

Islam and American Values: Equality

The beliefs and values of the United States were expressed in our founding documents. Are the doctrines of Islam compatible with these beliefs and values? Let's take a look at one of the core American beliefs that was expressed in the Declaration of Independence.

The Declaration of Independence states:

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...

All people are created equal in the eyes of God and in the eyes of the law. But what does Islamic doctrine have to say about this?

Islam makes a sharp distinction between a Muslim (believer) and a non-Muslim (disbeliever), and the rights given to each.

According to the teachings of Muhammad, as long as a Muslim remained a Believer and did not violate any of the doctrines of Islam, he was not to be harmed by another Muslim:

Abu Huraira reported that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) had said: ...A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim. He neither oppresses him nor humiliates him nor looks down upon him...All things of a Muslim are inviolable for his brother in faith; his blood, his wealth and his honour.

Sahih Muslim, No. 2564

This was also commanded by Allah in Chapter 4, Verses 92-93 of the Koran:

It is not for a believer to kill a believer except (that it be) by mistake...And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell to abide therein; and the Wrath and the Curse of Allah are upon him, and a great punishment is prepared for him.

But, Muhammad stated that there was to be no penalty for a Muslim who killed a non-Muslim (disbeliever):

It was narrated from 'Amr bin Shu'aib, from his father, from his grandfather that the Messenger of Allah said: "A Muslim should not be killed in retaliation for the murder of a disbeliever."

Sunan Ibn Majah, No. 2659

And a Jew or a Christian is worth only half of a Muslim:

It was narrated from 'Amr bin Shu'aib, from his father, from his grandfather, that the Messenger of Allah ruled that the blood money for the People of the Book is half of that of the blood money for the Muslims, and they are the Jews and Christians.

Sunan Ibn Majah, No. 2644

What is a Muslim supposed to do when he meets a Jew or Christian?

Abu Huraira reported that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) had

said: Do not greet the Jews and the Christians before they greet you and when you meet any one of them on the roads force him to go to the narrowest part of it.

Sahih Muslim, No. 2167

The Koran says that Muslims are the "best of creatures":

Chapter 98, Verse 7

Verily, those who believe [in the Oneness of Allah, and in His Messenger (Muhammad) including all obligations ordered by Islam] and do righteous good deeds, they are the best of creatures.

In contrast, Jews, Christians, and other non-Muslims are among "the worst of creatures":

Chapter 98, Verse 6

Verily, those who disbelieve (in the religion of Islam, the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad) from among the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) and Al-Mushrikun, will abide in the fire of Hell. They are the worst of creatures.

And what does the Koran say about how Muslims are to treat non-Muslims? The tone was set with this verse:

Chapter 4, Verse 101

...verily, the disbelievers are ever to you open enemies.

And so we have the following verses:

Chapter 48, Verse 29

*Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.
And those who are with him are severe
against disbelievers, and merciful among
themselves...*

Chapter 9, Verse 14

*Fight against them so that Allah will
punish them by your hands and disgrace
them and give you victory over them and
heal the breasts of a believing people.*

Chapter 9, Verse 73

*O Prophet (Muhammad)! Strive hard
against the disbelievers and the
hypocrites, and be harsh against them,
their abode is Hell, - and worst indeed is
that destination.*

Chapter 9, Verse 123

*O you who believe! Fight those of the
disbelievers who are close to you, and let
them find harshness in you; and know that
Allah is with those who are Al-Muttaqun
(the pious).*

Women and equality

Are women considered equal to men under Islam? Let's take a brief look.

According to the four major Sunni schools of Sharia Law, the indemnity for the death or injury of a woman is only one-half of that paid for a man.

And the Koran states that in property matters, a woman's testimony is only worth half that of a man:

Chapter 2, Verse 282

*...And get two witnesses out of your own
men. And if there are not two men
(available), then a man and two women,
such as you agree for witnesses, so that if
one of them (two women) errs, the other
can remind her...*

These are the words of Allah. Muhammad then used them to criticize a group of Muslim women:

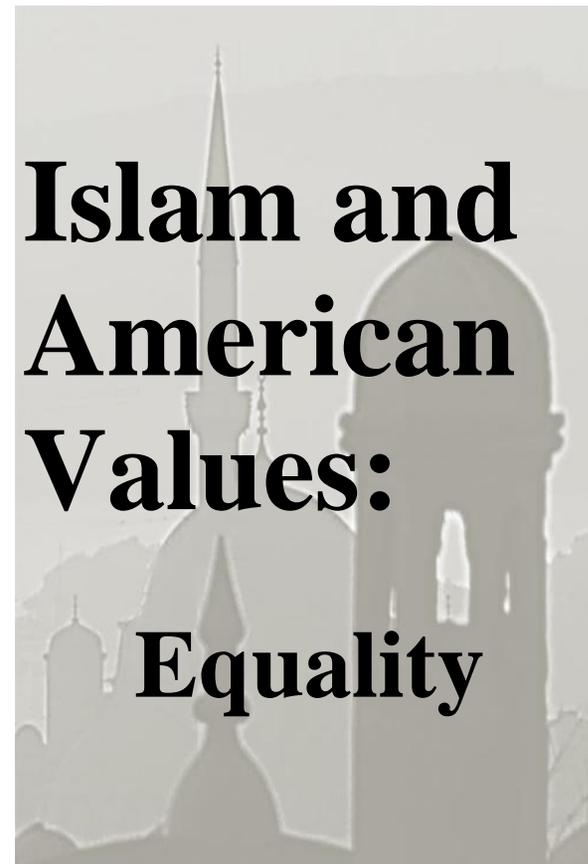
*He said, "Is not the witness (evidence) of
two women equal to the witness of one
man?" They replied in the affirmative.
He said, "This is the deficiency in her
intelligence"...*

Sahih Al-Bukhari, No. 304

So we can see that under Islam, there is no concept of equality between a Muslim and a non-Muslim, or between a male and a female. Only male Muslims are created equal.

For an in-depth look at the conflict between Islamic Doctrine and the equality guaranteed by the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, see my book: *Islamic Doctrine versus the U.S. Constitution: The Dilemma for Muslim Public Officials*.

Dr. Kirby is the author of six books on Islam. His books are available on Amazon.com.



Part of a series on Islam

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