

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - Ali During the Caliphate of Othman

Election of Othman as the Caliph

At his death bed, Umar nominated a board of six members consisting of Zubair b Awwam, Saad b Abi Waqas, Abdur Rahman b Auf, Talha b Ubaidullah, Ali b Abu Talib and Othman b Affan. During his lifetime, the Holy Prophet had given tidings of Paradise to ten persons. The six persons nominated by Umar were the survivors of the original ten persons who had been given the tidings of Paradise during their lifetime. The four persons out of the blessed ten who had died by this time were Abu Bakr, Umar, Ubaidullah b Jarah and Saeed b Zaid. These six persons were required to elect one of themselves as the Caliph. When the board met, it ran into difficulties in electing the Caliph. Out of the six members, Zubair withdrew his candidature in favor of Ali. Talha withdrew his candidature in favor of Othman and Saad b Abi Waqas withdrew his candidature in favor of Abdur Rahman b Auf. This left three candidates in the field. Out of these three candidates Abdur Rahman b Auf decided to withdraw, leaving two candidates namely Othman and Ali. Abdur Rahman was appointed as the arbitrator to choose between the remaining two candidates, namely Othman and Ali. Both Othman and Ali undertook to abide by the decision of the arbitrator. Abdur Rahman b Auf deliberated over the matter, considered the relative merits of the candidates and also consulted the Companions. After such consultation, Abdur Rahman formed the impression that the majority of the people favored the election of Othman. Contacting the two candidates separately he put to them the question whether they would follow in the footsteps of the previous Caliphs. Ali said that he would do so as far as possible subject to his best judgment in the light of the Quran and Sunnah. Othman replied to the question in the affirmative without any reservation. Thereupon Abdur Rahman gave his verdict in favor of Othman who was acclaimed as the Caliph, and the people ordered the oath of allegiance to him. Ali offered the oath of allegiance to Othman. In Nabj-ul Balagha' there is a short statement of Ali which shows his reaction to the election of Othman. Ali is reported to have said. "All know that in the matter of the Caliphate, I am more qualified and deserving than any other person. Even though my claims have been ignored I will be motivated by considerations of selflessness in the interests of the solidarity of the Muslim Ummah. I acknowledge the new Caliph in the interests of the Muslim community, regardless of whatever hardships I may have to endure."

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