

Human Rights in Islam

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The Qur'an is the Book of Revelation which Muslims believe to be God's Word transmitted through the agency of Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Of all the sources of the Islamic tradition, undoubtedly, the most important is the Qur'an which is regarded by Muslims in general as the primary, and most authoritative, source of normative Islam. Given the centrality of the Qur'an to the lives of the majority of the more than one billion Muslims of the world, a question of critical significance is: What, if anything, does the Qur'an say about human rights?

Here, an account is given of the Qur'an's affirmation of fundamental rights which all human beings ought to possess because they are so deeply-rooted in our humanness that their denial or violation is tantamount to a negation or degradation of that which makes us human.

From the perspective of the Qur'an, these rights came into existence essentially when we did; they were created, as we were, by God in order that our human potential could be actualized. These rights not only provide us with opportunity to develop all our inner resources, but they also hold before us a vision of what God would like us to be: what God wants us to strive for and live for and die for. Rights created or given by God cannot be abolished by any temporal ruler or human agency. Eternal and immutable, they ought to be exercised since everything that God does is for "a just purpose."

There is much misunderstanding about Islam, particularly in the West, where negative stereotypes of Islam and Muslims abound. After the demise of the Soviet Empire, many in the West have begun to see Islam and Muslims as the new "enemy" associated with backwardness, violence and fanaticism. The gulf between "the West" and "the World of Islam" - which are amongst the largest "blocs" in the world - appears to be widening and leading to increasing tension, apprehension and alienation on both sides. It is of the utmost importance at this time that an effort be made by Muslims to explain their religious worldview to the people of the West and that the people of the West make a comparable effort to understand Islam and Muslims from "within" as it were, and not in the context of the Western (particularly post-Enlightenment) historical experience, categories of analysis, or models of human liberation.

While much attention is focused, particularly in the West, on what is referred to as "the rise of Islamic fundamentalism" which is seen as anti-Western, anti-modern and anti-human, not much is said about the efforts being made in a number of Muslim societies, by many persons including scholars and activists, to liberate Muslim masses from the throes of poverty, illiteracy and other impediments to development. While some who are engaged in this "liberation struggle" are persons with a secular orientation, an increasing number are persons who believe that since Muslims are profoundly "People of the Book" whose lives are rooted in their faith, their model of liberation and self-actualization must come from within the framework of Qur'anic Islam.

The Qur'an's Affirmation of Fundamental Human Rights

I. General Rights

A. Right to Life: The Qur'an upholds the sanctity and absolute value of human life and states in *Al-An'am*: 151: "...do not take any human being's life - (the life) which God has declared to be sacred - otherwise than in (the pursuit of) justice: this has He enjoined upon you so that you might use your reason."

In *Al-Ma'idah*: 32, the Qur'an points out that, in essence, the life of each individual is comparable to that of an entire community and, therefore, should be treated with the utmost care:

“...We ordained
For the Children of Israel
That if anyone slew
A person –unless it be
For murder or for spreading
Mischief in the land –
It would be as if
He slew the whole people:
And if any one saved a life,
It would be as if he saved
The life of the whole people.”

B. Right to Respect: In *Al-Isra'*: 70, the Qur'an says: “Now, indeed, We have conferred dignity on the children of Adam.” Human beings are deemed worthy of esteem because of all creation they alone chose to accept the "trust" of freedom of the will (*Al-Ahzab*: 72). Human beings can exercise freedom of the will because they possess the rational faculty, which is what distinguishes them from all other creatures (*Al-Baqarah*: 30-34). Though human beings can become “the lowest of the low,” the Qur'an declares that they have been made "in the best of moulds" (*At-Tin*: 4-6), having the ability to think, to have knowledge of right and wrong, to do the good and to avoid the evil. Thus, on account of the promise which is contained in being human, namely, the potential to be God's vicegerent on Earth, the humanness of all human beings is to be respected and considered an end in itself.

C. Right to Justice: The Qur'an puts great emphasis on the right to seek justice and the duty to do justice. In *Al-Ma'idah*: 8, it tells the believers: "O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity; and never let hatred of any one lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just: this is the closest to being God-conscious."

And again, in *Al-Nisa'*: 136, the Qur'an emphasizes the importance of upholding justice:

"O ye who believe!
Stand out firmly
For justice, as witnesses
To Allah, even as against
Yourselves, or your parents,
Or your kin, and whether
It be (against) rich or poor:
For Allah can best protect both.
Follow not the lusts
(Of your hearts), lest ye
Swerve, and if ye
Distort (justice) or decline
To do justice, verily
Allah is well-acquainted
With all that ye do."

In the context of justice, the Qur'an uses two concepts: "*adl*" and "*ehsan*." Both are enjoined and both are related to the idea of "balance," but they are not identical in meaning.

"*Adl*" is defined by A. A. A. Fyzee, a well-known scholar of Islam, as "to be equal, neither more nor less." Explaining this concept, Fyzee wrote: "... in a Court of Justice the claims of the two parties must be considered evenly, without undue stress being laid upon one side or the other. Justice introduces the balance in the form of scales that are evenly balanced." "*Adl*" was described in similar terms by Abul Kalam Azad, a famous translator and commentator of the Qur'an and a noted writer, who stated: "What is justice but the avoiding of excess? There should be neither too much nor too little; hence the use of scales as the emblems of justice." Lest anyone try to do too much or too little, the Qur'an points out that no human being can carry another's burden or attain anything without striving for it (*An-Najm*: 38-39).

Recognizing individual merit is a part of "*adl*." The Qur'an teaches that merit is not determined by lineage, sex, wealth, worldly success or religion, but by righteousness. Righteousness consists of both right "belief" ("*iman*") and just "action" ("*amal*") as clearly indicated by *Al-Baqarah*: 177, which states:

"It is not righteousness
That ye turn your faces
Towards East or West;
But it is righteousness –
To believe in God
And the Last Day,
And the Angels,
And the Book,
And the Messengers;
To spend your substance,
Out of love for Him,
For your kin,

For orphans,
For the needy,
For the wayfarer,
For those who ask,
And for the ransom of slaves;
To be steadfast in prayer,
And practice regular charity;
To fulfill the contracts
Which ye have made;
And to be firm and patient,
In pain (or suffering)
And adversity,
And throughout
All periods of panic.
Such are the people
Of truth, the God-fearing."

Al-Hujurat: 13 tells us:

"The most honoured of you
In the sight of Allah
Is (he who is) the most
Righteous of you."

while *An-Nisa'* distinguishes clearly between passive believers and those who strive in the cause of God: "Such of the believers as remain passive - other than the disabled - cannot be deemed equal to those who strive hard in God's cause with their possessions and their lives: God has exalted those who strive hard with their possessions and their lives far above those who remain passive. Although God has promised the ultimate good unto all (believers), yet has God exalted those who strive hard above those who remain passive by (promising them) a mighty reward - (many) degrees thereof - and forgiveness of sins, and His grace: for God is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace."

Just as it is in the spirit of "*adl*" that special merit be considered in the matter of rewards, so also special circumstances are considered in the matter of punishments. For instance, for crimes of unchastity the Qur'an prescribes identical punishments for a man or a woman who is proved guilty (*Al-Baqarah*: 2), but it differentiates between different classes of women: for the same crime, a slave woman would receive half, and the Prophet's consort double, the punishment given to a "free" Muslim woman (*An-Nisa'*: 25; *Al-Ahzab*: 30). In making such a distinction, the Qur'an while upholding high moral standards, particularly in the case of the Prophet's wives whose actions have a normative significance for the community, reflects God's compassion for women slaves who were socially disadvantaged.

While constantly enjoining "*adl*," the Qur'an goes beyond this concept to "*ehsan*," which literally means, "restoring the balance by making up a loss or deficiency." In order to understand this concept, it is necessary to understand the nature of the ideal society or community ("*ummah*") envisaged by the Qur'an. The word "*ummah*" comes from the root

"*umm*," or "mother." The symbols of a mother and motherly love and compassion are also linked with the two attributes most characteristic of God, namely, "*Rahim*" and "*Rahman*" both of which are derived from the root "*rahm*," meaning "womb." The ideal "*ummah*" cares about all its members just as an ideal mother cares about all her children, knowing that all are not equal and that each has different needs. While showing undue favour to any child would be unjust, a mother who gives to a "handicapped" child more than she does to her other child or children, is not acting unjustly but exemplifying the spirit of "*ehsan*" by helping to make up the deficiency of a child who is unable to meet the requirements of life. "*Ehsan*," thus, shows God's sympathy for the "disadvantaged" segments of human society (such as women, orphans, slaves, the poor, the infirm, and the minorities).

D. *Right to Freedom*: A large part of the Qur'an's concern is to free human beings from the chains that bind them: traditionalism, authoritarianism (religious, political, economic), tribalism, racism, classism or caste system, sexism, and slavery.

Recognizing the human tendency toward dictatorship and despotism, the Qur'an says with clarity and emphasis in *Al-Imran*: 79:

"It is not (possible)
That a man, to whom
Is given the Book,
And Wisdom,
And the Prophetic Office,
Should say to people:
'Be ye my worshippers
Rather than Allah's'
On the contrary
(He would say):
'Be ye worshippers
Of Him Who is truly
The Cherisher of all."

The institution of human slavery is, of course, extremely important in the context of human freedom. Slavery was widely prevalent in Arabia at the time of the advent of Islam, and the Arab economy was based on it. Not only did the Qur'an insist that slaves be treated in a just and humane way (as, for instance, in *An-Nisa*': 36), but it also continually urged the freeing of slaves (*Al-Baqarah*: 177; *An-Nisa*': 92; *Al-Ma'idah*: 89; *At-Tawbah*: 60; *An-Nur*: 33; *Al Mujadalah*: 3). By laying down, in *Muhammad*: 4, that prisoners of war were to be set free, "either by an act of grace or against ransom," the Qur'an virtually abolished slavery since "the major source of slaves – men and women – was prisoners of war." Because the Qur'an does not state explicitly that slavery is abolished, it does not follow that it is to be continued, particularly in view of the numerous ways in which the Qur'an seeks to eliminate this absolute evil. A Book which does not give a king or a prophet the right to command absolute obedience from another human being, could not, possibly, sanction slavery in any sense of the word.

The greatest guarantee of personal freedom for a Muslim lies in the Qur'anic decree that no one other than God can limit human freedom (*Ash-Shura*: 21) and in the statement that "Judgment (as to what is right and what is wrong) rests with God alone" (*Yusuf*: 40). As pointed out by Khalid M. Ishaque, an eminent Pakistani jurist: "The Qur'an gives to responsible dissent the status of a fundamental right. In exercise of their powers, therefore, neither the legislature nor the executive can demand unquestioning obedience... The Prophet, even though he was the recipient of Divine revelation, was required to consult the Muslims in public affairs. Allah addressing the Prophet says: '...and consult with them upon the conduct of affairs. And... when thou art resolved, then put thy trust in Allah' (*Al-'Imran*: 159)."

Since the principle of mutual consultation ("*shura*") is mandatory (*Ash-Shura*: 38), it is a Muslim's fundamental right, as well as responsibility, to participate in as many aspects of the community's life as possible.

The Qur'anic proclamation in *Al-Baqarah*: 256. "There shall be no coercion in matters of faith" guarantees freedom of religion and worship. This means that, according to Qur'anic teaching, non-Muslims living in Muslim territories should have the freedom to follow their own faith-traditions without fear or harassment. A number of Qur'anic passages state clearly that the responsibility of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is to communicate the message of God and not to compel anyone to believe (for instance *Al-An'am*: 107; *Yunus*: 99; *An-Nahl*: 82; *Ash-Shura*: 48). The right to exercise free choice in matters of belief is unambiguously endorsed by the Qur'an in *Al-Kahf*: 29, which states:

"The Truth is
From your Lord:
Let him who will
Believe, and let him
Who will, reject (it)."

The Qur'an also makes clear that God will judge human beings not on the basis of what they profess but on the basis of their belief and righteous conduct, as indicated by *Al-Baqarah*: 62 which states:

"Those who believe (in the Qur'an)
And those who follow the Jewish (scriptures),
And the Christians and the Sabians,
Any who believe in God
And the Last Day,
And work righteousness,
Shall have their reward
With the Lord; on them
Shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."

The Qur'an recognizes the right to religious freedom not only in the case of other believers in God, but also in the case of non-believers (if they are not aggressing upon Muslims). *Al-An'am*: 108 states:

"Reville not ye
Those whom they call upon
Besides God, lest
They out of spite
Reville God
In their ignorance.
Thus have We made
Alluring to each people
Its own doings.
In the end will they
Return to their Lord,
And We shall then
Tell them the truth
Of all that they did."

In the context of the human right to exercise religious freedom, it is important to mention that the Qur'anic dictum, "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (*Al-Baqarah: 256*) applies not only to non-Muslims but also to Muslims. While those who renounced Islam after professing it and then engaged in "acts of war" against Muslims were to be treated as enemies and aggressors, the Qur'an does not prescribe any punishment for non-profession or renunciation of faith. The decision regarding a person's ultimate destiny in the hereafter rests with God.

The right to freedom includes the right to be free to tell the truth. The Qur'anic term for truth is "*Haqq*" which is also one of God's most important attributes. Standing up for the truth is a right and a responsibility which a Muslim may not disclaim even in the face of the greatest danger or difficulty (*An-Nisa': 135*). While the Qur'an commands believers to testify to the truth, it also instructs society not to harm persons so testifying (*Al-Baqarah: 282*).

E. Right to Privacy: The Qur'an recognizes the need for privacy as a human right and lays down rules for protecting an individual's life in the home from undue intrusion from within or without (*An-Nur: 27-28, 58; Al-Ahzab: 53; Al-Hujurat: 12*).

F. Right to Protection from Slander, Backbiting, and Ridicule: The Qur'an recognizes the right of human beings to be protected from defamation, sarcasm, offensive nicknames, and backbiting (*Al-Hujurat: 11-12*). It also states that no person is to be maligned on grounds of assumed guilt and that those who engage in malicious scandal-mongering will be grievously punished in both this world and the next (*An-Nur: 16-19*). Urging throughout that human beings should treat others with sensitivity and compassion, the Qur'an points out in *An-Nisa': 148-149*:

"God loves not that evil
Should be noised abroad
In public speech, except
Where injustice hath been
Done; for God

Is He who heareth
And knoweth all things.
Whether ye publish
A good deed or conceal it
Or cover evil with pardon,
Verily God doth blot out
(Sins) and hath power
(In the judgment of values)."

G. Right to Acquire Knowledge: The Qur'an puts the highest emphasis on the importance of acquiring knowledge. That knowledge has been at the core of the Islamic world-view from the very beginning is attested to by *Al'Alaq*: 1-5, which Muslims believe to be the first revelation received by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This passage reads:

"Read
In the name
Of thy Lord and Cherisher,
Who created -
Created man, out of
A (mere) clot
Of congealed blood.
Proclaim! And thy Lord
Is Most Bountiful-
He Who taught
(The use of) the Pen -
Taught man that
Which he knew not."

Asking rhetorically if those without knowledge can be equal to those with knowledge (*Az-Zumar*: 9), the Qur'an exhorts believers to pray for advancement in knowledge (*Ta-Ha*: 114). The famous prayer of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was "Allah grant me knowledge of the ultimate nature of things" and one of the best known of all traditions is "Seek knowledge even though it be in China." According to Qur'anic perspective, knowledge is a prerequisite for the creation of a just world in which authentic peace can prevail. The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of the pursuit of learning even at the time, and in the midst, of war, as indicated by *At-Tawbah*: 122, which states: "With all this, it is not desirable that all of the believers take the field (in time of war). From within every group in their midst, some shall refrain from going to war, and shall devote themselves (instead) to acquiring a deeper knowledge of the Faith, and (thus be able to) teach their home-coming brethren, so that these (too) might guard themselves against evil."

H. Right to leave one's homeland under oppressive conditions: According to Qur'anic teaching, a Muslim's ultimate loyalty must be to God and not to any territory. To fulfil his Prophetic mission, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) left his birthplace Makkah and emigrated to Madinah. This event ("*Hijrah*") has great historical and spiritual significance for Muslims who are called upon to move away from their place of origin if it becomes an

abode of evil and oppression where they cannot fulfil their obligations to God or establish justice. In a powerful passage in *An-Nisa'*: 97-100, the Qur'an states:

“When angels take
The souls of those
Who die in sin
Against their souls,
They say: ‘In what (plight)
Were ye?’ They reply:
‘Weak and oppressed
Were we in the Earth.’
They say: ‘Was not
The Earth of Allah
Spacious enough for you
To move yourselves away
(From evil)?’ Such men
Will find their abode
In Hell- What an evil
Refuge!-
Except those who are
(Really)weak and oppressed —
Men, women, and children
Who have no means
In their power, nor (a guide post)
To direct their way.
For these, there is hope
That Allah will forgive:
For Allah doth blot out (sins)
And forgive again and again.
He who forsakes his home
In the cause of Allah,
Finds in the earth
Many a refuge,
Wide and spacious:
Should he die
As a refugee from home
For Allah and His Messenger,
His reward becomes due
And sure with Allah:
And Allah is Oft-Forgiving,
Most Merciful.”

I. Right to develop ones aesthetic sensibilities and enjoy the bounties created by God:
As pointed out by Muhammad Asad, "By declaring that all good and beautiful things in life – i.e., those which are not expressly prohibited – are lawful to the believers, the Qur'an condemns, by implication, all forms of life-denying asceticism, world-renunciation and self-mortification. "There is a great difference between the spirit of classical Greece with its

contempt for sense-perception and the Qur'an which regards physical phenomena as "Signs of God." Some of the most memorable passages in the Qur'an point to the insight and wisdom which can be gained by reflecting on the myriad manifestations of God's creative activity all around us. The Qur'an tells Muslims that monasticism was not prescribed by God (*Al-Hadid: 27*). Though they are to remember that the hereafter is more important than the life on earth, Muslims are told to reject the negative view that it is wrong to enjoy the beauty and bounty of God's creation. In *Al-A'raf: 32*, the Qur'an states: "Say: 'Who is there to forbid the beauty which God has brought forth for His creatures, and the good things from among the means of sustenance?'" and "Say: 'They are (lawful) in the life of this world unto all who have attained to faith – to be theirs alone on Resurrection Day.'" The right to develop one's aesthetic sensibilities so that one can appreciate beauty in all its forms, and the right to enjoy what God has provided for the nurture of humankind, are, thus, rooted in the life-affirming vision of the Qur'an.

J. Right to Sustenance: As pointed out by *Hud: 6*, every living creature depends for its sustenance upon God. A cardinal concept in the Qur'an - which underlies the socio-economic-political system of Islam – is that the ownership of everything belongs, not to any person, but to God. Since God is the universal creator, every creature has the right to partake of what belongs to God (*Al-An'am:165; Al-Mulk: 15*). This means that every human being has the right to a means of living and that those who hold economic or political power do not have the right to deprive others of the basic necessities of life by misappropriating or misusing resources which have been created by God for the benefit of humanity in general.

K. Right to Work: According to Qur'anic teaching every man and woman has the right to work, whether the work consists of gainful employment or voluntary service. The fruits of labour belong to the one who has worked for them – regardless of whether it is a man or a woman. As *An-Nisa: 32* states:

“...to men
Is allotted what they earn,
And to women what they earn.”

L. Right to "The Good Life": The Qur'an upholds the right of the human being not only to life but to "the good life." This good life, made up of many elements, becomes possible when a human being is living in a just environment. According to Qur'anic teaching, justice is a pre-requisite for peace, and peace is a prerequisite for human development. In a just society, all the earlier-mentioned human rights may be exercised without difficulty. In such a society other basic rights such as the right to a secure place of residence, the right to the protection of one's personal possessions, the right to protection of one's covenants, and the right to move freely, also exist.

M. Other Rights: Since Qur'anic teaching embraces every aspect of human life, it contains references to more human rights than can be mentioned in this short paper. Reference has been made in the foregoing account to the human rights which figure most importantly in the Qur'an and which continue to be of on-going interest and importance in contemporary Muslim societies. In addition to the rights mentioned earlier, reference may

also be made to the following: (a) the right to social and judicial autonomy for minorities; (b) the right to protection of one's holy places; and (c) the right to return to one's spiritual centre.

According to *Al'Imran: 96*, *Al-Ma'idah: 97*, and *Al-Hajj: 25*, the *Ka'bah* in Makkah is the spiritual centre of all humankind. It was here that the Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) proclaimed the pilgrimage to all humankind, as pointed out by *Al-Baqarah: 125*, *Al'Imran: 96*, and *Al-Hajj: 26*.

II. Rights of Man, Woman, and Child

According to the Qur'an, God created man and woman from a single life-cell or spirit (*An-Nisa': 1*; *Al-Ar'af: 189*; *An-Nahl: 72*; *Ar-Rum: 21*). Both man and woman have male and female components (*Al-Hujurat: 13*) and both – together – constitute the human species. It is a clear teaching of the Qur'an that man and woman are equal in the sight of God (*Al-Imran: 195*; *An-Nisa': 124*; *At-Tawbah: 71-72*; *An-Nahl: 97*; *Al-Ahzab: 35*; *Ghafir: 40*). Being equal before God who is the ultimate source of life and the ultimate arbiter of value, man and woman cannot, subsequently, become unequal to each other in essence.

Since women were discriminated against in many ways in pre-Islamic Arab society, as also in many other societies, the Qur'an is particularly solicitous about protecting their rights. By condemning female infanticide in the strongest terms (*An-Nahl: 57-59*; *Al-Isra': 31*; *At-Takwir: 8-9*) it led to the abolition of this evil practice, thus giving female children a chance to live.

There is much Qur'anic legislation which is aimed at protecting the rights of women in the context of marriage. In this context, reference may be made, for instance, to *Al-Baqarah: 187*; *An-Nisa':4, 19*; *Al-Ar'af: 189*; *At-Tawbah: 71*; *An-Nur: 33*; *Ar-Rum: 21*. Marriage in Islam is a contract and women, as well as men, have the right to negotiate the terms of this contract though many Muslim women are unaware of this right. While the Qur'an provides for just arbitration in case a marriage runs into problems, it also makes provision for what we today call a "no-fault divorce" and does not make any adverse judgments about divorce (for instance, see *Al-Baqarah: 231, 241*). The Qur'anic prescription: "Either live together in kindness or separate in kindness" preserves the spirit of amity and justice in the context of both marriage and divorce.

In the context of child-rearing, the Qur'an states clearly that the divorced parents of a minor child must decide by mutual consultation how the child is to be raised and that they must not use the child to hurt or exploit each other (*Al-Baqarah: 233*).

Though polygamy has been widely misused, it was intended by the Qur'an to be for the protection of orphans and widows (*An-Nisa':2-3*). The Qur'an also gave women – for the first time in the history of any religion - the right to inherit on the death of close relatives and also to receive bequests or gifts during the lifetime of a benevolent caretaker.

The Qur'an gave to women the right to work, to engage in trade, to earn money, and the purpose of prescribing a modest code of dress and conduct was not to confine them to

the home but to make it safe for them to go about their daily business without fear of sexual harassment (*An-Nur*: 30-31; *Al-Ahzab*: 59). Here, it may be mentioned that confinement to the home was not the normal way of life for chaste Muslim women but was a punishment for unchaste women (*An-Nisa*': 15).

The Qur'an is much concerned also about protecting the rights of children. According to Qur'anic teaching, children have a right to life (*An-Nahl*: 57-59; *Al-Isra*': 31; *At-Takwir*: 8-9); a right to proper nurture and education (*Al-Baqarah*: 233; *Al-Isra*': 31); a right to be maintained financially by the father or his heir(s) (*An-Nur*: 61), but to be brought up according to the wishes of both parents (*Al-Baqarah*: 233); and a right to have their interests protected by the Islamic society in which they live, should they become orphaned (*An-Nisa*': 2-3 and numerous other references). Adopted children whose parentage is known have a right to know about it and to be called by their father's name (*Al-Ahzab*: 5).

The compassionate spirit of the Qur'an is, perhaps, nowhere more visible than in passages relating to the treatment and care of orphans. In *Ad-Duha*: 8-11, the Qur'an reminds the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) of his own orphaned state (having lost his father before his birth and his mother when he was six years old) and of God's bounty toward him:

"And He found thee
In need, and made
Thee independent.
Therefore treat not
The orphan with harshness
Nor repulse the petitioner
(Unheard);
But the Bounty
Of thy Lord-
Rehearse and proclaim."

Conclusion

For Muslims, the Qur'an, being God's Word, is the primary and most authoritative source of Islam. As has been illustrated in the foregoing pages, the Qur'an strongly affirms and upholds fundamental human rights. It follows, therefore, that these rights must be acknowledged and protected in all Muslim societies and communities. For Muslims, the greatest source of empowerment and self-actualisation lies within the teachings of the Qur'an. By understanding and implementing these teachings, they can, indeed, vindicate the trust of being God's vicegerent ("*khalifah*") upon the Earth, and transform this world from its present sorry state into a virtual paradise where man, woman and child, and all peoples of the world, live together in justice and peace.

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