

Press Release

For immediate release

The Onyx Link Foundationⁱ (OLF) Challenges the Claim that Islam is Religion and State

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For the victims of terror, their families, and loved ones in the UK and worldwide...

The OLF, an independent think tank based in Newport, South Wales, issues its second academic document, OLF2, which challenges the claim that Islam is both a religion and a state: one of the main causes of religious extremism and violence.

This document calls into question the evidence used to support the formation of a theocratic state that forces the *ordering of government* and society in accordance with Shariah Law. Theocracy in this context is a political system of governing that seeks power and control based upon the belief that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was a political leader who established a state after his migration to *Madinah*. Advocates of this position maintain that the Prophet (PBUH) established such a state during his life. The Document of Madinahⁱⁱ, issued by the prophet as a covenant for social inclusion and peaceful co-existence, was considered to be a '*constitution for his state*', and his judicial arbitration (*Hukm*) among his companions as '*ruling his state by what God Has revealed*', and why today the flag of ISIS depicts the seal of the Prophet (PBUH) as its banner! Such perceptions are challenged by OLF using the prime sources of Islam.

The OLF argues that political leadership is established through human choice, working within a constitution and the sovereignty of its state borders for managing people's affairs. Ordering of government and civil rights within society is regulated by state laws, the acceptance of which is a requirement for citizenship. Religious leadership of God's Prophets and Messengers on the other hand, is not their personal choice or that of their people, rather it is commissioned by God in order to deliver His message of morality and good conduct to people, and not to establish a state. The following is a typical example of how a religious system is formed and how it works:

God Has sent His Messenger Muhammad (PBUH) for all people to perfect moral character and good conduct. He appointed him as the teacher of this message, and informed him that he has no control over anyone. His Lord instructed him to invite all people to His Grace with wisdom and beautiful preaching. Like all Messengers, his obligation is one – to convey with clarity the Message of God. God Has directed him not to compel anyone to believe. Moreover, He Has given people the choice to believe or to disbelieve in His Message. So, no one can limit this God-given choice. Therefore, freedom of choice and lack of compulsion are fundamental principles of Islam: *“There is no compulsion in religion”*. In contrast to citizenship, religiosity is a willful commitment to follow the guidance of God as instructed by His prophets and messengers to the best of one’s ability, as truthfulness and sincerity are basic requirements of faith. Therefore, after having faith in God and His messenger, there is no room for hypocrisy because people have full rights to withdraw their faith in God and His message without liability to the Messenger or anyone else. This was the role of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his practice: a religious leader. Whomsoever imposes control over people - political or otherwise - in the name of his religion has nothing to do with him since he (PBUH) is the paradigm of implementing his message.

The belief that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was a political leader has paved way to the claim that he (PBUH) implemented the Law that Allah revealed for ruling (*Hukm*) his state! To support this claim of Ruling (*Hukm*) in the political sense with a textual evidence, advocates of theocracy made a serious corruption of the sense of *Hukm* in the closing statements of the Quranic verses: 5:44, 5:45, and 5:47, that outline the consequences of rejecting “judgement by what Allah has revealed”. These are the verses they used to call for the establishing of an “Islamic State”! It is from these verses that *fatwas* such as: “all countries where the rulings of Shariah are not implemented are lands of disbelief (Kufr), whether those people are Muslims or not” are issued. A *fatwa* that incites hatred of such people and justifies their killing.

This serious distortion is clarified as follows:

The Arabic word ‘*Hukm*’ is a noun derived from two roots:

- A. *Hakuma - Yahkumu*, which means to gain wisdom and hence become *Hakeem* (in Hebrew *Hakham*) wise and mindful; therefore, *Hukm* through this route means *Hikmah*: moral legislations or wise opinions/wisdom, e.g. Prophet

Abraham invoked his Lord: "**O my Lord! bestow *Hukm* (wisdom) on me, and join me with the righteous**" (26:83).

B. *Hakama - Yahkumu*, that literally means to rule; thus *Hukm* means 'ruling' in three senses:

1. Juristic: an authoritative pronouncement of guidance upon moral values by God (i.e. His legislation), a Prophet, or a wise person.
2. Judicial: a legal decision by a judge upon the Law.
3. Political: to govern/exercise authority or influence over, and hence the person becomes *Haakim*, a governor.

The first two senses of *Hukm* have always been used by God in His revelation and practiced by all His Prophets and Messengers. The Quranic phrase: "ruling (*Hukm*) by what Allah Has revealed" is confined to the juristic and judicial senses. However, the advocates of an "Islamic State" have employed the political sense of the term *Hukm* to replace the juristic and judicial senses in God's revelation (as in the phrase "*Hukm by what Allah Has revealed*") to justify their political ideology as we shall see below. The Quran never uses *Hukm* in the political sense, but rather the terms *Malaka*, *Mulk*, and *Malik* are used to convey the meanings: *to reign*, *monarchy*, and *king* respectively. An example of the juristic sense is in the words of Moses (PBUH): "**I fled from you (Pharaoh and his people) when I feared you. But now my Lord has endowed me with *Hukm*, and has made me one of [His] message-bearers**" [26:21]. The word *Hukm* in this context refers to ethical values that God has ordained for His vicegerents on earth, to populate it and observe moral conduct that qualifies them for the bliss of the hereafter. In relationships, the highest value is love, and the lowest is respect. While in human interaction, the highest value is altruism or preferring the other over yourself (*Eethar* in Arabic), followed by loving for the other what you love for yourself (the Golden Rule), and the lowest value being justice. The Law, whether God's law or man-made, safeguards justice, which is only the baseline of Moral "grounds" where virtuous societies thrive. Therefore, observing the Shariah Law that theocrats regard as the utmost goal of religiosity is in fact simply the threshold of morality!

The OLF hopes that this effort will clarify the essence and purpose of such radical ideologies and challenge the ways religious texts are used to justify them. Such analysis may empower communities and organisations to build resilience against radicalisation, and to develop models for deradicalising and rehabilitating extremists.

The next OLF press release and academic document shall be on: The Rise of Jihadist Ideology: The verses of fighting and war in the Holy Quran.

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ⁱ THE ONYX LINK FOUNDATION, based in Newport south Wales, is an independent think tank, aiming to enhance community relations through shared values and active citizenship, promoting social wellbeing and environmental harmony.

The OLF is tackling social isolation by developing models of psychotherapy to address personal wellbeing and strategies for challenging radical ideologies and perceptions that encourage segregation, discrimination, and violence.

ⁱⁱ Biography of the Prophet (PBUH), by Ibn Ishaq.

ⁱⁱⁱ Dr Abdalla Mohamed, Ph.D. in psychology, is a Muslim scholar who mastered most of the branches of Islamic knowledge in traditional institutions for over 20 years in Sudan. Since 1992, he has been teaching Islamic knowledge and practicing Islamic Jurisprudence, Islamic counselling, and religious advice for Muslim communities in England and Wales. Between 2004 and 2009 he was a lecturer at the Life-long Learning Centre of Cardiff University teaching modules on the Prime Sources of Islam. From 2005 to 2010 the Department of Religious & Theological Studies at Cardiff University, appointed him member of the Advisory Committee for establishing their Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK. His efforts and contributions to community relations in Wales in collaboration with the Welsh Assembly government, the Muslim Council of Wales, Cytun: Churches Together in Wales, Cardiff University, and many interfaith communities and religious organisations has been acknowledged with an OBE by HM Queen Elisabeth II in 2008. In March 2010, he was awarded the Welsh Assembly Government's Recognising Achievement Award for services to community relations in Wales.