

THE CONCEPTS OF HOMELAND AND PATRIOTISM IN ISLAM

The previous analysis shows how Islam regards patriotism and the yearning for a home land as natural and legitimate human feelings. This view is appreciated by scholars who understand the civil nature of the governing authority in Islam. There are some who disagree with this principle and call for uniting the civil and religious authorities under one office (Emarah, 1979b). They consider the concepts of patriotism and the yearning for a homeland as idols that should be destroyed (Emarah, 1980). It is important to highlight the fact that Islam does not call for theocratic rule. Thus, the Islamic government is a civil government that observes Islamic law. This does not allow anyone to brand military conflicts that this government gets involved in as religious wars. The fact that the Quran describes legitimate wars that the Muslims engage in as “fighting in the cause of God” does not make these wars religious wars. It simply indicates that defending Muslim land and lives against oppression and persecution is a noble cause.

The Quran provides a criterion for differentiating between

those who can be taken as allies and those who should be shunned. Those who persecute Muslims and expel them from their homes are not to be loved nor taken as friends. However, those who do not persecute Muslims, expel them from their homes, nor help others to persecute or expel Muslims out of their homes are to be treated kindly and can be taken as friends, : *“God may still bring affection between you and your present enemy- God is all powerful, God is most forgiving and merciful- and He does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with anyone who has not fought you for your faith or driven you out of your homes: God loves the just. But God forbids you to take as allies those who have fought against you for your faith, driven you out of your homes, and helped others to drive you out: any of you who take them as allies will truly be wrongdoers.”* [60:7-9] This verse provides a criterion for differentiating between friends and enemies of Muslims. Scholars have explained that the word used for justice in this verse go beyond the normal meaning of the word. They argue that the Quran exhorts Muslims to treat everyone, friend or foe, justly. Thus, in this view, treating them “justly” really means that they should be given a share of Muslims’ wealth as a gift. This interpretation plays on a derivation of the word “Kist” used in the verse which can mean a share as well as justice.

Scholars have also extended the meaning of the term expulsion used in the verse to encompass not only physical expulsion but also persecution which prevents Muslims from controlling their destiny. A verse in the Quran equates

those who do not show any act of patriotism in defending their country against external occupation with dead people, “[Prophet], consider those people who abandoned their homeland in fear of death, even though there were thousands of them. God said to them: ‘Die!’ and then brought them back to life again, God shows real favor to people, but most of them are ungrateful”. [2:243] The verse describes a people who were overtaken by cowardice and refused to fight back their enemy who conquered their homeland and equates their condition with death. When, their condition changed and they rose against their enemy and fought back to liberate their land, it was as if they were raised from the dead.

Sheikh Abdo (1972) indicated that the death of a nation does not necessarily mean the complete devastation of the people. It could also mean that the nation has lost its drive to defend its right for independence and self control. So, it is no longer a nation that enjoys unique characteristics that make it different from other nations. It died because its people have nothing to live for. The fight of this nation against the occupier is a fight in the cause of God. This is a much bigger concept than a religious war. All the scholars are agreed that in a situation like that, each and every Muslim capable of carrying arms is mandated to participate in fighting.

Islam has supported the concept of patriotism and the right of people to live in an independent Homeland. It sanctified their right to defend this homeland when attacked and labeled their defense as “fight in God’s cause.”The

government in Islam is not a theocracy simply because Islam does not embody a system for clergy. There are no official “officers of the faith.” Therefore, resolution of conflict that may arise between a government in a Muslim country and other countries should be dealt with within the realm of political rather than religious activities.