

Islam encouraged the freeing of slaves and treated prisoners with kindness. Many companions freed slaves as an act of worship.

The Farewell Sermon: A Charter of Human Rights

The Farewell Sermon delivered by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) summarizes Islamic human rights. It addressed:

- Equality
- Justice

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- Sanctity of life and property
 - Rights of women
 - Brotherhood of mankind

Comparison with Modern Human Rights

Modern human rights are man-made and subject to change, whereas Islamic human rights are divine and permanent. Islam balances individual freedom with moral responsibility.

Ways to Spread Awareness Regarding Human Rights in Society According To Islam

Spreading awareness about human rights in society according to Islam can be done in a way that is both authentic to Islamic teachings and effective in today's world. Islam places strong emphasis on human dignity, justice, and compassion. Below is a structured approach rooted in Islamic principles:

Start with the Qur'an and Sunnah

Islamic awareness should be grounded in primary sources:

- **Human dignity:**
“Indeed, We have honored the children of Adam.” (Qur'an 17:70)
- **Justice and equality:**
“O you who believe! Stand firmly for justice...” (Qur'an 4:135)

Rights of all people:

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

“Your blood, your wealth, and your honor are sacred.” (Bukhari & Muslim)

Teaching these verses and hadiths helps people see that human rights are not foreign concepts but deeply Islamic.

Educate Through Mosques and Islamic Institutions

Friday khutbahs (sermons) focusing on:

- Rights of women, children, neighbors, minorities, and workers
- Prohibition of oppression (zulm)
- Study circles (halaqahs) on:

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- The Prophet’s ﷺ Farewell Sermon (a complete human rights charter)
 - Islamic ethics (akhlaq) and social justice

Lead by Example (Practical Da‘wah)

Islam emphasizes action over words:

- Treat everyone with fairness and respect regardless of race, class, or religion
- Uphold honesty, kindness, and accountability
- Protect the weak and speak against injustice
- The Prophet ﷺ spread Islam’s values mainly through character.

Use Education and Media

Write articles, blogs, and social media posts linking human rights to Islamic teachings.

Create short videos or infographics about:

- Rights in Islam
- Misconceptions about Islam and human rights
- Include Islamic human rights discussions in school and madrasa curricula

Revive the Concept of Accountability (Hisbah)

Encourage peaceful advocacy against injustice

**“Promote the Islamic duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil “
(Qur’an 3:110)**

Support lawful and ethical activism that aligns with Islamic values

Focus on Family and Community Education

Teach children:

- Respect for parents, elders, and others
- Gender justice and kindness
- Address harmful cultural practices that contradict Islam (e.g., domestic abuse, forced marriages)

Interfaith and Social Engagement

- Participate in dialogues and community service projects
- Show that Islam promotes coexistence, peace, and universal justice

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- Clarify that Islam protects:
 - Freedom of belief
 - Life, intellect, wealth, honor, and family (Maqasid al-Shariah)

Emphasize the Consequences of Oppression

The Prophet ﷺ warned:

“Beware of oppression, for oppression will be darkness on the Day of Judgment.” (Muslim)

Reminding people of accountability before Allah strengthens moral responsibility.

Spreading human rights awareness in Islam requires:

- Knowledge
- Sincere intention (niyyah)
- Good character
- Consistent action

Islam does not merely support human rights—it institutionalizes them as divine obligations.

Conclusion

Islam presents a comprehensive and universal system of human rights that ensures peace, justice, and dignity for all humanity. These rights are timeless and applicable in every age. By following Islamic teachings, societies can eliminate oppression, inequality, and injustice, and establish a peaceful and harmonious world.

Conclusion: Human Rights in Islam

Human rights in Islam are not merely social or legal constructs—they are divinely ordained principles that form the foundation of a just and moral society. Islam recognizes the inherent dignity, equality, and worth of every human being, emphasizing that life, honor, intellect, and freedom are sacred and must be protected.

These rights are derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah, making them absolute and universal, not contingent on culture, nationality, or political systems. The concept of human rights in Islam is deeply connected to the idea of Amānah (Divine Trust),

which places a moral and spiritual responsibility on individuals, and governments to uphold justice, prevent oppression (ẓulm), and ensure the welfare of all members of society..

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ exemplified these principles through his teachings demonstrating that respecting human rights is both a religious obligation and a practical path to social harmony. In essence, Islam offers a comprehensive framework for human rights that balances individual freedoms with social responsibilities, encourages accountability before Allah, and fosters a society based on justice, compassion and equality .

By adhering to these principles, Muslims can actively promote human dignity, protect the vulnerable, and contribute to a fair and peaceful world, reflecting the true spirit of Islamic teachings.

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