

## Groups and Parties in Islam

*Does Islam allow the existence of various groups and parties? If so, what are their roles? Several questions have been raised lately on the subject of Islamic parties and groups.*

*Some people inquire: Is the large number of Islamic parties and groups an advantage to the Muslim Ummah or is it a handicap? Others inquire: Is it allowed under the Islamic Law to have several parties and groups? Others suggest that since these parties and groups have the same cause and the same ideology, why do they not unite, form an alliance and become a single party named Hizbullah (the party of Allah), instead of having, for example, the Da'wah party, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Al-Muhajiroun, Muslim Brotherhood, or al-Jihad.*

*They support their assertion with Allah's (swt) words, "Truly it is the party of Allah that are the successful." [TMQ 58:22] and, "Surely the party of Allah are the victors." [TMQ 5:56] Both a reference to the Shari'ah derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, as well as an individual analysis of each topic should be carried out before attempting to answer these questions, and to examine the legality and objective of Islamic groups and parties.*

*The legality of forming Islamic parties and groups The formation of a group or a party is fard kifayah (duty of sufficiency) on all Muslims, i.e. it is every Muslim's duty, but if it is carried out by a few people who possess certain qualities, that is enough to fulfil this obligation, for Allah (swt) says, "There should be among you group(s) inviting to what is good (Islam), enjoining what is right (obligatory) and forbidding what is wrong (prohibited). They are those that are successful." [TMQ 3:104] This ayah states the obligation of forming a group or a party and it also describes the qualities of the group and its function.*

*The definition of the word 'Ummah' in this verse is group, bloc, band or a party. Imam Rashid Rida said in his book Tafsir al-Manar that the meaning of the word 'Ummah' in this ayah is a group of people comprising individuals who are united by one bond and who act like the limbs of a single body. Furthermore the definition of the word 'Ummah' meaning a party or a group, this is mentioned in leading Arabic dictionaries such as Fairuz al-Abadi's Al-Qamus al-Muhit. He said, "Verily a party is a group of people. A party is a man, his followers and friends who hold the same views and values." Imam Abu Bakr Ibn al-'Arabi said in his book Ahkam al-Qur'an Verily Ummah in this verse means jama'a (group)." Imam al-Tabari, a leading commentator and interpreter, said in his book Jami' al-Bayan, on the meaning of this verse,*

*"Allah (swt) means by this: There should be among you a jama'a (group) inviting people to Islam and its rightfulness."*

*Qadi al-Baydawi said in his book Anwar al-Tanzil on the meaning of this verse,*

*" 'Among you' here, aims at singling out a group of people, because inviting to what is good and forbidding what is wrong requires certain conditions and qualifications which are not shared by all of the Muslim Ummah, such as knowledge of the Shari'ah and the manner in which the obligation is to be carried out. That is why Allah (swt) addressed everyone at the beginning of the verse and then ordered the selection of a few people. This was to show that it is the duty of everyone; so if it is abandoned then everyone would be sinful, but the sin would disappear if a group of people, qualified for the task, performed it."*

*Therefore, 'Ummah' here means jama'a (group) and hizb means party, both having similar meanings, except that 'party' is more specific than 'group'. A party has a bond that links all its members together around one ideology and one goal that unites them; the party is a man, his followers and friends who carry the same opinion and ideals.*

Imam al-Razi said in his book *Tafsir Mafatih al-Ghayb*,

"A party is a man and his friends who share his views; it is the people that unite under the order of their party."

### **The qualifications of an Islamic party or a group**

1. Allah (swt) says,

**"There should be among you group(s) inviting to what is good (Islam), enjoining what is right (obligatory) and forbidding what is wrong (prohibited). They are those that are successful."** [TMQ 3:104]

The group or the party that is formed according to this ayah requires certain qualifications:

a. The group or the party must have an amir whose decisions must be obeyed as long as they do not contravene the Qur'an and the Sunnah, for the Messenger of Allah (saw) said, **"If there are three of you in a corner of the Earth, appoint one of you as an amir."**

b. The group or the party must be solely based on the Islamic 'aqeedah, for Allah (swt) says,

**"If anyone desires a deen other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost."** [TMQ 3:85]

And when Allah (swt) says "inviting to what is good" it means to Islam. This implies that the nature of the group or the party is derived from the Islamic 'aqeedah.

c. The aim of the party or the group must be the establishing of the Islamic way of life, not to take up ministerial posts or Parliamentary seats, nor to look after welfare, moral or spiritual aims. The aim must be to work towards resuming the Islamic way of life within society by establishing the Khilafah or the Imamah, which is the power responsible for the implementation of the Shari'ah, abiding by the Shari'ah principle which states "That which is necessary to accomplish a duty is itself a duty". The application of the Shari'ah in all aspects of life is an obligation. This cannot be carried out in the absence of the Islamic State, so the formation of the Islamic State is an obligation.

d. The ultimate ambition of the group or the party is to attain Allah's (swt) pleasure, for He (swt) says,

**"Seeking grace from Allah and (His) good pleasure and aiding Allah and His Messenger. Such are indeed the sincere ones."** [TMQ 59:8]

e. It is not necessary that the party or the group be formed with the permission of any ruler, because performing this duty does not require the permission of the ruler, otherwise the command of Allah (swt) would be delayed until the ruler granted permission, and this is totally in violation of the principle of accomplishing an obligation.

f. The bond between the members of the party or the group must be the Islamic 'aqeedah and ideology, and not the bond of nationalism, sectarianism, spiritualism and materialism. It should be the bond based on the Islamic 'aqeedah and principle which tied together 'Umar and Suhayb, Salman and Abu Bakr, Bilal and 'Ali. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, **"There is no difference of merit between an Arab and a non-Arab except in taqwa."**

We conclude from the qualifications listed above that the group or the party that we have been ordered to form by the above mentioned verse [3:104] must be a political one, which should manage the Muslim Ummah's affairs at domestic and international levels, such as the monitoring of the ruler's domestic policies and decisions, making him accountable for them in

case of a breach, inquiring about his foreign policy and making sure that it is based only on the Divine Law of Islam.

### **Why the group or party must be political in nature**

Evidence from the Qur'an is reflected in the verse where Allah (swt) commands,

**"There should be among you group(s) inviting to what is good (Islam), enjoining what is right (obligatory) and forbidding what is wrong (prohibited). They are those that are successful."** [TMQ 3:104]

This ayah determines the qualifications of the Ummah i.e. the party or the group as being political. Politics in Islam means to govern and manage the affairs of the Ummah on the basis of Islam; unlike the meaning of politics according to the disbelievers principles, which is the art of pragmatism, meaning to fit yourself to a situation based on reality i.e. being realistic, requiring lying, deluding and cheating, all of which contradicts with the meaning of politics in Islam.

The linguistic meaning of politics, as mentioned in the dictionary Al-Qamus al-Muhit, volume 3, by the learned Arabic language expert Fairuz Abadi is,

"I governed the people, i.e. I invited (ordered) the people and forbade them."

Governing means inviting and forbidding, and these in Islam are part of the divine laws. Politics is therefore governing the Ummah's affairs at a domestic and international level and inviting to all that is good and forbidding what is wrong. These are the specifications of the Islamic party as the verse above has determined.

Evidence from the Sunnah confirming that politics means governing the Ummah's affairs and protecting her interests, as well as being an obligation of every Muslim, is reflected in the Messenger of Allah's (saw) saying, **"Each of you is a guardian, and each of you will be asked about your guardianship."** And he (saw) also said, **"A group of people from my Ummah will always remain on the right path and continue to be triumphant, their opponents shall not be able to do them any harm"**. And the Messenger of Allah (saw) said, **"Whosoever does not show concern for the Muslims' affairs is not one of them"** and **"The best jihad is a word of wisdom said to a tyrant ruler"**. In another hadith he (saw) said, **"Islam is a word of sincerity and well wishing. Upon this we said: For whom? He replied: For Allah, His Book, His Messenger and for the leaders and the common Muslims."** He (saw) also said, **"The Prophets ruled over the children of Israel. Whenever a Prophet died, another Prophet succeeded him, but there will be no Prophet after me. There will soon be Khulafa'a and they will number many."**

The above evidences are for all Muslims to acknowledge, and not just for the Muslim groups or parties. Nevertheless, the quality of the group or the party must be political as mentioned in the ayah. The nature of the work carried out by the group or the party entails it to be political, "inviting to all that is good and forbidding what is wrong" exclusively within an Islamic framework. These two tasks are the assignment of the political group or party, and since the forming of the group or the party on the basis of the Islamic 'aqeedah is fulfilling the obligation mentioned in the ayah, and since the aim of the group or the party is to establish the Islamic Khilafah (i.e. its members are politicians looking after the affairs of the Muslims), it is only natural that its main work is political, for it aims at removing the polytheist body or the rotten political system and re-establishing a just and worthy political system, the Khilafah.

In summary the ayah has decreed that every group has two tasks:

1. Inviting to all that is good, i.e. inviting to Islam. This applies naturally to non-Muslims.
2. Inviting people to good deeds (that which is obligatory) and forbidding what is wrong (that which is prohibited) and this applies to Muslims.