

Rajab and the Question of Muslim Unity

For many Muslims today, the word “Khilafah” (Caliphate) feels distant. Some associate it with history books, others see it as something abstract or unfamiliar. This is understandable, especially for a generation that has only ever lived within the modern nation-state system. Yet every year, the month of Rajab quietly reminds us of a profound turning point in Muslim history. In Rajab 1924, the Khilafah was abolished. This was not simply the end of a government, but the loss of a framework that had organised the unity of the Muslim Ummah for over thirteen centuries.

At the heart of Islam is the idea that Muslims are one Ummah — a single community bound together by faith, responsibility, and moral obligation. This is not a metaphor or an emotional slogan. It is a clear Qur’anic principle. Allah (swt) says: ﴿إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّةٌ أَمْتَكُمْ أَمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَإِنَّا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونَ﴾ “**And indeed, this Ummah of yours is one Ummah, and I am your Lord, so worship Me.**” [Qur'an 21:92].

Allah (swt) also links unity directly to guidance and protection: ﴿وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ جَمِيعاً وَلَا تَرْفَوْا﴾ “**And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided.**” [Qur'an 3:103].

Classical scholars explained that “the rope of Allah” refers to Islam as a complete way of life, including collective obedience and authority. ‘Abdullâh ibn Mas’ûd (rh) said that the rope of Allah is the Jama‘ah — the united body of Muslims.

Unity in Islam was therefore never meant to be limited to personal spirituality alone. It was intended to shape how Muslims organise their collective life — politically, socially, and economically.

For most of Islamic history, this unity had a practical expression. The Khilafah functioned as the political framework through which Muslims managed justice, security, public welfare, and mutual protection. It did not erase cultures or languages; diversity existed and was accepted. What unified Muslims was not ethnicity or territory, but Islam itself.

The Prophet (saw) reinforced this idea of collective responsibility when he said: ﴿مَثُلُّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي تَوَادُّهُمْ وَتَرَاحُمُهُمْ وَتَعَاطُفُهُمْ مِثُلُّ الْجَسَدِ إِذَا اشْتَكَى مِنْهُ عُضُوٌ تَدَاعَى لَهُ سَائِرُ الْجَسَدِ بِالسَّهْرِ وَالْحُمَّى﴾ “**The believers, in their mutual love, mercy, and compassion, are like one body: if one part of it suffers, the whole body responds with sleeplessness and fever.**” (Sahih Muslim)

When the Khilafah was abolished, Muslims did not lose their faith, nor did Islam suddenly become impractical. What changed was structure. And importantly, that structure was not replaced with something neutral. New ways of thinking were introduced that slowly reshaped how Muslims understood identity, loyalty, authority, and responsibility.

Nationalism was one of the most influential of these ideas — but it was not the only one. Nationalism taught Muslims to prioritise the nation-state over the Ummah, borders over brotherhood, and “national interest” over moral obligation.

Alongside nationalism, other concepts also reshaped Muslim thinking. Secularism confined religion to private life. Capitalism redefined success in terms of profit and power. Individualism weakened collective responsibility. Together, these ideas reshaped Muslim political consciousness.

Allah (swt) warns: ﴿وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالذِّينَ نَفَرُوا وَأَخْتَلُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ﴾ “And do not be like those who became divided and differed after clear proofs had come to them.” [Qur'an 3:105].

The result is a reality many Muslims recognise today. There is deep concern and solidarity when Muslims are oppressed — but also a painful sense of helplessness. This is not because Muslims do not care, but because the Ummah is fragmented.

Ibn Taymiyyah (rh) observed that whenever Muslims became divided, Allah allowed their enemies to overpower them.

When understood in this light, the Khilafah is not a fantasy or a call to upheaval. Rather, it represents an attempt to organise Muslim life around Islamic values — gradually, responsibly, and with justice at its core.

Rajab is not only a month of remembrance, but a moment for reflection and clarity. It invites Muslims to think deeply about unity — not as a slogan, but as a lived responsibility. The fragmentation of the Ummah was not accidental, and neither is the yearning for coherence and justice that continues to live in Muslim hearts. As Allah (swt) reminds us: ﴿إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّةٌ أَمْتَكِنُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَإِنَّا رَبُّكُمْ فَأَغْبُدُون﴾ “And indeed, this Ummah of yours is one Ummah, and I am your Lord, so worship Me.” [Qur'an 21:92].

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