

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - Social Boycott Of Banu Hashim

Consequences of the social boycott

The accounts of the social boycott available in the source books that have come down to us are incomplete, and do not present a true picture of the actual state of affairs. We know that during this period the Banu Hashim lived in a glen outside Makkah. The point to be determined is whether the Banu Hashim were driven to this glen by the Quraish, or did the Banu Hashim move there out of their own accord. In the boycott instrument the Quraish were not required to drive the Banu Hashim out of their homes in Makkah. It appears that the Banu Hashim shifted to the glen, which belonged to Abu Talib out of their accord for reasons of safety, and with a view to living together in a time of crisis. The boycott was only against Banu Hashim. Abu Lahab and his wife who were Banu Hashim did not join the other members of the Banu Hashim. It appears that all other families of the Banu Hashim sided with the Holy Prophet even though they had not accepted Islam. An important issue in this connection is, whether Abu Talib had become a Muslim by the time the boycott was enforced. In this biography of the Holy Prophet Ibn Ishaq quotes some verses composed by Abu Talib with reference to the boycott. A translation of these verses is available in Guillauman's Life of Muhammad. Addressing the Quraish, Abu Talib says: "Did you not know that we have found Muhammad a prophet like Moses described in the oldest books". When the boycott was lifted, and the boycott document was torn Abu Talib composed some more verses, which provided: "The deed was torn up, and all that was against God's wish was destroyed".

A person giving expression to such thoughts as these could not be any one other than a Muslim. It appears that Abu Talib would have accepted the new faith, but he could not make an open declaration, because he felt that people would say Abu Talib has professed Islam out of the fear of death.

Most of the writers refer to this event as a siege. It is doubtful whether this was in fact a siege. According to the agreement of boycott there was no stipulation for siege. The ban was only on marriage and purchase or sale of goods. This did not include any siege. This did not restrict the movements of Banu Hashim either. According to most of the accounts that come down to us, the impression is created that the Banu Hashim in the glen were starved and they were forced to subsist on the leaves of trees. This is not the correct presentation of facts. The boycott was enforced against Banu Hashim alone. Many Muslims still lived in Makkah proper, and there were no restrictions on their purchase or sale of goods. If the Muslims of Makkah purchased provisions from the market, and supplied them to the Banu Hashim in the glen they could do so for there was no term in the agreement of boycott that no one was to be allowed to supply any article of food and drink. Hardship was certainly involved in the segregation of the Banu Hashim in the glen outside Makkah, but the Holy Prophet being a great man was resourceful enough to overcome such hardships. In any proper account of Islamic history the emphasis should not be on the hardships inflicted by the enemies of Islam, the emphasis should be as to how the Muslims overcame such hardships and defeated the enemy at his own game. Under the leadership of the Holy Prophet the Banu Hashim met the ordeal of the social boycott successfully. The social boycott failed to achieve the purpose for which it was intended, and once again in the battle between the truth and falsehood, the Quraish met a reverse, and the Muslims scored a victory.

[View Page](#)