

## Did Khilafah only exist for 30 years?

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Question: The need for Khilafah has become well established and many Muslims now call for it. However, some people claim that the Khilafah only lasted for 30 years and that thereafter the Khilafah ceased to exist. Does this understanding have any Islamic basis? And is it a valid justification for not establishing Khilafah today just because it only lasted 30 years?

Answer: There is no doubt that the Islamic State, which Muhammad al-Mustafa (as) established in Madinah existed until it was destroyed at the hands of Kamal Ataturk on the 3rd of March 1924. The continuity of the Islamic ruling system, the Khilafah system, beyond the time of the Khulafah Rashideen is established by historical reality and by the text. As for history we should bear in mind the structure of the ruling system so that we can assess historically whether it existed or not. This structure is based on the following pillars: the Khaleefah, i.e., the head of State, the Khaleefah's delegated assistants (mo'aawin Tafweed), the Khaleefah's executing assistants (mo'aawen Tanfeez), the Ameer of Jihad, the Governors (Wulah), the Judges (qudah), state departments, and the state assembly (Majlis al-Ummah). If we analyze history we can see that all but one (the Shura) existed throughout the eras until its destruction in 1924. The absence or neglect of the Shura after the Khulafa Rashidun does not mean the ruling system changed because ruling is possible without Shura even though it is the right of the Muslims. As for the periods in history where no khaleefah existed whether due to civil war or occupation by foreign armies, the Khilafah still continued to exist as the rest of the structure still existed. As regards the claim of hereditary rule, it is true that the bay'ah i.e. process of appointing a Khaleefah, was mal-administered but that did not affect the continuity of the Khilafah. This is because even though a Khaleefah might have taken the people's bay'ah for his son before his death, it was always renewed afterwards. This bay'ah was usually given either by the people of influence and representation (ahl al-Halli wal- 'aqd) or as we saw in the latter period by the Shaykh al-Islam.

The scholars accepted that the Khilafah continued after the Khulafah Rashidun, although some from the Salaf disliked to use the title Khaleefah for later rulers because of the following hadith reported by at-Tirmizi on the authority of Safeenah who said that the Messenger (saw) said: "The Khilafah in my Ummah after me will be for thirty years. Then there will be Mulkan 'aduudan (hereditary rule) after that." [Similar narrations are also to be found in the Sunan of Abu Dawud (2/264) and Musnad of Ahmad (1/169)] According to the scholars, this hadith does not mean the Khilafah ceased to exist after thirty years because it contradicts other authentic texts.

Jabir b. Samurah (ra) narrated that the Messenger (saw) said "The Islamic Deen will continue until the Hour has been established, or you have been ruled by twelve Khulafah, all of them being from the Quraish"; [Sahih Muslim]. This hadith indicates that the Ummah will have not four or five but twelve Khaleefah, indicating that the Khilafah could not have been restricted to only thirty years. Regarding this hadith Qadi 'lyad said: "it has been mentioned in the latter hadith "The Khilafah after me will be for thirty years, then there will be a hereditary rule"; this contradicts the hadith regarding the twelve Khaleefah for in the thirty years there were only the Khulafah Rashidun and months in which the bay'ah was given to al-Hasan b. al-Ali. The answer to this is: What is meant by "the Khilafah will be for thirty years"; is the Khilafah of the Nubuwwah (prophethood)"; [As quoted by an-Nawawi in his Sharh Sahih Muslim, 1821]

As for the reference to twelve Khulafah it does not mean it was restricted to that number as Qadi 'lyad explains: "Perhaps what is meant by twelve Khaleefahs in these hadiths and their like is that they were the Khulafah during the strong period of the Khilafah, the power of Islam, when the affairs were in order and the people were united on those who undertook the post of Khilafah." [Tarikh al-Khulafah of as-Sayuti, p.14].

Ibn Hajar said in sharh of al-Bukhari: "What Qadi 'lyad said is the best of what has been said regarding the hadith I think it's the strongest because it is supported by sayings of the Prophet through authentic lines of transmission: "And people will gather round all of them"; [Fath al-Baari] and then Ibn Hajar gives a historical account of how people had gathered round and united under certain Khulafah after the Khulafah Rashidun; he mentions the likes of Umar ibn Abdul Aziz and he even mentions "khulafa bani Abbas"; i.e. amongst the Abbasids.

Sayf ad-Deen al-Aamidi, the great Shafi'i scholar and Usuli, said in his book *al-Imamah min abkar al-afkar fi usul ad-din* (p.306): "And his (saw) saying "After me the Khilafah will be for thirty years and then it will turn into a mulkan adooda (hereditary kingship); this hadith does not indicate that the Khilafah is restricted to the Khulafah Rashideen (they are Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali [may Allah be pleased with them]) since their Khilafah lasted for thirty years as stated by the Prophet (saw). And nor does the hadith mean that there is no Khilafah after the Khulafah Rashideen. Rather what is meant is: The Khilafah after me in terms of the responsibilities of the Imaamah and following my Sunnah without increase or neglect will be for thirty years, contrary to the period after this when most of the ruling will be of kings. Despite this the continuity of the Khilafah is indicated by the following two things:

The first: The Ijma' of the Ummah in every age on the obligation to follow an Imam of that time and upon the fact that the Imaam and Khaleefah must be obeyed.

Second: He (saw) said: "then it will become (taseer) a mulkan". The personal pronoun (dameer) in "taseeru milkan" refers to the Khilafah. Since the mentioned (verb) cannot refer to anything other than the Khilafah, as if it is saying "and then the Khilafah becomes a mulk"; It judged that the Khilafah will become a mulk, the judgment on a thing requires that the thing itself exists. In the first point Imaam Amidi explains that the Ummah is agreed, and this of course is due to text, that the Imaam of that age must be followed and hence one cannot argue the hadith is restricting any Khilafah after it. And his second argument is linguistic, the hadith is saying an aspect of the Khilafah will change and not the Khilafah itself. It is like saying "and then Tariq became angry"; the transforming of Tariq to a state of anger does not mean Tariq has become Ali or Umar. He is still Tariq but an aspect of his state has changed which is that he has become angry. Similarly when the hadith says "thumma taseeru mulkan" (and then it became a hereditary rule); it does not mean it ceases to be a Khilafah. In fact in one of the narrations of the above hadith says: "The Khilafah of the Prophethood will be thirty years and then it will become a kingship"; In other words what will cease is the Khilafah of the prophethood, i.e. the perfect Khilafah and not the Khilafah itself.

Imaam at-Taftazani referring to the fact that the rulers after Imam Ali were considered kings says: "This is a difficult problem, for the people of influence and representation (ahl halli wal aqd) of the Muslim people were agreed on the Khilafah of the Abbasids and some of Banu Marwan, such as Umar b. Abd al-Aziz, for example. Perhaps the meaning here (referring to the above hadith that the Khilafah will be thirty years) is rather the perfect Khilafah, in which there is no dross due to difference [of opinion] or inclination away from following [the right Khaleefah], will be for a period of thirty years, and then after it there might be or there might not be a Khilafah...If objection is made that since the period of the Khilafah was thirty years, then the time subsequent to the rightly guided Khalifahs is devoid of the Imaam and whole of the Muslim people are thus disobedient an when they die, they die as in the days of ignorance, we reply that it has already been pointed out that the perfect Khilafah is what is meant. It is well known from the hadith that to die without a Khaleefah is to die the death of Jahiliyyah, so what about the Muslims after the thirty years? At-Taftazani replies by saying the Muslims in those days were not sinful because the Khilafah did exist as the hadith only refers to the perfect Khilafah.

Imam Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (b.911 AH) in his *Tarikh al-Khulafah* (History of the Caliphs) recounts history of the Khulafah until his time with the death Khalifah Mutawakkil Abul Izz in 903 AH and the appointment of his son al-Mustamsik Billah. He says in his introduction to the *Tarikh*: "This is a brief history in which I present the biography of the Khulafah, the Amirs of the Believers who looked after the affairs of the Ummah from the time of Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq — may Allah be pleased with him! — until this our time" and that was 900 years after the Hijrah!

The notable scholars throughout the ages had a relationship with the Khulafah, whether they accounted them, such as Abu Hanifah and al-Mansur, or they worked for them such as Qadi Abu Yusuf who was the Qadi al-Qudah (chief judge) under Harun ar-Rashid or they participated in the bay'ah of a Khaleefah such as Izz b. Abd as-Salam, who gave bay'ah to Mustamsir Billah after the defeat of the Tatars.

Towards the end of the Uthmani Khilafah when the big powers were conspiring against it, Sheikh ul Hind Maulana Mahmood Hassan (who was the then head of Darul Uloom Deoband and direct student of Maulana Qasim Nanautavi, the founding father of the Darul 'Uloom) in the 1920's, mentioned a fatwa regarding saving the Uthmani Khilafah from the enemies of Islam.

The respected Maulana said: 'The enemies of Islam have left no stone unturned to strike against and harm the honor and prestige of Islam. Iraq, Palestine and Syria that were won over by the Prophet's companions and his followers, after in numerous sacrifices, have once again become targets of greed of the enemy of Islam. The honor of Khilafat is in tatters. Khalifa-tul-Muslimin, who used to unite the entire community on this planet; who is the vice-regent of Allah on this earth; used to implement the universal law of Islam; who used to protect the rights and interests of Muslims and used to preserve and ensure the glory of the words of the Creator of this universe be preserved and implemented, has been surrounded by enemies and made redundant.' [From the Fatwa of Sheikh ul Hind Maulana Mahmood Hassan, 16th Safar 1339 AH, October 29 1920 CE, page 78 of English translation of 'The Prisoners of Malta' by Maulana Syed Mohammad Mian, published by Jamiat Ulama-I-Hind]

Also, Maulana Mohammad Ali Johar, a founder of the Khilafat movement said about the Khilafah: 'The ruler of Turkey was the Khaleefah or successor of the Prophet and Amir -ul- Mu'mineen or chief of the believers and the Khilafah is as essentially our religious concern as the Quran or the Sunnah of the Prophet.' [Johar, Mohammed Ali, My Life a Fragment pg.41] Also Maulana Abul Kalam Azad wrote a book in 1920 called 'The Issue of Khilafat', where he stated: 'Without the Khilafah the existence of Islam is not possible, the Muslims of India with all their effort and power need to work for this.' In that book he listed all of the Khulafah from the time of Abu Bakr (ra) until the time when he wrote his book. Thus, we can see the 'Ulema were concerned to ensure the continuation of the Khilafah until the very end.

The continuity of the obligation of Khilafah after the Khulafah Rashideen is a pillar of Ahl as-Sunnah and hence at-Taftazaani (who incidentally was a Shafi'i scholar) in his commentary (sharh) of the Aqeedah of Imam an-Nasafi (who was a Hanafi) said: 'The position of agreement is that it is obligatory to appoint an Imam. The difference of opinion is on the question whether the appointment must be by Allah or by His creatures, and whether the basis [for appointment] is text or reason. The correct position is that the creatures must appoint a Khaleefah because of the statement of the Prophet (saw): 'Whoever dies without knowing the Imam of his time, dies the death of Jahiliyyah.'

At-Taftazani also says: 'The Muslims must have an Imaam, who will carry out the administration of their decisions, the maintaining of their restrictive ordinances, the guarding of their frontiers, the equipping of their armies, the receiving of their alms, the subjugation of those who get the upper hand and robbers and highwaymen, the performance of worship on Fridays and the Festivals, the settlement of disputes which take place amongst creatures, the receiving of evidence based on legal rights, the giving in marriage of young men and maidens who have no guardians, and the division of the booty and things like these which individuals of the people are not entrusted.' [Sharh 'Aqidat an-Nasafiyyah, p.147] What Imaam at-Taftazani says is considered the last word on what Ahl as-Sunnah agreed and the above quote on the obligation of appointing a Khaleefah is clear regardless of ones historical interpretation.