

# Human Rights in Islam: A Model for Universal Dignity and Prosperity

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## Abstract

Islamic teachings provide a broad base for human rights, emphasizing dignity, justice, equality, and social responsibility. The Qur'an and Sunnah outline rights dealing with life, property, education, gender parity, and freedom of belief that ensure all human beings receive respect and are treated fairly. These principles aim at protecting against oppression, guaranteeing welfare, and ensuring governance with ethics. Islamic human rights are universal, with an emphasis on both individual and collective well-being. Concepts such as Adl (justice), Ihsan (excellence), Tazkiyah (self-purification), and Shura (consultation) underpin the guiding philosophy for moral conduct and interaction in society and governance. By integrating the spiritual, ethical, and social imperatives, Islam presents human rights as a set of practical responsibilities that protect dignity and ensure prosperity, rather than ideals. This article explores the basic tenets of human rights in Islam, their practice throughout history, and their relevance as a model for universal human dignity and socioeconomic flourishing in societies today.

**Keywords:** Human rights, Islam, universal dignity, social justice, Qur'anic guidance, Prophetic teachings, equality, ethical governance, and social welfare founded upon humanitarian principles.

## Introduction

Human rights represent a cornerstone of modern civilization in terms of the dignity, liberty, and equality that each human being deserves. While instruments like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights produced a legal and political framework for this principle in modern times, Islamic teachings represent moral, spiritual, and practical origins to human rights more than a millennium earlier. In Islam, therefore, human rights are directly related to ethical, social, and spiritual duties and responsibilities. The Quran and Sunnah denote that every human being is gifted with intrinsic dignity (karamah) and as such, the society must uphold justice (Adl), mercy (Rahmah), and equality. In Islam, such rights flow to every level of life, including protection of life, property, freedom of belief, education, gender equality, and access to social welfare. For example, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ stressed protection for the weak and orphaned, among the most vulnerable groups, as well as the marginalized, in order to demonstrate human rights applied within societal infrastructure. Islamic human rights are universal in nature because they aim at securing not only individual dignity but also societal prosperity and harmony. Principles such as Shura (consultation), accountability, and ethical

governance further propagate social justice and collective welfare, making human rights a moral and civic duty. Unlike purely legal frameworks, Islamic human rights embrace spiritual, moral, and social dimensions to create an inclusive model for ensuring justice, equality, and human flourishing. The following article attempts to look at the principles, historic application, and contemporary relevance of human rights in Islam, arguing that they provide a timeless model for universal dignity and prosperity.

Safeguarding life, property, and personal security are fundamental human rights in Islam.

In Islam, the protection of life, property, and personal security is a fundamental obligation. This is so because in Islam, human life is held in great sanctity and honor. The Holy Qur'an explicitly says that taking a life without justification is a heinous crime; it denotes the sanctity of human life. Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ adopted clear measures to safeguard individual property and ensured that transactions took place in a just manner to protect economic rights and social stability. Personal security involves more than the safety of the person; it extends to the social and psychological aspects of well-being. Islamic law prohibits oppression, exploitation, and arbitrary harm, thus ensuring that the most vulnerable and marginalized members of society are accorded protection. At the social level, the rights to life and property are imbued with ethics, for example, the Qur'an encourages fair trade and prohibits theft and corruption, calling for restitution in case any wrongdoing is committed. This form of protection has been achieved historically within Islamic societies through judicial systems, public welfare initiatives, and moral accountability to bring about communities that prized dignity and justice. Modern scholars suggest these principles remain compatible with modern human rights frameworks, providing ethical guidance that complements legal and social protections today. The emphasis on both moral and practical responsibilities in Islam makes sure that the protection of life, property, and security is not confined to a mere legal principle but is a spiritual and ethical duty underpinning social prosperity.

*The Rights of Women, Children, and Marginalized Groups within the Islamic Perspective*

It gives particular importance to protecting the rights of women, children, and marginal groups, ensuring their dignity, welfare, and full participation in society. The Qur'an and Sunnah continue to reiterate equality, respect, and protection for such categories that shun off all forms of social inequities and discrimination against them. In Islam, women have rights over receiving education, inheritance, consent to marriage, and economic enterprise. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ emphasized fair treatment towards them, forbade female infanticide, and called for their participation in social life, education, and religious activity. Such rights, though innovative in their times, remain ethical guidelines for gender equity in contemporary times. For children, protection, care, and upbringing become basic rights, focusing on proper upbringing and education with emotional support as means to bring them up morally and socially responsible. Special protection for orphans and other vulnerable children is covered under mechanisms of charity and community responsibility, such as Sadaqah and Zakat. Protection extends to other marginal groups in society, including the poor, the disabled, and religious minorities. The Prophet ﷺ rigorously promoted justice and compassion for these groups, enforcing mechanisms in society against their exploitation and for inclusion. For example, he made provisions for the poor, the widows, and all other underprivileged classes through the disbursement of zakat. Thus, the emphasis of Islam on the rights of such groups

provides for the establishment of a just, balanced society which recognizes human dignity and social obligation beyond their privileged or majority groups. These teachings further convey the universality of Islam, offering a model for inclusive human rights that sustains social harmony, justice, and prosperity.

#### Freedom of Belief and Expression within the Islamic Framework

Islamic teachings uphold the sanctity of conscience and freedom to believe, asserting that faith should be a matter of personal conviction rather than one of coercion. The Qur'an says time and again, "There is no compulsion in religion" (Qur'an 2:256), hence laying down a premise for religious tolerance, coexistence, and respect for diversity. Free expression in Islam comes with ethical and social responsibility. While having the right to express opinions, criticize, and debate, such rights are enveloped by guiding principles of truthfulness, respect, and the concept of not causing harm. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ urged consultation-what is often referred to as Shura-dialogue, and informed decision-making, hence modeling that freedom of expression contributes to social cohesion when exercised responsibly. In practice, Islamic societies encouraged intellectual discourse, debates, and education, thereby allowing a plethora of ideas to flow while maintaining moral and social boundaries. Communities were taught to respect different views, protect minorities, and conduct disputes through reasoned dialogue. By entwining freedom of belief with moral responsibility, Islam secures a position wherein individual rights coexist with social harmony. This balanced function makes the Islamic model of human rights not only spiritually firm but also practically destined toward universal dignity, mutual respect, and sustainable social prosperity.

#### Economic Justice and Social Welfare as Human Rights in Islam

Basic needs, dignity, and equal opportunity for all are ensured within economic justice and social welfare, which stand central within the Islamic conception of human rights. The Quran puts emphasis on just sharing of wealth, prohibition of exploitation, and moral duty in favor of needy persons. Further, such practices as Zakat-obligatory almsgiving, Sadaqah-voluntary charity, and prohibition of Riba establish a system promoting social equity and economic responsibility. According to Islamic teachings, it is believed that poverty and economic inequality can destroy human dignity and social stability. Therefore, by providing for the redistribution of wealth through Zakat and stimulating voluntary charity, Islam tries to nurture and protect vulnerable groups of the population, including poor people, orphans, and widows. Indeed, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ developed policies and practices aimed at sustaining public welfare, ensuring market fairness, and avoiding monopolies or illegal accumulation of wealth. In its turn, protection of property and labor rights represent an essential aspect of economic justice underlined by such precepts as fair wages and honest trade, ethical conduct of business, and respect for labor and property. Social welfare is consolidated through community support mechanisms and ethical governance, where the well-being of the whole is treated as a moral and civic duty. In such a way, Islam, through integration of moral imperatives with practical measures, shows that economic rights are inextricably linked with social ethics and stand out as a model where prosperity is considered a collective achievement that respects human dignity, reduces inequality, and advances social harmony.

Accountability, Justice, and Ethical Governance in Islamic Human Rights Islamic doctrine postulates that the question of human rights protection goes hand in hand with

accountability, justice, and ethical governance. The concept of Adl, or justice, has been reiterated throughout the Qur'an, stating that the ruler and individual alike have to act fairly, protect the rights of others, and forbid oppression. Justice is seen as a divine trust for ensuring the respect of human dignity in all walks of life. Ethical governance in Islam obliges the leadership to serve the interests of the community, safeguard the rights of all its members, and engage them through Shura, or consultation. This was put into practice by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ through just conflict resolution, through transparency of matters, and legislation and policy initiatives which consider protection of both individual and collective rights. From this process, confidence, accountability, and social cohesion evolve, which indeed are essential ingredients in sustainable human development.

In Islam, accountability is framed both in person and worldly senses, but also in terms of sacred duties. In this life, people answer for how they treat others, while leaders and citizens alike will answer to God for injustices and violations. This double duty creates an ethical order that avoids corruption, exploitation, and denial of human rights.

Ethical governance, open institutions, and judiciaries that reflect justice will further continue to protect those rights meaningfully. In a more complete way, Islam integrates accountability with justice and ethical leadership to protect human dignity, support social well-being, and underpin the flourishing of society.

#### Islamic Human Rights as a Pattern for Global Dignity and Prosperity

Islam's framework for human rights grounds dignity, justice, and flourishing in today's world. Centered on equality, moral duty, and well-being, Islamic guidance crosses cultural and national lines, underscoring the universal character of its moral and social order.

Islam calls for respect for human dignity, irrespective of race, gender, or status. The Qur'an reminds us that all people come from one family, stressing equality before God and a shared moral responsibility. It is through the protection of the vulnerable, the advancement of justice, and the promotion of social welfare that Islam engenders social trust, cohesion, and stability, the ingredients of strong societies.

Its global relevance is rooted in a mix of moral, spiritual, and pragmatic dimensions. Ideas ranging from justice (Adl) and consultation (Shura) to economic equity, freedom of belief, and protection of life and property intersect with modern conceptions of human rights and bear implications for how inequality, oppression, and injustice might be confronted today. Ethical governance and social welfare systems informed by Islamic ideas can thus enable policy measures, humanitarian actions, and international cooperation.

Where spiritual guidance meets concrete ethics, Islam offers a frame that uplifts individual dignity and collective well-being. The holistic approach would maintain that respect for human rights is not only a legal duty but also a moral, ethical, and social obligation toward the development of humanity worldwide.

#### The Meaning of Human Dignity in Islam: Foundations in Ethics and Spirit

Karamah, human dignity, is considered the heart of Islamic rights, linking ethical and spiritual levels. The Qur'an upholds life as sacred and declares that God has endowed every human being with dignity, irrespective of status, gender, or ethnicity. This universal standard is signaled in the verse, "We have certainly honored the children of Adam" (Qur'an 17:70).

Ethically, dignity ties individuals and society to act justly, protect liberty, and end exploitation. Violations of rights, oppression, or dehumanization contradict the ethical core of Islam and indicate spiritual failings. Spirituality reinforces this: accountability to God for one's actions grounds moral responsibility and a culture of fairness.

Dignity is, however, more than recognition; it is all about creating the conditions to thrive: education, health, safety, and inclusion. So, by linking dignity with moral obligation and social welfare, Islam conceptualizes a wide rights framework which interconnects the spiritual, ethical, and social dimensions.

Contemporary thinkers observe that this same worth-based grounding underlies contemporary human rights: a call to inherent worth as both an ethical imperative and one increasingly seen as a practical necessity for sustainable, equitable societies.

#### Education, Knowledge, and the Right to Personal Development in Islam

In Islam, education and development of personal character play a vital role in the dignity and success of human beings in society. The Holy Qur'an calls for this pursuit of knowledge: "Read in the name of your Lord who created" (Qur'an 96:1), emphasizing spiritual, moral, and intellectual dimensions of learning. Education goes beyond facts, shaping ethical reasoning, critical thinking, and civic responsibility.

It is a right for everyone: men and women, old and young, regardless of status. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ explained that seeking knowledge is a duty of every Muslim. Education facilitates informed choices, civic participation, and the meaningful contribution of citizens towards their communities. It lays a basic framework for understanding the rights and responsibilities that drive personal development and ensure community well-being.

Personal development in Islam encompasses spiritual, moral, intellectual, and physical growth. As the intellect is developed to enhance reasoning, moral and spiritual education builds character, empathy, and ethical conduct. An integrated approach ensures education serves the best interests of all-round development, enabling individuals to defend justice, respect others' rights, and contribute to society.

At all levels, Islamic societies throughout history have supported schools, libraries, and learning centers that fostered literacy and scholarship. As a practical, universal framework for its human rights principles, Islam assumes the nurturing of human potential in access to knowledge and lifelong learning.

### Justice, Equality, and Protection for Marginalized Communities

Adl or justice and equality are the basis on which Islamic rights stand, and no one will be victimized, discriminated against, or neglected. The Qur'an characterizes all humans as equal before God: "Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you" - meaning moral conduct surpasses status, wealth, or lineage (Qur'an 49:13).

One of the core features is protection for the poor, orphans, women, religious minorities, and the enslaved. The Prophet ﷺ protected the dignity of these persons by defending their rights through legal, social, and economic protection. Zakat and waqf in history have ensured that vulnerable sections received food, education, and health.

Justice in Islam has to do with both legal and ethical levels: fairness, no exploitation, and appropriate punishments to restore social equilibrium. The ethical duties include polite treatment of neighbors, avoidance of harm, and harmony.

Equality informs governance and decision-making and inspires social interaction. Shura, or consultation, ensures inclusiveness, while mechanisms of accountability ensure the alignment of leadership with the concerns of people. These together overcome inequality and marginalization while strengthening communities.

Islam provides a comprehensive model for the organization of society, integrating justice, equality, and protection of the weak to preserve dignity while building solidarity and expanding prosperity and opportunity for all.

### Economic Rights and Social Welfare: Fostering Prosperity and Reducing Inequality

Economic justice and social welfare, therefore, involve access to resources in a manner that is fair. The Qur'an and Sunnah have thus guided that the concentration of wealth in a few hands while the needs of the poor, orphans, and most marginalized should draw due attention. This would support the dignity of individuals and collective well-being.

Basic wealth redistribution and anti-exploitation mechanisms include Zakat, or mandatory almsgiving; Sadaqah, or voluntary charity; and prohibition of Riba, or usury. With these, Islam minimizes disparity in economic opportunities, enhances social bonding, and provides people with a dignified lifestyle. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ emphasized the care for widows, orphans, and the poor-that is how economic rights are translated into practice.

It also encompasses fair trade, rights of labor, and protection of property. Fair dealings, fair wages, and transparency in transactions ensure that economic activity serves social welfare and fairness, building a climate in which prosperity is shared and social tensions are eased.

Historically, the welfare model involved public hospitals, schools, and granaries-a testament

to the Islamic concern for collective welfare. In this regard, by linking moral imperatives to specific economic thresholds, Islam ensures protection for individual freedoms, while also laying the bedrock for social cohesion, equality, and sustainability.

Freedom of Expression, Consultation, and Civic Responsibility in Islam Islam respects human and collective agency by embracing freedoms of expression, consultation (Shura), and civic responsibility as part of human rights. Individuals are invited to express an opinion, discuss it, and arrive at a collective decision that is ethical and non-harmful. Shura inculcates consultation into governance to make leaders sensitive to the welfare and opinions of everyone. This is well-illustrated by the example of Prophet Muhammad: diverse voices build strong inclusion, accountability, and social cohesion. The concept of civic responsibility extends from government to daily life: justice, honesty, charity, and active interest in public welfare. In Islam, freedom of expression is held with accountability to moral standards, encouraging dialogue, sound reasoning, and social cohesion. A framework that encourages active participation but ensures moral restraint guarantees that individual freedom would serve social well-being, trust, and human dignity.

### **Conclusion**

Islam presents an integrated approach to human rights, intermingling spiritual, ethical, social, and economic strands in daily life. Dignity, justice, equality, education, economic fairness, and civic duty resound both in private life and institutional leadership. These make certain that rights are not only concepts found in legal abstractions but are real and active duties found in daily living. Protection of life, property, and the vulnerable; propagation of education, ethics, and social welfare—these bring cohesion, resilience, and prosperity together. Mechanisms such as Zakat and Shura, along with ethical governance, further enforce principles of fairness, accountability, and equal opportunity in support of the perpetual universality of Islamic rights. In this way, Islam combines moral, spiritual, and pragmatic guidance in a model of universal human dignity, social harmony, and sustainable prosperity, relevant for contemporary societies and the modern global endeavor of human rights.

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