

Khalifa Umar bin al-Khattab - Islamic Actions and Social Mandates

The Dhimmis

In the conquest of non-Muslim countries by the Muslims, the population which did not embrace Islam were guaranteed life, liberty, and property and were called "Ah Al-Dhimma" or "Dhimmis" i.e. the People of the Covenant or Obligation.

In the treaties with the non-Muslims executed during the caliphate of Umar it was invariably provided that the life, liberty, and property of the non-Muslims who accepted to pay Jizyah was guaranteed.

In the treaty with the Christians of Jerusalem it was provided: "The protection is for their lives, and properties, their Churches and Crosses. Their Churches shall not be used for habitation nor shall these be demolished, nor shall injury be done to their Crosses."

Umar took pains to uphold the principle that there is no compulsion in religion. Those non-Muslims who chose to become Muslims of their own accord were welcome, but there were no compulsory conversions. The Muslims were forbidden to interfere with the religious freedom of the Dhimmis.

The Dhimmis were treated as full citizens of the State. There was to be no discrimination between a Muslim and non-Muslims in the eyes of law. If a Muslim killed a Dhimmi he was subject to the same penalty as if he had killed a Muslim. The lands of the Dhimmis were left in their possession. Umar issued strict instructions that all assessments in the case of Dhimmis should be fair.

The Dhimmis were required to pay Jizyah, but this was in lieu, of their exemption from military duty. Where the Dhimmis performed military duty, Jizyah was not taken from them. When any non-Muslim was too poor to pay Jizyah he was exempted from the levy.

Umar allowed the Dhimmis to follow their own personal laws. In order to maintain the integrity of the Dhimmis Umar ordered that they should wear the dress which they used to wear before the conquest of their country by the Muslims. They were required not to imitate the Muslims in the way of dress or otherwise. This order was issued not with a view to humiliating the Dhimmis in any way but to maintaining their cultural identity.

The Dhimmis were free to follow their religious practices but they were enjoined in their own interest not to carry such practices in any way offensive to the Muslims. The Christians were free to ring bells in their churches but in the interests of enmity between the two communities they were asked not to ring the bells at the time when the Muslims were offering prayers. The Christians were allowed to take out their crosses in processions but they were advised that such processions should avoid routes passing through settlements populated by Muslims. These restrictions did not in any way interfere with the liberty of the Dhimmis. These were in their direct interests in as much as thereby the risk of any conflict with the Muslims on sentimental grounds was eliminated.

Umar issued strict instructions to his officers that the covenants with the Dhimmis should be enforced in letter as well as in spirit. These instructions provided:

"Forbid the Muslims to do any injustice to the Dhimmis. No harm should be done to them in any way."

Even on his death bed, Umar thought of the State's responsibility to the Dhimmis. In his bequest to his successor he said:

"My bequest to my successor is that covenants with the Dhimmis should be observed faithfully. They should be defended against all invasions. No injustice should be done to them. They should be treated as full fledged citizens and should enjoy equality before law. Their taxes should be fair, and no burden should be imposed on them which they cannot bear."

[View Page](#)

Source : Alim.org-Umar bin al-Khattab History