

Assessment Three

An Analysis of the Role of Christians & Minorities in Early Islamic Caliphates to ISIS & Other Extremist Groups

Christian-Muslim Relations: Texts, Past & Present

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Introduction:

When examining Islamic caliphates, it is imperative to assess the claims various groups and powers have had to this role. This is especially important due to the rise of terror groups such as ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) with each group claiming to be the enforcer of Islamic government, rule, and law. Along with terror groups, countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey also claim a significant stake in the narrative of Islamic influence as being the centers of the Islamic world. Saudi Arabia holds the two holiest cities of Islam, Mecca, and Medina, Iran is the center of Shiite theological study (as well as where the Shiite “Islamic Revolution” took place) and Turkey is home to the remnants of the Ottoman Empire. Even during the early Rashidun Caliphate after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, there were already disagreements and tensions as to who would be the direct enforcer in the Islamic world. This eventually led to the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates, respectively.

This brief synopsis illustrates that the concept of a caliphate is subjective and open to interpretation. There is not a direct quote in the Quran which designates a specific Islamic individual, group, or party as the beneficiaries of caliphal rule. It is due to this ambiguity that the Shiites and Sunnis still hold a significant tension in the geopolitical spectrum, both politically and theologically.

When examining the role of Christians and minorities in Islamic caliphates, their roles have not been consistent. ISIS, which claims to be the “Islamic State” and therefore the sole authority in their Caliphate, does not hold Christians, or other minorities to be active subjects within their rule. However, when comparing this to earlier and multiple caliphates, this differs, in which Islamic rule was still in its exposition.

What was the role of Christians and minorities in earlier Islamic caliphates? How does that differ from ISIS and other terror groups which claim to be the sole authority of Islam? How Islamic are some of these caliphates and where did they originate? Most importantly, what does this mean for the contemporary political and cultural relationship between Christians and Muslims in the current climate? This analysis will look at the relationship of Christians and minorities in the caliphates of the past and compare it to terror groups who claim the caliphate, in the present.

Part I: Historical Analysis of Christians in Earlier Caliphates

I. Role of Christians in Administration

After the death of Muhammad in 632, the Islamic Caliphate spread throughout Arabia, effectively expanding the rule of law of the early Muslims. However, much of the inhabitants of these areas were non-Muslims and there was a systematic approach in how to utilize the involvement of the local inhabitants while spreading the Caliphate. In fact, when the early Islamic Empire expanded into the Byzantine territory, the previous Byzantine subjects welcomed the change in government “and found the new yoke far lighter than the old, both in taxation and in other matters,” (Sirry, 204).

During the early Rashidun and Umayyad Caliphates, Islam was still in its exposition, with a heavy population of Christians and Jews in its newly acquired territories. To expect a sudden takeover without the involvement of the pre-existing population would lack pragmatic and efficient government. Due to the involvement of administration in previous empires, particularly the Byzantine Empire, Christians had strong experience in government administration and overall literacy. In fact, Christian administrators of “Byzantine origin were in ever greater demand to administer an institution that was somehow alien to the Arab culture,”

(Sirry, 201). Prior to the arrival of Islam, Arabia was fairly secluded from the major empires of its time and functioned at a primarily tribal level. The overall literacy and experience of the existing Christian population gave significant service to the early Islamic caliphates (Sirry, 202).

The founder of the Umayyad Caliphate, Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan (or Muawiyah I)'s claim to the caliphate was controversial. He led a revolt against the fourth of the Rashidun Caliphs, (also the first of the Shiite Imams) Ali ibn Abi Talib, Muhammad's son-in-law, and first cousin. After Ali's assassination and Muawiyah's eventual ascension of the Caliphate, he inherited a significant population of Christians in his base in Damascus. To maintain this population, Muawiyah not only maintained close tribal and administrative ties to the Christian community, but he also married a Christian as a show of alliance and hoping for Christian support (Donner, 176). This included employing Christian administrators and advisors.

It would be naive to assume that these alliances and marriages by the Umayyads were out of goodwill and not for political purposes. However, even within the controversies of the Umayyad Caliphate, the approach was to appease the Christian community by employing them, making alliances with Christian tribes, and by marrying Christian women. With these alliances and personal relationships being molded, the existing Christian community now had personal encouragement for taking part in the conquests and biddings of the Umayyads. In Muawiyah's perspective, his marriage and alliances with Christian tribes were primarily for the consolidation of power and for the success of his Caliphate in keeping the preexisting inhabitants appeased, while rendering their services for conquests and his politics.

In the succeeding Abbasid Caliphate, the Abbasids administered the services of Christians within the administration to their advantage. Although the Abbasid Caliph Mansur (754-775) attempted to remove Christians and non-Muslims from any administrative role, he was

forced to withdraw from this approach and continue the employment of Christians and Jews due to their competence and administrative experience (Sirry, 192). Along with the issue of competence, there was also fear of repercussions from the existing Christian and non-Muslim community of internal strife within the Caliphate. There was a plethora of Christians in upper-level administrative roles in later Abbasid times, with some Caliphs being more open and favoring Christians than others. Regardless of the internal preferences from some of these Caliphs, ranging from wanting to expel non-Muslims in high roles to some preferring them, many of them ended up using the services of the Christian subjects (Sirry, 194).

Even in the much later Ottoman Empire, we see strong documented evidence of Christians in significant roles within the Islamic Caliphate. Although these nomadic Turks were not Arabs, nor centrally located in Arabia, they ended up successfully claiming an Islamic Empire and ruled for over 600 years. A significant portion of Ottoman conquests occurred in Christian lands, with native Christians becoming subjects of the Ottoman Empire.

After the conquest of Constantinople, Ottoman leader Mehmet II inherited a sizeable Christian population (specifically Greek Orthodoxy), with significant churches in the heart of the city. Although many of these churches were converted into mosques to signify Islamic rule, Mehmet demonstrated tolerance and leniency to his Christian subjects. This included the freedom of worship, exemption from taxation, and keeping the Christian clergy in charge of Christian affairs. To maintain administrative structure within the Christian clergy, Mehmet abolished independent functions of the Church and had the sultan nominate the Patriarch of the Church. Therefore, the Patriarch was an official function of the Ottoman government and well within the jurisdiction of the sultan. (McCarthy, 73-74).

These aspects of incorporating Christian and minority subjects within administrative roles of the Islamic Empire have a strong aspect of pragmatism involved. In many occupied areas, the majority of the inhabitants were not Muslim and in many cases were Christian (such as Constantinople during the Ottoman conquest). For practical purposes, it would be pragmatic to include the local population in the state of affairs to suppress any possibility of a revolt or uprising against the state. This allowed for many in the Islamic government to not only bring Christian and minority subjects within their fold but also to limit the chances of revolt against a sizeable population.

II. Role of Christians in Culture & Society

To merely highlight the historical role of Christians and minority subjects in administrative roles would not be a sufficient method to analyze the role of Christians and minorities within the daily life of the Caliphate. Significant aspects, such as the involvement in cultural and social life outside of administrative roles are crucial in determining the historical and contemporary importance of this area of research. In many examples of early Islamic government, we see the involvement of Christians and minorities in the fields of economics, education, and even theology.

Literacy in Arabia was sparse, particularly amongst the Arab Muslims. In contrast, Christians had a higher rate of literacy amongst their population (primarily due to the involvement in administration in the Byzantine Empire). In the Abbasid Caliphate, one of the most crucial initiatives by the Caliphate was to expand the availability of scholarly texts into Arabic, particularly from Greek and Syriac. Therefore, “[t]he people who knew Greek and Syriac were mostly Christians and almost all the translations were carried out by members of the

religious minority,” (Kennedy, 114). Interestingly, these translations were mostly occurring within Christian monasteries.

Early sources also indicate the introduction of the *Bayt al-hikma* or the “House of Wisdom. In its essence, this was an area in which academics and scholars could focus on their research and engage in debate amongst one another (Kennedy, 113). Learning and academia flourished, which eventually introduced the arrival of the Golden Age of Islam. This aspect of an academic environment was alien within the traditional Arabian landscape, and this was entirely impossible without the services of its Christian subjects, as they provided the services of scholarly translations which the good majority of the Arab Muslims could not.

Additionally, this also allowed for the overall subjects of the Caliphate to receive an immense amount of intellectual material from previous societies and to build a contemporary academic atmosphere amongst the population. This aided in the development and introduction of important Islamic philosophers, scholars, and scientists into developing original academic infrastructure and achievements. Without these translations, the Golden Age of Islam within the Abbasid Caliphate would not have been as significant, nor as far-reaching. This not only made the Christian subjects be included in the cultural state of affairs but also having the services of Christian translators to be desired and in demand.

The inclusion of Christians in translation services led to theological debate between Christians and Muslims. This can primarily be seen in the debate between a Muslim and a Christian in Al-Kindi’s *Apology* in which both participants invite the other to their respective religions and attempt to highlight (in what each view) as flaws in their doctrine. Although polemical from both sides, there is a series of discussions in which there is an openness in critiquing the dominant religion of the State. It would be incorrect to state that the Christian side

is not more vulnerable in this regard, but the fact that Al-Kindi's work was allowed to be constructed demonstrates a form of early Christian-Muslim dialogue. Additionally, the Christians also engaged in further translating the Bible and holy texts into Arabic (Goddard, 53-55).

III. Historical Examples of Christian-Muslim Coexistence & Dialogue

Tensions between Muslims and Christians (as well as Jews) were prevalent, even during the more inclusive periods of various caliphates. However, there are various instances of dialogue and coexistence amongst Muslims and minorities in Islamic societies. When analyzing this aspect of Christian-Muslim relations, the Quran is a useful text for dissection when using it as a source of historical analysis of the political and social scenario at the time of its inception.

It is important to note, that Christians and Jews (as well as some translations including Zoroastrians) are deemed "People of the Book" in the Quran and are listed as amongst those that will be granted paradise (2:62), with various other verses specifying the unique and special place for Jews and Christians, since the source of their text and the Quran is the same. However, there are also references to the "People of the Book" in a more unfavorable term, especially when discussions are theological in the concept of the Trinity versus the Tawhid (3:64). We can make a historical assessment that these varying verses were revealed when tensions between Muslims and Jews/Christians grew, in comparison to its exposition.

Meanwhile, it is also important to note that there has never been a reversal of the designation of Jews and Christians as the "People of the Book." Although the Quran's application and view of certain verses differ amongst schools and sects, some verses in the Quran do make other verses void.

An example of this is alcohol. It is thoroughly agreed amongst most schools in Islam that the Quran has forbidden alcohol for Muslims. However, this was not always the case, as continuing revelation added and amended previous revelations and verses. In an earlier verse in the Quran, it states that alcohol has both advantages and disadvantages, but the negatives outweigh the positives (2:219). At this point, alcohol is discouraged but not outright forbidden. However, the Quran later issues (deemed by most schools) an outright ban on alcohol within Islam (5:91).

This illustrates that there is precedence in the Quran for an amendment, and for one verse to have precedent over the other if circumstances demand such action. However, even with tensions between Muslims and the “People of the Book”, there has never been a reversal of this designation for Jews and Christians. The significance of this cannot be understated, as it highlights the interpretation for dialogue between the Muslims and their Abrahamic counterparts and as a form of encouraging coexistence for generations to come.

Additionally, Muhammad himself issued a charter dedicated specifically to the expected behavior of the Muslim government and population towards the Jews and Christians. The Charter of Medina (issued approximately in 622) was drafted in the city he and the early Muslims received a haven by the Christian kingdom of Abyssinia against the Meccan aristocracy. This city of Yathrib (later known as Medina), had a significant preexisting population of Jews and Christians. The Charter allowed for both Jews and Christians to freely practice their religion, apply their religious texts to themselves for governing and for mutual agreement and understanding between these groups, with neither allowed to engage in espionage against one another (Goddard, 29-30). This application is quite liberal when observing from a

medieval lens and provides specific instruction for tolerance and understanding between the Abrahamic traditions.

Even when observing the Rashidun Caliphate after the death of Muhammad, there are a plethora of incidents in which the Muslim leaders of the time engaged in pragmatic outreach with their Christian counterparts. During the reign of the second Rashidun Caliph, Umar I (also spelled as Omar), led an outstanding army to conquer Jerusalem, which is home to many Christians and landmark churches. The occupants of Jerusalem did not resist the incoming Muslims, and Christian writers account for the positive encounter between the sitting Caliph and the Christians. He was greeted by the Patriarch of Jerusalem and Umar obliged. The Patriarch also welcomed and offered the Caliph to pray within the walls of the Church after his journey, but Umar refused since he feared it would set a precedent of other Muslims forcibly converting churches of Christian subjects into mosques. The Patriarch and Umar then embarked on a journey to Bethlehem where the Caliph visited the Church of Nativity and set a rule that no more than one Muslim can enter the area at a time. (Muir, 145). This historical event is compelling in contemporary circumstances, with the recent decision of the Turkish government to convert Sofia Hagia into a fully conventional mosque.

During the reign of the fourth Caliph of the Rashidun Caliphate (and the first of the Shiite Imams), Ali ibn Abi Talib wrote a letter to one of his newly appointed Governor of Egypt, Malik al-Ashtar, in the tumultuous times of his ascension to government. These letters of Ali are held in high regard by Muslims, especially the Shiites who view the Imams as infallible. In this letter, Ali gives counsel to Malik on the difficulties of responsible government and the burden he must endure. However, Ali goes as far as to say that his subjects are of either “two kinds: either they are your brothers in religion or your equals in creation, (Ṭabaṭabā’i, 69). Other than this

statement, there is not one quotation in the letter that Ali sent which segregates between Muslim or non-Muslim subjects or offers other forms of approach in governing different religious communities. This quotation exemplifies a fairly open approach to governing minorities when examining in a medieval lens in terms of the role and place of minorities within parts of Islamic leadership.

Part II: Analysis of the Role of Christians & Minorities in the Caliphates of Extremist Outfits

Part I. Ideology & Philosophy

When examining the role of Christians and minorities in the Caliphate by extremist groups like ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and Boko Haram, it is necessary to assess the philosophy these groups adhere to and where this inspiration of a caliphate is derived from. Although each caliphate claims Islamic rule and values, these standards can vastly differ from not only the specific caliphate but Caliphs within each specific caliphate.

One of the most influential philosophers in Islamic thought (within the Hanbali-Sunni school) is Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328) from Damascus. Although Ibn Taymiyyah's initial followers were minimal, as well as there being significant hesitation on accepting his philosophical school of thought, his influence cannot be understated. He is considered the father of the puritanical form of Sunni Islam, as well as a precursor to the Wahhabi and Salafi subjects within Sunni Islam. He believed that mainstream Islam had deviated from the time of Muhammad and considered the rise of Sufism and Shiitism to be heresy outside the fold of Islam. In regard to the Christian community, Ibn Taymiyyah not only engaged in polemics attacking Christian theological belief but believed in "[limiting the] Christian impact on the

Muslim community, and clarify the legal boundaries between the two communities,” (Thomas, 824).

Various Islamic leadership (although not always mentioned explicitly in the Quran) defined the place of both Muslims and non-Muslims within their roles in the specific caliphate. Ibn Taymiyyah’s writings were produced during the Mamluk Caliphate in Damascus, with the constant interruption of Mongolian invasion and destruction. However, even after the key distance between Muslim and non-Muslim subjects throughout the various caliphates (some leaders more progressive than others), Ibn Taymiyyah’s writings deemed a further differentiation between the two. He went as far as to suggest a limit on “Christian expression on juristic and historical ground to protect the purity of Muslim practice and identity,” (Thomas, 825).

When comparing to earlier instances of Islamic governance, Ibn Taymiyyah extends beyond earlier caliphates and overall Islamic doctrine. Egyptian scholar, Ali Abd Al-Raziq argues that during the inception of Muhammad’s organized community movement in Medina the distinction between faiths was “not about the incompatibility or complete separation of the religious and political communities,” amongst one another and to “establish a religious community of tolerant of diversity and responsive to political problems,” (Barkindo, 31-32). Ibn Taymiyyah’s philosophy is distinct from not only Muhammad’s charter in Medina but also of outreach in certain instances of earlier Islamic caliphates.

According to Ibn Taymiyyah’s philosophy, to follow true Islamic morals, which is attached to political government, there needs to be a concept of Muslim subject/citizen domination over the Christians and minorities. This can also be witnessed in how he specifically propagates raising arms and violence against the non-Muslim rule but exempts Muslim rule for Jihad. When it comes to despotic rule from non-Muslims, Ibn Taymiyyah is quoted as saying, “if

the enemy decided to attack the Muslims, then to repulse the enemy would become a personal duty on all,” (Mulcaire, 2). However, when it comes to tyrannical Muslim leaders, Ibn Taymiyyah states that Muslims should obey them since “sixty years domination of a despotic ruler are better than one single night passed without a ruler,” (Mulcaire, 2).

This aspect of the superiority of despotic Muslim rule over the non-Muslim rule is a key elemental figure when analyzing terror groups in their claim to bringing a Caliphate. Even when despotic Muslim figures are viewed as tyrannical, there have been instances of exoneration towards them, as well as scapegoating towards Christians and minorities.

During the reign of the controversial second Umayyad Caliph, Yazid I, there was an uprising in the Muslim community of the concept of illicit hereditary rule. After the death of the first Umayyad Caliph, Muawiyah I, he announced his son, Yazid to take the throne as the new Caliph, officially establishing the first dynastical rule in the Islamic Caliphate. Muhammad’s grandson, Husayn ibn Ali (also the third of the Shiite Imams), led a revolt against what he and many considered an immoral and corrupt rule. Husayn’s companions and family were intercepted in the desert plains of Karbala, Iraq where he was eventually killed and beheaded, including his children and companions. The survivors were taken prisoner to Damascus and shackled.

Husayn’s death (also considered martyrdom by Shiites and a significant portion of the Sunnis) led shockwaves against Yazid. Yet, how does this relate to Christians and minorities? Interestingly, Yazid’s government, in which many Christians held administrative roles (as well as his mother being a Christian) tried to put the responsibility of Husayn’s death to the Christians in his government, as recorded by Umayyad accounts in one of the most comprehensive compilations of the Muslim historian, Al- Tabari. The Umayyads argued that Yazid was not the

one responsible for Husayn's death, but this was rather due to his appointed Governor Ubaydallah ibn Ziyad, who was nominated by Yazid's Christian advisor, Sarjun (the father of John of Damascus). Therefore, there was an attempt to blame this shameful event on the Christian advisor, attempting to exonerate Yazid (Tabari, xii). However, it is clear in Tabari and other canonical sources, that the decision was with the sitting Caliph.

This aspect of scapegoating has a similar narrative of Ibn Taymiyyah's existing philosophy, in why despotic Muslim rule is better than no rule, as well as why Christians and minorities shouldn't be trusted and where Ibn Taymiyyah's philosophy has shown some historical precedent. Ironically, there is also evidence that although Ibn Taymiyyah may be the most influential scholar with this concept, there have been earlier attempts of suppressing any attempt to thwart the Caliphate. The Umayyad and earlier Abbasid Caliphates gathered many religious figures and Hadith transmitters to promote the concept of loyalty to the caliphate as being loyal to the religious community (Barzegar, 143). Therefore, we see earlier instances of puritanical Sunni orthodoxy being mixed with state affairs.

II. Influence of Ibn Taymiyyah's Philosophy on Terror Outfits

One of Ibn Taymiyyah's key areas of focus was the concept of *Takfir* ideology, in which one can deem anyone as a non-Muslim or a *kafir* (infidel). This ideology greatly influenced the founder of the later Wahhabi movement, Muhammad Ibn Ab-Al Wahhab (1744-1773), the predominant sub-sect in Saudi Arabia in which many terror groups have a relation. This ideology has had a profound impact on being used in global anti-colonialist terror movements. Osama Bin Laden, mastermind of the September 11th, 2001, attacks and former leader of Al-Qaeda referenced Ibn Taymiyyah's reference of takfir in his sermons at least twice, as well as having a profound impact on Boko Haram (Barkindo, 35).

When it comes to the direct influence of Ibn Taymiyyah's writings and teachings, it becomes difficult to assess if Ibn Taymiyyah's polemics and preachings are directly correlated with the ideology of terror groups (unless explicitly stated, like Osama Bin Laden). However, the statements of some of these groups, such as Boko Haram, have the same key philosophical beliefs as Ibn Taymiyyah with a contemporary application. Before Boko Haram was named as such, the group's original name was the *Jama'atul Ahlu Sunna Lidda' Awati Wal Jihad* (Committed to the Prophet's Teachings For Propagation and Jihad) and "seemingly reinforced in Taymiyyah's call to return to the basics of [Islamic] belief and the duty to implement such beliefs," (Barkindo, 36-37) also drawing correlation of Western ideology to that of the Mongol invasion Ibn Taymiyyah witnessed in Islamic lands.

Like Ibn Taymiyyah, "Boko Haram [believes] that the reformation of Islam and the implementation of Islamic law remains the only valuable option for social justice and prosperity (Barkindo, 37). Like Ibn Taymiyyah, many of these terror outfits are adamant for a return to some form of (what they perceive as) a return to the original way of Islam. Similarly, we see both Ibn Taymiyyah and contemporary terror outfits involved in labeling the practices of minority Islamic sects, such as Shiites and Sufis, as *bidah* (innovation in religion) in which ISIS "largely [borrows] from Wahabism the penal code that is already institutionalized in Saudi Arabia," (Hassan, 5). Due to this concept and ideology, we see the destroying of religious sites of Shiites, Sufis, Christians, and other minorities by terror groups.

Ibn Taymiyyah's ideology and its direct influence on Wahhabism has led to many linking the two directly to radical ideology. However, political events taking place post both of the World Wars, and the rise of anti-colonial sentiment in the 20th century is also a factor towards the rise in this ideology. Yet, Ibn Taymiyyah's ideology is not based purely on religious

authority, but on statecraft as well. Both are synonymous, and (like for much of these terror groups) much of it derives from the contemporary political events of their respective times, such as the Mongolian destruction Ibn Taymiyyah witnessed during his time as a Muslim subject.

III. ISIS' Actions Against Christians & Minorities

ISIS and many other terror outfits claiming (either explicitly or otherwise) to be a state or a caliphate are not recognized as sovereign government entities. Yet, we can assess how they perceive government and statehood based on the actions that occur by these outfits, particularly ISIS since it is explicitly claiming statehood in Iraq and Syria, with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (deceased in 2019) who claimed to be the Caliph of this Caliphate. With the sample size provided by ISIS, there can be a thorough analysis of the role of Christians and minorities in their state, which is filled with acts of mass destruction, violence, intimidation, and genocide.

During the many seizures of cities in Iraq and Syria, ISIS makes a concentrated effort to target sites of religious and historical importance, thereby making a statement of how they would view these subjects within this Caliphate. In 2014, Baghdadi and ISIS took control of the city of Mosul, Iraq, not only the second-largest city in Iraq but also with a sizeable Christian population and culture. It is no accident that after the seizure of this city, the ISIS Caliphate was officially announced, particularly because of its roots in the Christian tradition. During this seizure, as well as many others, churches, shrines, and religious areas were destroyed, such as the St. Elijah's Monastery within Mosul and later on moving towards the ancient city of Palmyra, having roots dating back to the Roman Empire. Women of the Yazidi religion were also tortured and used for sex, establishing their inferiority as subjects within this Caliphate (Specia).

In 2016, the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry declared that ISIS was committing genocide against the Yazidi community within its Caliphate, in many cities and areas such as the city of Kocho, Iraq. This includes not only the execution of the Yazidis (primarily the men and boys) but also forcing an ultimatum to convert to Islam or to face execution, as well as the looting of possessions and property. Interestingly, one justification that ISIS has used for its genocide against the Yazidis was because they were not considered to be “People of the Book,” the designation for the Jews and Christians in the Quran. Therefore, the Yazidis were termed as infidels unfit for being subjects within the Caliphate (Cetorelli & Ashraph, 8-10).

With this designation of the Yazidis being an intolerable community within their Caliphate and using the term of the “People of the Book” from the Quran applied to the Jews and Christians, there is an apparent attempt by ISIS to designate subjects accordingly. However, it is contradictory on an ideological level. This would make one assume that the ISIS Caliphate is thereby giving a specific status to Jews and Christians as acceptable subjects within their Caliphate. Historically, there have been multiple precedences in earlier Islamic rule, and belief in respecting the sanctity of Christian and Jewish houses of worship (such as Muhammad’s Charter of Medina, Umar I’s visit to Jerusalem, and the declaration of Jews and Christians as “People of the Book” in the Quran), yet ISIS has not hesitated to destroy houses of worship of the same “People of the Book” they are using to justify the designation of the Yazidis as inferior. The destruction of Mosul, multiple monasteries, and churches are proof of this contradiction of their statement, as well as reveal how they view the place of Christians in this Caliphate as well.

It is also important to note (similar to Ibn Taymiyyah’s philosophy), that ISIS also does not recognize all Islamic sects and subsects as inherently Islamic. On the contrary, they view

many of these sects and groups, primarily the Shiites and Sufis (including Sunni Sufis), outside the fold of Islam and heresy, therefore applying the *Takfir* ideology into practice. If one were to view this as a state policy, this would prompt a government or caliphate to designate any opponent as a non-Muslim, thereby hindering any room for debate or involvement within the Caliphate. From an ideological point of view, ISIS has targeted mostly Islamic sites. Some of these shrines include the Sufi shrine of Nizar Abu Bahaaddine, and the Shiite shrine of Mohammed Bin Ali, a descendant of the first Shiite Imam, Ali ibn Abi Talib (Romey). These actions can be viewed as state policy of how ISIS views possible subjects belonging to these groups, as outside of the fold of Islam and with no role as subjects within ISIS' brand of the Caliphate.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to assess the role of Christians and minorities in earlier Islamic Caliphates, to that of terror groups that also claim to represent the Islamic Caliphate. There is a clear distinction between significant earlier Caliphates, to that of a group like ISIS. Although there have been examples of tensions between Muslims and their minority subjects, there are a plethora of examples from earlier Caliphates that illustrate the inclusion of Christians and minorities as part of the caliphate in both administrative roles and social roles.

It is also important to note that this research highlights how vague the designation of an Islamic Caliphate can be. Islamic values can differ not just among caliphates, but also among individuals. Unlike the Catholic Church, there is no single authority that represents the whole of Islam. On an intellectual level, there is (in theory) an opportunity for members of the Muslim community society to engage in debate, with separate interpretations of the same text. However,

it can also lead to confusion amongst its leaders and followers with a lack of cohesive leadership and authority, as can be seen during the instances of the early Muslim Civil Wars.

Due to this, it becomes imperative for members within and outside the Islamic community to not engage in stereotypical narratives of how Islamic some of these terror outfits are. If one is to highlight the genocide and crimes committed against minorities by a group that designates themselves as an Islamic government, there also needs to be an equal discussion about the inclusion of minorities in past Caliphates as well. This approach has led to massive Islamophobic attitudes towards members of the Muslim community within Western society, even though many of these same Muslims may also be considered heretics by groups like ISIS.

It is also imperative to view many instances of history outside the lens and scope of the modern and current moral standards. Many wish to compare (regarding Islamic society and otherwise), historical examples of the past via the standards of a contemporary 21st-century Western society, which leads to an Orientalist approach in viewing history. When comparing some of the actions of previous regimes (such as the involvement of Christians and minorities within administrative roles in government, but with restrictions), some of these actions were more liberal than they currently appear.

There has been an undeniable decline within recent and current Islamic society in terms of inclusion and involvement of minorities. There is a lack of representation of minorities in contemporary Islamic societies, with acts of discrimination and violence against minorities. Contemporary actions, such as the conversion of Sofia Hagia into a mosque by the current Turkish regime, are an example of how contemporary actions by some Islamic governments illustrate a steep decline when compared to certain instances of Islam's past. Yet, when analyzing previous examples in Islamic history, there are examples of tolerance and inclusion,

both from the state and society. These examples can also be found in Islamic texts, which Muslims hold in high regard. This allows for a pragmatic and hopeful approach for the betterment of Christian-Muslim relations, both within and outside Islamic societies.

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