

The Onerous Rules & Regulations Imposed on The People of the Book

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The Arabic language *al-Awan* website is dedicated to the spread of a rational and secular culture in the Arab world. As well as the regular news and essays that are published, a sidebar on the front page is dedicated to posting documents of both contemporaneous and traditional subjects.

On Saturday, 10 January, 2009, *al-Awan* published the text of an ancient document dating back to the 11th century, A.D. It was excerpted from a book of *Ibn Hazm* which listed the ***“Rules and Regulations Governing the People of the Book 1.”***

First, I quote from the document, and then offer my comments.

“These are the Rules and Regulations that were imposed by ‘Umar ibn-al-Khattab on the Christians of Syria, after conquering their land. The purpose of these rules was to make them submissive and contemptible. Christians were in no way to exhibit any sign of their unbelief, or anything forbidden in Islam; since Allah, the supremely Glorified and Honored, had said: 2.”

“And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is all for Allah. But if they cease, then lo! Allah is Seer of what they do.” 3. Qur’an 8:39 Pickthall’s Translation

Following this introduction, *Ibn Hazm .4* provided this detailed list dating from the early years of Islam. Referring to the Christians of Syria, ‘Umar, the second Caliph declared:

“They are forbidden to build churches, or monasteries, in their cities or nearby areas. They are not allowed to renovate such buildings. They must allow any Muslim to lodge in these buildings for three nights, and provide him with food. They must never shelter a spy, nor show any duplicity to Muslims. They are not to teach their children the Qur’an. They must not display any sign of their unbelief, or forbid their relatives from converting freely to Islam. Furthermore, they must show reverence to Muslims, and give them pride of place at their assemblies. They should avoid appearing like Muslims in their clothing, their head covers, their shoes, and the parting of their hair. They must not speak the language of Muslims, nor use their names. They are not allowed to use a saddle on a beast of burden, nor bear a sword, nor any other weapon. Their rings must not bear any Arabic inscriptions. They must refrain from selling wine. They must have the front of their hair cut, and wear their own kind of clothing all the time, and must use belts. They are not to display a cross or any of their books, as they are passing Muslims on their way. Their dead must not be buried nearby a Muslim cemetery. They should not ring their bells in a loud manner; equally, they must not raise their voices

while reading their Scriptures in their churches. They are forbidden to parade their palm branches (on Palm Sunday.)”

“Now should Christians ever deviate from obeying these rules, Muslims would cease to honor the covenant that had protected them. In that case, Muslims can deal with them as if they have become people of discord and trouble. 5.”

The importance of this document (posted on 10 January, 2009) reminded the Arab readers that the claim of Islamic tolerance is not supported in either their sacred texts, or in their 1400-year history.

There is no way around the hard fact that the Qur’an in Chapter 8, and verse 39, specifically commands the believers to fight Christians and Jews. This chapter known as *Al-Anfal* was “revealed” in Medina, and its 75 verses are replete with the subject of war and booty. For example, the late Saddam Hussein, when mounting a campaign against the Kurds in northern Iraq, code-named it “*Al-Anfal*” as if to secure a Qur’anic warrant for his horrible crime against fellow-Sunni Muslims!

I must confess that I feel very strongly about this subject, since my roots are in Eastern Christianity, and my forefathers had lived under the onerous rules of *Dhimmitude* for centuries. They were regarded by the Arab conquerors as hard-headed and obstinate, since they clung to their faith and their way of life, notwithstanding the awful restrictions placed on them. Their Muslim overlords couldn’t understand my forefathers’ unwillingness to join them and accept the claims of Islam! Thirteen hundred years of *Dhimmitude* were punctuated, quite often, with severe persecution.

Eventually, the stigma of “*Dhimmi*” that had burdened the Eastern Christians was lifted, thanks to the Allied forces that brought to an end the 400 year old colonial rule of the Ottoman Empire in the Levant. However, the years of freedom from *Dhimmitude* did not last long. After the British and the French left the Middle East, the Christians hoped that Arab nationalism would bring them peace, justice, and equality. It didn’t take long before persecution returned to shatter their hopes. The rise of Islamic *Salafism* meant that gradually, the remnant of the Eastern Christian communities of the Middle East would bear the brunt of discrimination including covert as well as overt persecution.

I am thankful to *al-Awan* website for publishing this infamous document. For here we have the words of an early document based on a “divine” text that authorized the subjugation, and humiliation of the stubborn *dhimmis*, for their refusal to Islamize.

A final word addressed to Western leaders, opinion makers, and educators at universities:

Please liberate yourselves from the fetters of political-correctness and multiculturalism. Join forces with those brave Arab reformists who yearn to see their lands liberated from the suffocating and worn-out cliché *that Islam is a peaceful and tolerant religion*. They need our full support as they tell the true story of Islamic history, and the urgent need for the Islamic nations to relinquish their hegemonic impulse, and join the rest of the world

in combating discrimination and injustice against their fellow-human beings. The “*Pact of ‘Umar*” must be relegated to the dustbin of history!

Notes

1. Ibn Hazm (994-1064) a Muslim theologian. He was born in Cordoba, Spain (known in Arabic as al-Andalus. One of his books dealt with the subject of sects in Islam.
2. In Islamic devotional parlance, several words are used in lieu of Allah. Ibn Hazm referred to Allah as: ‘*Azza wa Jalla*’ (supremely glorified & honored), who spoke in the Qur’an.
3. Reference is to Chapter 8:39 of the Qur’an, known as *Al-Anfal* (Spoils of War, Booty); it has 75 verses, and was “revealed” in Medina.

Two alternate translations of the text:

Ahmed Raza Khan

“And fight them until no mischief remains and the entire religion is only for Allah; then if they desist, Allah sees all what they do.”

Yusuf Ali

“And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevails justice and faith in Allah altogether and everywhere; but if they cease, verily Allah doth see all that they do.”

4. Ibn Hazm went back to the early years of Islam, i.e. the age of the “*Rightly Guided Caliphs*” (632-661 A.D.) and quoted the text of “The Pact of ‘Umar” i.e. the famous ‘*Umar ibn-al-Khattab*, the conqueror of Syria, who became the Second Caliph in 634, and was assassinated in 644. He is well-known for establishing the rules that governed the lives of *Dhimmis* (Christians & Jews) living in *Daru’l-Islam*.

5. Reference here is to the loss of the status of *Dhimmi*.

The URL for the Arabic text is:

http://www.alawan.org/?page=articles&op=print_preview&article_id=2636

For more information on the “Pact of ‘Umar” please consult:

<http://www.bible.ca/islam/islam-kills-pact-of-umar.htm>