

## **A MUSLIM MODEL FOR PEACEFUL CO – EXISTENCE AND MUTUAL RESPECT**

### **Abstract**

The core Muslim sources consider diversity and plurality to be the basis of everything. Indeed, diversity and plurality in nations, religions, cultures, races, and religious laws is part of the design of the universe. With the current debate on multiculturalism and cultural engagement, there is an urgent need to understand the Muslim contributions to this critical topic. However, instead of examining the general views of Islam and Muslims on diversity and plurality or their general understanding of multiculturalism, culture engagement, peaceful co-existence, and mutual respect, the objective of this article is namely to develop a particular Muslim model related to Islamic Jerusalem for *Aman* (peaceful co-existence and mutual respect). It is hoped that this model could set the scene to advance the current research on the Muslim contributions on this important topic at this critical time in 21<sup>st</sup> century, enrich our understanding of multiculturalism and cultural engagement, address some of the sensitive, important and key issues on the subject, and open up and promote intellectual and academic debate and understanding of this Muslim model to shed light on new lines of explanation. Although Islamic Jerusalem is the most delicate issue of dispute between the current two conflicting parties, it is also hoped that this model will provide a better understanding for the world leaders who are trying to return peace to the region.

**Key Words:** Diversity, plurality, multiculturalism, cultural engagement, peaceful co-existence, mutual respect, Islam, Muslim, Islamic Jerusalem

### **Introduction**

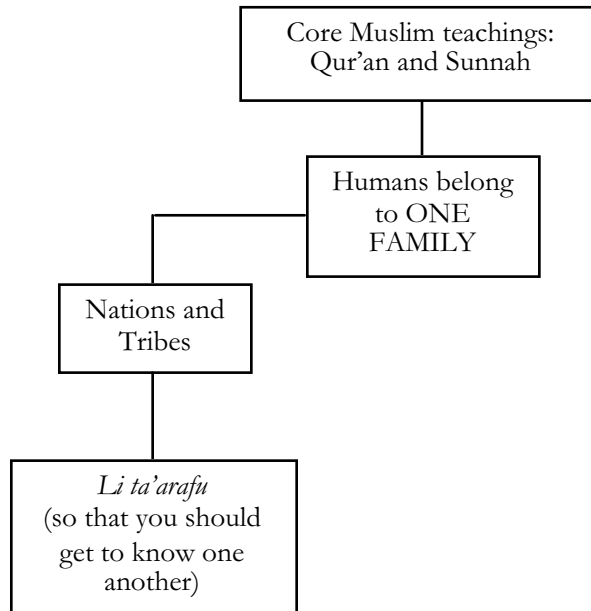
The core Muslim sources, Qur'an (Muslim Holy Book), and *Sunnah* (Prophetic traditions), consider diversity and plurality to be the basis of everything apart from God. Indeed, diversity and plurality in nations, religions, cultures, races, and religious laws is part of the design of the universe. In respect of their cultural, religious, or gender differences, the Qur'an addresses hu-

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mans and reminds them that they belong to the same family, *ya a'yyuh al-nasu inna khalaqnakum min dhakarim wa untha* 'O humankind! We created you all from a single pair of a male and a female'<sup>2</sup>. In addition, it is narrated that Prophet Muhammad said that 'You are all the children of Adam.' In another verse, the Qur'an says *wa law shaa'a Allah laja'alakum ummatan wahidatan* 'If God had so willed, He could surely have made you all human one single community (nation)<sup>3</sup>. From this point of reference, he 'made you into nations and tribes' *wa ja'alnakum shu'uban wa qabaa'ila*. The main purpose for this creation is ***li ta'arafu*** 'so that you should get to know one another'<sup>4</sup>, not that you may despise one another. On the bases of the Muslim core sources, the Qur'an in particular, the author argues that the first step in establishing a model for peaceful co-existence and mutual respect to identify and recognise diversity and plurality.

**Diagram 1: A Muslim Model *Aman* (for Peaceful Co-existence and Mutual Respect)**



On another hand, IslamicJerusalem (one word)<sup>5</sup> is claimed as a sacred

2 (Qur'an, 49:13)

3 (Qur'an, 5: 48)

4 (Qur'an, 49:13)

5 „IslamicJerusalem (one word) is a new terminology for a new concept, which may be translated into the Arabic language as *Bayt al-Maqdis*. It can be fairly and eventually characterised and defined as a unique region laden with a rich historical background, religious significances, cultural attachments, competing political and religious claims, international interests and various aspects that affect the rest of the world in both historical

space by three of the world's major monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The unique region of Islamic Jerusalem can be argued as the model place where this one family can live together. When the author thinks of Islamic Jerusalem, he thinks of several concepts including those of hope and justice. One could argue that 'history has proved that there can never be peace nor stability without justice. The road to peace starts in Islamic Jerusalem and the solution to its current issue is the key to a just peace in the region.'<sup>6</sup> As Karen Armstrong argues in her paper at the first International Academic Conference on Islamic Jerusalem Studies in 1997:

From the very earliest days, it seems the cult of Jerusalem was inextricably bound up with the quest for social justice. Thus in the Hebrew Bible, prophets and psalmists repeatedly reminded their people that Jerusalem could not be a holy city of *Shalom* (of peace) unless it was also a city of *Tseddeq* (of justice).<sup>7</sup>

Late Michael Prior adds that:

The lesson of history is that it cannot belong exclusively to one people or to only one religion. Jerusalem should be open to all, shared by all. Those who govern the city should make it 'the capital of humankind'<sup>8</sup>.

However, this article is not a study of the Muslim history or politics/theology, nor of Islamic Jerusalem, but a serious and scholarly attempt to develop a Muslim model for *Aman* (peaceful co-existence and mutual respect). In other words, instead of examining the general views of Islam and Muslims on diversity and plurality or their general understanding of multiculturalism and culture engagement, the objective of this article is namely to develop a particular Muslim model related to Islamic Jerusalem for *Aman* (peaceful co-existence and mutual respect).

Moreover, the aim of this article is to present this Muslim model to intellectuals, academics, and the wider public interested in multiculturalism and cultural engagement. It is hoped that this model could set the scene to advanced the current research on the Muslim contributions to this important topic at this critical time in 21<sup>st</sup> century, enrich our understanding of multiculturalism and cultural engagement, address some of the sensitive, impor-

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and contemporary contexts. It has a central frame of reference and a vital nature with three principal intertwined elements: its geographical location (land and boundaries), its people (population), and its unique and creative inclusive vision, to administer that land and its people, as a model for multiculturalism, cultural engagement and *Aman* (peaceful co-existence and mutual respect).<sup>9</sup> See the original definition in El-Awaisi, Abd al-Fattah, *Introducing Islamic Jerusalem*, Al-Maktoum Institute Academic Press, Scotland, 2007, p. 11.

6 Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi, The significance of Jerusalem in Islam: an Islamic reference, *Journal of Islamic Jerusalem Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Scotland, 1998, p. 47.

7 Karen Armstrong, Sacred Space: the Holiness of Islamic Jerusalem, *Journal of Islamic Jerusalem Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Scotland, 1997, pp. 5-16.

8 Michael Prior, Christian perspectives on Jerusalem, *Journal of Islamic Jerusalem Studies*, Vol. 3, No.1, Scotland, 1999, p. 17.

tant and key issues on the subject, and open up and promote intellectual and academic debate and understanding of this Muslim model to shed light on new lines of explanation.

However, this may be a provocative and challenging issue for those in academic and political establishments who are interested in the study of Islam and Muslims and who may not accept these results/findings on the basis that it goes beyond their political agenda and attachments, or for those who cannot go along with innovation and new ideas. Indeed, to advance such knowledge, understanding and approaches is to challenge long-established traditionalist and Orientalist claims. Although Islamic Jerusalem is the most delicate issue of dispute between the current two conflicting parties, it is hoped that this model will provide a better understanding for the world leaders who are trying to return peace to the region.

### Method

The author has adopted the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches in this research. In addition, he did not embark on his research with a defined model for *Aman* (peaceful co-existence and mutual respect). Instead, his findings/results have emerged in the course of his examination and analysis of the data collected systematically throughout the process of this research, in particular his critical analytical study of Umar's Assurance of *Aman* to the People of Aelia (Islamic Jerusalem)<sup>9</sup>. This means that this model was developed from the author long research on this Assurance. He has also tried to take a comprehensive, realistic, inclusive and scholarly approach rather than a theological faith stand or one that is politically exclusive. Moreover, the author has endeavoured, in his explanations, understanding, interpretations, to concentrate on and look with complete openness at most if not all of the aspects surrounding the issue under discussion, and focus on the key and fundamental ones related to the topic.

This article depends mainly on Muslim core sources, such as the Qur'an and its commentaries, as well as on books of Prophet Muhammad's traditions, on historical sources and secondary references. Throughout the article, the author has chosen not to depend on any one English translation of the meaning of the Qur'an but to use several English translations. To compare these translations and choose the best, he refers to several of those available including those of: Abdullah Yusuf Ali<sup>10</sup>, Muhammad Muhsin Khan<sup>11</sup> and

9 Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi, Umar's Assurance of Safety to the People of Aelia (Jerusalem): a Critical Analytical Study of the Historical Sources, *Journal of Islamic Jerusalem Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Scotland, 2000.

10 Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, Islamic Foundation Press, Leicester, 2003.

11 Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali, *Interpretation of the Meaning of the Noble Qur'an*, Dar-us-Salam, Saudi Arabia, 1996.

Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali, Muhammad Asad<sup>12</sup>, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem<sup>13</sup>, and Thomas Cleary<sup>14</sup>. In most cases, he has chosen part of their translation of a particular text adding to it his own translation.

Some available English translations suffered from the translators not understanding the original Arabic texts. To help understand some important Arabic texts and to re-examine the accuracy of these translations, both transliteration and translation were often included. Moreover, when translating terminologies from Arabic into English, an attempt has been made by the author to strike a balance between the strength of expression in the original and its exact meaning. However, to avoid the mistranslating of any particular Arabic terminologies, the author employed an approach of not translating these into English but leaving them in their original Arabic language which helps to avoid any leading to different or strange understandings and interpretations. For example, the term *Aman* which could be translated as safety, does not give the right meaning of the term in Arabic. For the researcher, the term *Aman* means peaceful co-existence and mutual respect.

For this article, multiculturalism - as a process, a particular way of thinking, and about change - provides the important context for much of what we do, while cultural engagement has to be our response to it. Indeed, cultural engagement consists of intellectual, emotional, and behavioural components which cultivate the positive attitude towards others. Moreover, cultural engagement is a two way traffic and an invitation to identify a common ground through which co-existence can happen. The end product of cultural engagement is peaceful co-existence in an environment of mutual understanding and respect. In short, cultural engagement is clearly the way to address the challenges of multiculturalism and produce a positive response, which helps the society to challenge alternative perspectives on multiculturalism and difference. In addition, cultural engagement is essential to contest the notion of a 'clash of civilisations' and address the absence of understanding between cultures - which often amounts to mutual incomprehension - and the associated climate of suspicion.

### **Results/Findings and Discussion: Umar Ibn al-Khattab's Model of the Seventh Century and its implementation**

The first Muslim *Fatih* of Islamic Jerusalem was a fundamental landmark which reshaped relations between the people of diverse faiths and cultures who inhabited the region. The arrival of Umar Ibn al-Khattab (d 24 AH/645 CE) in the region - five years after the death of Prophet Muhammad (12 Rabi' al-Awal 11 AH/ 6 June 632 CE), in Jumada I/II 16 AH/ June/July 637 CE

12 Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, Book Foundation, England, 2003.

13 Haleem Abdel, M.A.S, *The Qur'an: a new translation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004.

14 Thomas Cleary, *The Qur'an: a new translation*, Starlatch Press, USA, 2004.

- marked the beginning of a new and distinguished phase in the relations between the followers of the three great Semitic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Instead of continuing to implement the Byzantines' exclusion policy, Umar, as head of the Muslim state, not only rejected the idea of excluding others who would like to live in the region, he was categorically pro-active in establishing a new policy and system. Karen Armstrong argues that 'The Muslims had established a system that enabled Jews, Christians, and Muslims to live in Jerusalem together for the first time.'<sup>15</sup>

The arrival of Umar in the region also marked the start of a golden age and the beginning of a new era in which Islamic Jerusalem became a common and open space for everyone and a model for peaceful co-existence and mutual respect. This model was based not only on fostering the culture of diversity, plurality and implementing recognition of others, but on determining their rights, duties, and treatment as a means to encourage and establish a peaceful co-existence between the different communities in Islamic Jerusalem.

During his historical visit, Umar laid down the foundation of fostering diversity and plurality in Islamic Jerusalem in the form of what is well known in history as *Al-Uhda al-Umariyya* or Umar's Assurance of *Aman* to the People of Aelia. Not only did he recognise and appreciate others' presence in Islamic Jerusalem, he accepted them and offered a framework to show that it could be shared with them. Indeed, as well as respecting and determining non-Muslim rights, he also took practical steps to grant them protection, safety and security for their rights, lives and properties. He granted them freedom, and enabled them to become citizens and members of the Islamic Jerusalem society, without interference in their culture and religious life. In short, Umar not only identified, he also accommodated the presence and needs of his diverse citizens and established a system to protect their rich cultural diversity, identities and belongings.

Umar's model for a multicultural Islamic Jerusalem was based on the core Muslim teachings, the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. Moreover, the methodology of *Tadafu'*, the concept of '*Adl*, and the principle of non-exclusion'<sup>16</sup>, together not only emphasise the recognition of others but also took great care to preserve the dignity of humans and what belonged to them as prescribed in the Muslim core teaching sources. Preserving human dignity is a very central issue in Muslim thought and attitude.<sup>17</sup> The explicit and sharp declaration of Umar to his governor of Egypt, Amr Ibn al-Aas, that 'how could you have enslaved people, when their mothers have born them free'<sup>18</sup>, is a very clear ex-

15 Karen Armstrong, *A History of Jerusalem: One City. Three Faiths*, HarperCollins Publishers, London, 1996, p. 246, p. 233.

16 El-Awaisi, *Introducing Islamic Jerusalem*.

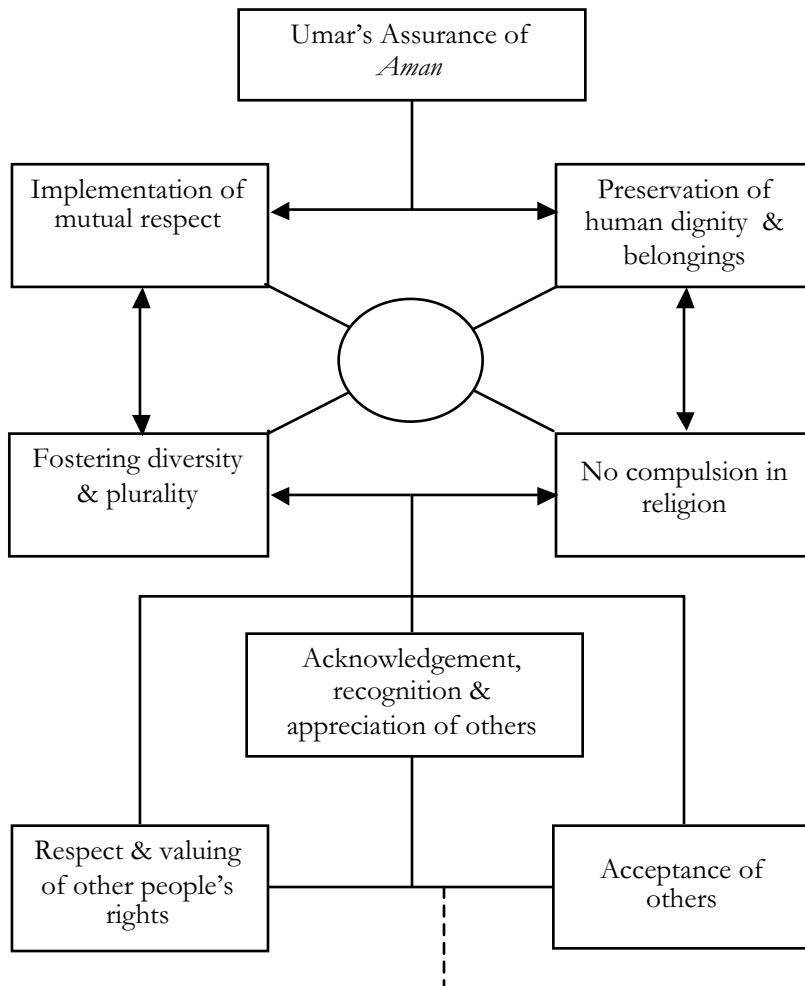
17 Ibidem.

18 Ibn al-Jawzi, Abu al-Faraj Abd al-Rahman Ibn Ali, *Sirat wa Manaqb Amir al-Mu'minin Umar Ibn al-Khattab*, ed. by: M. Amr, Dar al-Da'wah al-Islamiyyah, Cairo, 2001, p. 89.

ample of this.

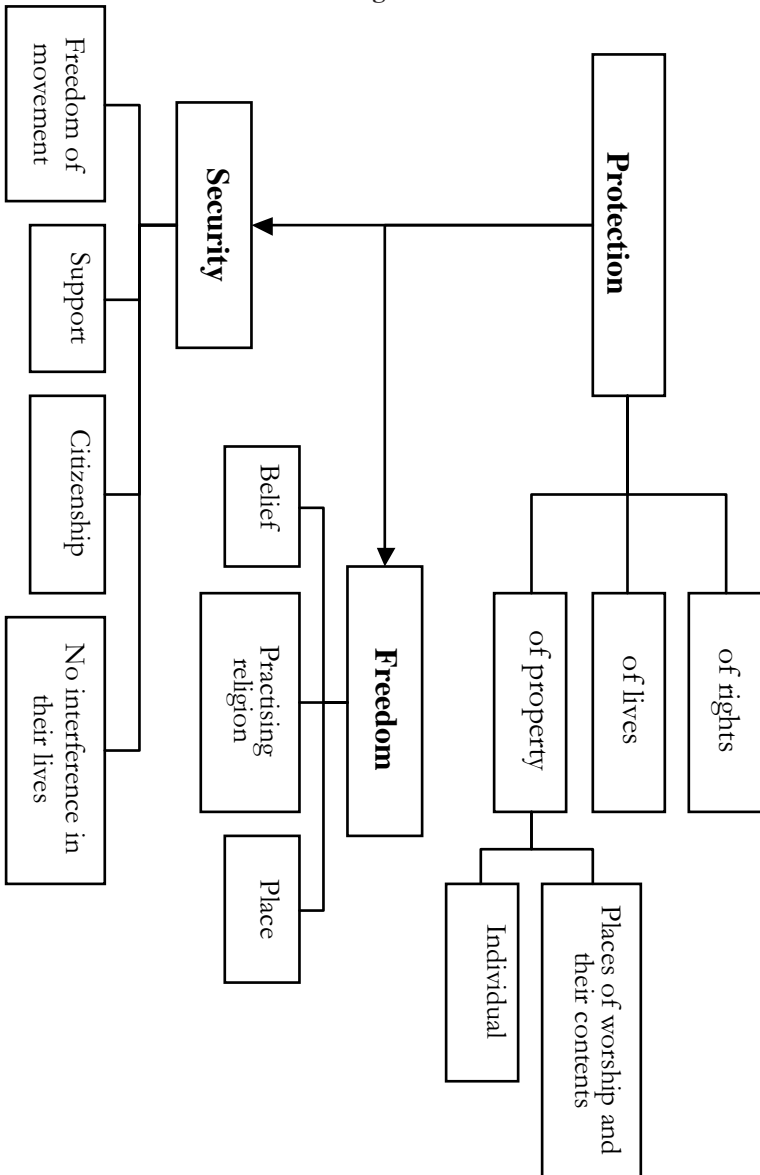
By establishing this model, one can argue that Umar’s aim was to preserve the human dignity of the people of Islamicjerusalem in status and rights regardless of their culture, religion, race and gender. This clearly manifested itself in the personal liberty, freedom and equality granted to the people of Islamicjerusalem in Umar’s Assurance of *Aman*. Moreover, one may argue that this understanding and attitude to preserving human dignity and the recognition of others led Umar to implement the principles of mutual respect.

**Diagram 2: A Muslim Model for *Aman* (Peaceful Co-existence and Mutual Respect)**



**Diagram 3: A Muslim Model for *Aman* (Peaceful Co-existence and Mutual Respect)**

Leading to:



One of the most important elements for this model's success was how the state and its established power and authority managed the diverse society of Islamic Jerusalem. The foundations for managing the future relations between the three faiths were laid down during that historical visit in the form of Umar's Assurance of *Aman* to the people of Aelia. Although this was a practical application of the core Muslim teachings, the Qur'an and *Sunnah*,



it was the major outcome of the first Muslim *Fatih* of Aelia. Indeed, it was the practical management initiative to implement the new vision for the region. In addition, it formed the cornerstone to manage and implement the new vision where Umar granted the people of Aelia an Assurance of *Aman* for themselves, their property, their churches, and their religion. Indeed, Umar's Assurance of *Aman* is an important reference text and a theoretical framework which laid down the foundation principles and the essential criteria to establish and manage a multicultural society in Islamic Jerusalem for the first time. It introduced, defined, and legislated the status and rights of non-Muslims in Islamic Jerusalem and ensured a peaceful co-existence between the different communities there.

On this basis, Umar not only implemented this theoretical framework but demonstrated his protection practically during his first visit to Islamic Jerusalem. Among the early events during this visit, which emphasised his keenness to protect non-Muslim holy places, was Umar's refusal to pray either in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or its atrium when he was visiting the place and was invited to do so by Patriarch Sophronious. Abu-Munshar (2007: 110) quoting Eutychius, Sa'id Ibn al-Batriq, reconstructed the recording of the conversation between Umar and Patriarch. Umar's justification for his refusal was

If I prayed inside the Church, it would have been lost by you and would have slipped from your power; for after my death the Muslims would take it away from you, together saying that 'Umar prayed here.'<sup>19</sup>

According to this account, it seems that Umar was not satisfied that his verbal explanation might be enough to convince the Muslims following his death not to change the church into a mosque. Umar wrote Sophronious a decree which read, 'The Muslims shall not pray on the stairs, unless it is one person at a time. But, they shall not meet there for a congregational prayer announced by the prayer call.'

Moreover, Umar also succeeded during his visit in establishing mutual respect with the Islamic Jerusalem people. Sophronious trusted Umar with the Christians' holiest shrine when he entrusted him with the keys of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In addition to establishing this mutual respect, Sophronious secured the protection of the Church from intra-Christian dispute. According to this account, Umar passed the keys to one of his companions, Abd Allah Ibn Nusaibah<sup>20 21</sup>.

All the changes introduced by Umar were essential steps towards implementing his new vision, policy and system. However, certain aspects re-

19 Maher Abu-Munshar, *Islamic Jerusalem and its Christian: A History of Tolerance and Tensions*, I B Tauris, London, 2007, p. 110.

20 Although this account was not mentioned in any early sources, Abu-Munshar's satisfaction with its authenticity is based on the fact that the keys are still in the hands of the Al-Nusaibah family. Abu-Munshar, *Ibidem*, pp. 111-112.

21 *Ibidem*.

lating to IslamicJerusalem were not altered. For example, the name was unchanged, nor were its geographical boundaries. Also this area was not chosen as the capital<sup>22</sup>. In addition, there was no thought of making Muslims the majority in IslamicJerusalem. Karen Armstrong argues that Muslims were the minority in IslamicJerusalem until the Crusader period.<sup>23</sup> A young Malaysian postgraduate student, Fatimatulzahra Abd al-Rahman, examined Armstrong's argument and presented an interesting discussion which concluded that this was the case. One can argue that the main issue for Muslims at that time was not to change its demographical population by excluding non-Muslims and transferring Muslims from Arabia to settle in IslamicJerusalem so they would become the majority. Indeed, this matter highlights the unique nature of this model where the subject of majority and minority was not the issue. The main concern was to establish a new vision for IslamicJerusalem, which would lead to a peaceful co-existence and mutual respect between the different communities in the region<sup>24</sup>.

The author argues that what prevented Muslims from doing all this was their vision of IslamicJerusalem. If Makkah and Madinah were exclusive areas for Muslims, IslamicJerusalem was made by Muslims into an inclusive, multi-religious, and multicultural region where all traditions and cultures could live in peace and harmony. According to one verse in the Qura'an, IslamicJerusalem is 'the land which We have given *Barakah* for everyone in the universe'<sup>25</sup>. This is the main vision of IslamicJerusalem – an inclusive not an exclusive one. Karen Armstrong argues that Umar Ibn al-Khattab was 'faithful to the Islamic inclusive vision'<sup>26</sup>. Unlike the Jews and Christians, Muslims did not attempt to exclude others from (Islamic) Jerusalem's holiness' and, instead of excluding these religions, 'Muslims were being taught to venerate them'.<sup>27</sup> In addition, Armstrong argues that:

From the first, Muslims showed that the veneration of sacred space did not have to mean conflict, enmity, killing ... and exclusion of others ... From the start, the Muslims developed an inclusive vision of [Islamic] Jerusalem which did not deny the presence and devotion of others, but respected their rights and celebrated plurality and co-existence. This inclusive vision of holiness is sorely needed by the people of [Islamic] Jerusalem today.<sup>28</sup>

22 El-Awaisi, *Introducing IslamicJerusalem*.

23 Karen Armstrong, *Sacred Space: the Holiness of IslamicJerusalem...* pp. 14-15.

24 Abd al-Rahman Fatimatulzahra, *Political, Social and Religious Changes in IslamicJerusalem from the First Islamic Fatih until the end of Umayyad period (637 to 750CE): An Analytical Study*, Dundee: Unpublished Master's dissertation, Al-Maktoum Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, 2004, p. 55.

25 (Qur'an 21:71)

26 Karen Armstrong, *Sacred Space: the Holiness of IslamicJerusalem...* p. 14.

27 Ibidem, p. 18.

28 Ibidem, pp. 18-19.

In addition, IslamicJerusalem represents for Muslims a region of hope, peace and stability. It was the region of hope for Prophet Abraham. When his people in his home country tried to kill him, he was ordered to migrate to the land of hope, IslamicJerusalem. Once again, when Prophet Muhammad lost hope of any support in Makkah and its surrounding area, he was taken by night to the land of hope, IslamicJerusalem. Since then, IslamicJerusalem has always been a symbol of hope for Muslims. Even with all the turmoil and troubles in the region, it still represents for contemporary Muslims the land of hope for the future<sup>29</sup>.

For the non-Muslim, the first Muslim *Fatih* of IslamicJerusalem put an end to centuries of instability, religious exclusion, persecution and colonial rule. When Muslims came to IslamicJerusalem, the first thing they did was to solve the existing religious and social problems by establishing peace between the inhabitants of that region. Before the first Muslim *Fatih*, Aelia had been a closed and insular region, mainly for Byzantine Christians. Indeed, it was very much an exclusive region, i.e. just for the locals and the Byzantines. IslamicJerusalem, on the other hand, was not an exclusive region during Muslim rule but an inclusive one<sup>30</sup>.

The author argues that the first Muslim *Fatih* liberated the Christians from the persecution of Byzantine occupiers, rid the Jews of Byzantine oppression, restored their presence to that region after an absence of five hundred years<sup>31</sup>, enabled all the communities to live side by side peacefully for the first time after a long history of conflict, and provided the grounds for establishing IslamicJerusalem as a model for peaceful co-existence and mutual respect.

Jewish sources, for example, show that the Jews of Syria were 'patiently awaiting' the arrival of the Muslim armies because they were groaning under the rule of the tyrannical Byzantines and suffering cruel oppression in the fifth, sixth, and early seventh centuries C.E.<sup>32</sup> The Jewish response to the first Muslim *Fatih* of IslamicJerusalem was 'characterised as generally positive'<sup>33</sup>, because it terminated the Byzantine rule and liberated them from their oppressor. Indeed, the Jews returned to IslamicJerusalem only when the Muslims took over and opened it up to all nations. The Jews had been excluded by the Romans (Hadrian) in 135 AD, but the Muslims brought them back after 500 years to establish peace between the three Abrahamic faiths, Islam, Christianity and

29 Laury Haytayan, Armenian Christians in Jerusalem: 1700 Years of Peaceful Presence, *Politics and Religion Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2011, Belgrade, pp. 179-195.

30 Ibidem.

31 Karen Armstrong, *A History of Jerusalem...* p. 420; Amnon Cohen, *Jewish life under Islam: Jerusalem in the sixteenth century*, Harvard University Press, 1984, p. 14.

32 Ben Zeev (Abu Zuaib), *Ka'ab al-Ahbar: Jews and Judaism in the Islamic Tradition* Jerusalem, 1976, p. 35.

33 Al-Sharif, Abd Allah, 'Mawqif Yahud al-Sham min al-Fatih al-Islami', *Majalat Jami'at Umm al-Qura li Ulum al-Shari'a wa al-Lugha al-Arabia wa Adabiha*, Vol. 16, No. 28, Saudi Arabia, 2004, p. 526.

Judaism. For the first time in history, these three religions managed to live together under the new vision of Islamic Jerusalem<sup>34</sup>.

After the second *Fatih* of Islamic Jerusalem by Salah al-Din in 1187, two new quarters were created within the walls of the Old City: the Maghrabi quarter and the Jewish quarter with the Sharaf quarter in between. In short, the Muslim *Fatih* of Islamic Jerusalem made it possible for Jews to return to the region. Both Umar and Salah al-Din invited Jews to settle in Islamic Jerusalem. When Islam ruled in that part of the world, both after the first Muslim *Fatih* in the time of Umar Ibn Khattab and after the second liberation by Salah al-Din, the different traditions managed to live in harmony and peace with one another.

The Christians of Aelia also greatly welcomed the first Muslim *Fatih*.<sup>35</sup> This could be argued as being related to the new vision of Islamic Jerusalem which provided Christians with the respect which would lead to good treatment, peace, security and stability. Runciman argues that Orthodox Christians "finding themselves spared the persecution that they had feared and paying taxes that, in spite of the *Jizya* demanded from the Christians, were far lower than in the Byzantine times, showed small inclination to question their destiny".<sup>36</sup> In addition, Runciman quotes Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, Michael the Syrian, who stated that God 'raised from the south the children of Ishmael (Muslims) to deliver us from the hands of the Romans.'<sup>37</sup> Moreover, Butler quotes Ibn al-Ibri who stated that Christians were optimistic towards the Muslims, 'God of vengeance delivered us out of the hand of the Romans by means of the Arabs. Then although our Churches were not restored to us, since under Arab rule each Christian community retained its actual possession, still it profited us not a little to be saved from the cruelty of the Romans and their bitter hatred against us.' Karen Armstrong argues that it was not surprising that Nestorian and Monophysite Christians welcomed Muslims and found them preferable to the Byzantines.<sup>38</sup>

The Muslim sources also record a letter sent to the Muslim army, when Abu Ubayda camped in *Fahl* in the Jordan Valley: 'O Muslims, we prefer you to the Byzantines, although they are of our own faith, because you keep faith with us and are more merciful to us and refrain from doing us injustice and your rule over us is better than theirs, for they have robbed us of our goods and our homes.'<sup>39</sup>

34 El-Awaisi, *Introducing Islamic Jerusalem*.

35 Abu-Munshar, *Ibidem*, pp. 105-109.

36 Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Cambridge Academic Press, Cambridge, 1987, I, pp. 20-21.

37 Runciman, *Ibidem*, pp. 20-21.

38 Karen Armstrong, *A History of Jerusalem*, p. 232; Rabbi Adam Rosenwasser, Jerusalem a City of War and Peace and Holiness... a Scriptural Perspective, *Politics and Religion journal*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2011, Belgrade, pp. 157-165.

39 Muhammad Ibn Abd Allah Al-Azdi, *Tarikh Futuh al-Sham*, ed. by A. Amer, Mu'assasat Sijil

Crusade historians, such as William of Tyre and Michael Foss<sup>40</sup> argue that for 372 years, since the first Muslim *Fatih* in 637 until 1009 (Al-Hakim ruling), Christians practised their religion freely.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, IslamicJerusalem was for the Christians an open and safe region to travel to.<sup>42</sup> In addition, both Christians and Jews were employed by the Muslim authority in IslamicJerusalem in all positions. Ahmad Ibn Tulun, the local Turkish commander, who established an independent state in Egypt away from the Abbasid Caliphate from 868-904, appointed a Christian as a governor of IslamicJerusalem. He also allowed a new Jewish sect to establish itself in the region.<sup>43</sup> Al-Maqdisi described the situation of both Christians and Jews in IslamicJerusalem before the beginning of the Crusader period: 'Everywhere the Christians and Jews have the upper hand.'<sup>44</sup>

One might argue that the Muslims' devotion to IslamicJerusalem is not a result of colonialist aims or a desire to expand their rule, nor is it based on false racist nationalist claims. On the contrary, the nature of IslamicJerusalem and its special qualities constitute the fundamental reason for their concern for it. Umar's Assurance of *Aman* not only rejected the notion of the supremacy of one people or race over others but presented IslamicJerusalem as a model both for peaceful co-existence and mutual respect; and for conflict resolution. As one of the main characteristics of IslamicJerusalem is its competing political and religious claims, it could be argued that it should be presented as a model for conflict resolution through constructive argumentation methodology as a means for a 'constructive dialogue' and positive negotiation with its conflicting parties<sup>45</sup>. The adopting of this constructive dialogue methodology would open the way for conflict resolution.

The Muslims demonstrated that this model could even work in conflict situations and areas where there had been long centuries of war and exclusion. Even at a later stage, Salah al-Din was very faithful and committed to this inclusive vision. During the negotiations in the third Crusade, Salah al-Din replied to King Richard I 'the Lionheart' of England in October 1191 CE by acknowledging Christian rights in IslamicJerusalem, asserting Muslim rights and refuting Richard's claim that Muslims were invaders. In his reply, he stated 'IslamicJerusalem is ours as much it is yours.'<sup>46</sup>

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al-Arab, Cairo, 1970, p. 111.

40 Abu-Munshar, *Ibidem*, pp. 125-127.

41 William of Tyre, *A history of deeds done beyond the sea*, translated and annotated by E.A. Babcock Octagon Books, New York, 1976, I, pp. 89-93.

42 Michael Foss, *People of the first Crusades*, Caxton London, 2002, p 29.

43 Karen Armstrong, *A History of Jerusalem...* pp. 254-255.

44 Abu Abd Allah Muhammad Al-Maqdisi, *Ahsan al-Taqaqim Fi Ma'rifat al-Aqalim*, Brill, Leiden, 1909, p. 167.

45 El-Awaisi, *Introducing IslamicJerusalem*.

46 Baha' al-Din Ibn Shaddad, *Sirat Salah al-Din al-Ayoubi: Al-Nawadir al-Sultaniyya wa al-*

With this peace among the different religions and cultures, stability was the obvious result. The whole region witnessed this very clearly. The author argues that Islamicjerusalem had always held the key to war and peace in the region. Whenever it has been blessed with peace, the whole region has enjoyed peace, security and stability. There is no doubt that settling the issue of Islamicjerusalem in a way that ensures justice and restores the rights of its people holds the key to world peace and regional stability.

One can argue that, to achieve global peace and stability, it is necessary to have peace and stability in Islamicjerusalem. Until this is achieved the entire world will not rest. Peace and stability in that region would bring about global peace and stability. Indeed, Islamicjerusalem acts as a centre for peace and for conflict in the world. Some might argue that this may be true for the Muslim Arab world but not for the rest of the world. The author argues that the formula is a global one. In the past, why did the farmers leave their land in Europe to go and fight during the Crusader period? Today, for example, when there is a conflict in that region, everyone pays the price of that war in one way or another: more taxes, higher petrol prices, etc.

What was the basis of that original peace and stability? The author argues that it was the concept of 'Adl (justice). Justice is a pre-requisite for peace and stability. The formula which has been produced on the peace process negotiations for the current conflict in West Asia in the last decade is based on the Arab and the Palestinian point of view of 'Peace for Land', and on the Israeli point of view, 'Peace for Security'. The author argues that neither viewpoint is an appropriate formula. The exchange of land will not bring peace and security. In addition, imposing security will not bring peace. For the author, the formula based on his understanding of the history of the region should be that neither peace nor security will be established without justice. So, the formula should be 'Peace for Justice' which will lead to preserving human dignity and mutual respect. In other words, justice is necessary before peace can be achieved.

The Muslim vision for Islamicjerusalem was to establish peace and stability in the area. To achieve this goal, one could argue that sovereignty is necessary. However, it is the Muslim vision of inclusion that is important, and not having sovereignty over the region and its people - although that too is important. However, sovereignty (*Siyadah*) over territory and people does not mean ownership (*Milkiya*) as it does not give the right of the ruling power to confiscate individual ownership of property or to own individuals. As quoted by Aminurraasyid Yatiban<sup>47</sup>, Wahbah al-Zuhayli, a Syrian prominent scholar, argues that:

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*Mahasin al-Yusufiyya*, Dar al-Manar, Cairo, 2000, p. 152; Donald P. Little, Jerusalem under the Ayyubids and Mamluks, in: K. J. Asali (ed.), *Jerusalem in History*, Essex Scorpion, Publishing, 1989, p. 179.

<sup>47</sup> Aminurraasyid Yatiban, *The Islamic Concept of Sovereignty: Islamicjerusalem during the First Islamic Conquest as a Case Study*, Unpublished Master's dissertation, Al-Maktoum Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, Dundee, 2003.

Sovereignty gives the legal power to the state to take any suitable action regarding the land under its authority, such as introducing certain regulations. It does not have the right to abandon the individual ownership of private land, unless to be used for public necessity but also with compatible value of compensation.<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, sovereignty only gives power to administer the well-being of the people and safeguard its territory. In short, Umar used his power to reshape a good relationship between the different communities establishing Islamicjerusalem as a model for peaceful co-existence and mutual respect.

One can argue that sovereignty alone does not lead to peace, security and stability. Without the vision coming first, there will never be peace or security and stability. It is the inclusive nature of the vision that allows people to live in peace, even if this is a Muslim vision and those living under the vision are not all Muslims. Generally, during Muslim rule, people in Islamicjerusalem enjoyed safety, peace, security, stability and prosperity - with the exception of the period of the Crusades (1099-1198). Indeed, Islamicjerusalem enjoyed, in particular, the special care of the Caliphs and the Muslim rulers. In addition to being a spiritual and political centre, Islamicjerusalem was also a cultural, learning and teaching centre from which a large number of scholars graduated. Scholarly activities took place on a wider scale and at various levels, and schools, mosques and hospitals were founded<sup>49</sup>.

In the seventh century, and in particular during the first Muslim *Fatih* of Islamicjerusalem, the land of hope provided the world with the famous document known as Umar's Assurance of *Aman* to the people of Aelia (Islamicjerusalem). This fundamental landmark of hope established a new system to manage diversity, laid the foundations for future relations, and led to reshaping the relationships between people of diverse faiths who inhabited the region, namely, Jews, Christians and Muslims. Indeed, Umar's Assurance was the jewel of the first Muslim *Fatih* of Aelia, and the beacon for developing Islamicjerusalem's unique and creative vision, nature, and model.

This marked the beginning of a new and distinguished era of safety, peace, stability, security, progress, development and prosperity. With his global feeling and a local touch, Umar was trying to resolve a local conflict with an international approach. In other words, he was 'thinking globally' and 'acting locally'. In short, Umar's global vision and local focus presented Islamicjerusalem as a model for peaceful co-existence and mutual respect.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, and in particular through serious scholarly findings, the land of hope is re-presenting itself in a modern fashion as a model for peaceful co-existence and mutual respect. Indeed, our understanding of Islamicjerusalem as a model for peaceful co-existence and mu-

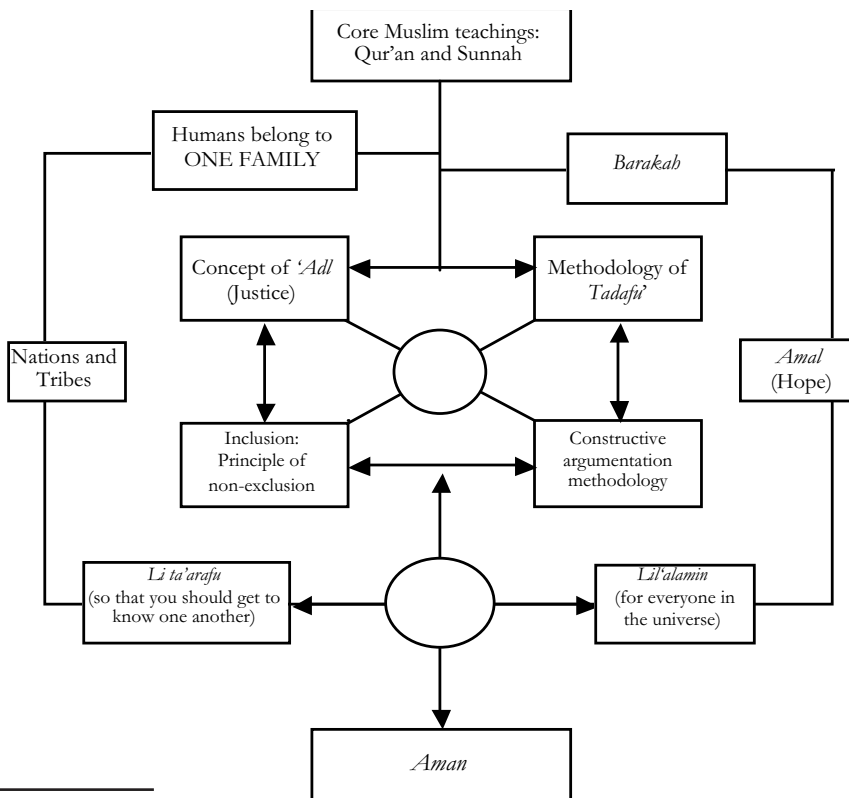
48 Wahbah Al-Zuhayli, *Al-Fiqh al-Islami wa Adillatuh*, Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, 2002, VIII, p. 6331.

49 El-Awaisi, *Introducing Islamicjerusalem*.

tual respect with all its intertwined elements, nature, characteristics, as developed and presented in this article, could be seen as the twenty-first century's contribution to establishing a new agenda and new frame of reference for safety, peace, stability, security, progress, development and prosperity in the region.

In short, several supporting evidences have been provided to support the author's central argument that **IslamicJerusalem** is not exclusive but **inclusive** and should be opened up 'to everyone in the universe', as stated in the Qur'an *Lil'alamin*<sup>50</sup>, 'so that you should get to know one another' *Li ta'arafu*<sup>51</sup>, not that you may despise one another. It gives the world a model of a common and open space in which people from different backgrounds can live together in peaceful co-existence and mutual respect. Indeed, it is not closed and insular, but a centre in which diversity and pluralism thrive through mutual respect and co-existence. This unique global common space of openness and *Barakah* has made IslamicJerusalem an ideal *Amal* Hope region where the one human family can make *Li ta'arafu*, live together in *Aman* and enjoy this *Barakah*.

**Diagram 4: A Muslim Model for Aman (Peaceful Co-existence and Mutual Respect)**



50 Qur'an, 21:71

51 Qur'an, 49:13



Umar therefore successfully created, developed and managed a new multicultural environment in Islamic Jerusalem where differences among its people were not only acknowledged and recognised but accepted, respected, valued, and protected. Islamic Jerusalem provides and promotes a climate of religious and cultural engagement and dialogue, mutual respect and diversity, and social justice. It also encourages, supports, and contributes to fostering a multicultural ethos of mutual cultural understanding and respect, and a common understanding between different communities and individuals at all levels.

One can argue that the differences between cultures, communities, and religions should give strength to the society as a whole. Indeed, the different cultural lenses which people from diverse backgrounds bring to their society should enrich their experiences and add to their pursuit for a common ground. In examining Umar's Assurance as a whole, it was seen that Muslims were not afraid of recognising the needs of others and dealing with them. On the contrary, they discovered and established a model where they saw how practically fostering a culture of diversity, plurality and mutual respect of differences was positive and strength rather than a threat.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Islamic Jerusalem was created by Muslims as an inclusive, multi-religious, and multicultural region where all traditions and cultures could live in peace and stability. Indeed, its uniqueness is highlighted through its vision which presents a model for a *Aman* (peaceful co-existence and mutual respect). It also offers away for people from different religious and cultural backgrounds to live together in an environment of multiculturalism and religious and cultural engagement, diversity and mutual respect. In short, it is not closed and limited, but a centre in which the richness of cultural diversity and pluralism thrive in a spirit of mutual respect and co-existence. This was the nature, identity, and vision of Islamic Jerusalem in the past during Muslim rule. Indeed, in this age more than ever, where we are trying to promote multiculturalism and cultural engagement at a global level, Islamic Jerusalem could serve as a model for peaceful co-existence and mutual respect – giving us, as it does, the model of common space in which people from different background can live in peace together.

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## МУСЛИМАНСКИ МОДЕЛ ЗА МИРНУ КОЕГЗИСТЕНЦИЈУ И МЕЋУСОБНО ПОШТОВАЊЕ

### Резиме

Централни муслимански извори укључују разноликост и плуралитет као базу свега. Заиста, разноликост и плуралитет у нацијама, религијама, културама, расама и верским правима је део састава универзума. Са актуелном дебатом о мултикултурализму и културном ангажовању, постоји огромна потреба да се разуме муслимански допринос овој критичној теми. Међутим, уместо да истражују опште погледе Ислама и муслимана на разноликост и плуралитет или њихово разумевање мултикултурализма, културног ангажовања, мирне коегзистенције и међусобног поштовања, циљ овог рада јесте да развије посебан муслимански модел везан за напоре *Исламскогјерусалима за Аман* (мирна коегзистенција и међусобно поштовање). Надамо се да овај модел може да направи простор за даља истраживања на тему муслиманског доприноса у овом критичном моменту у 21. веку, развије наше разумевање мултикултурализма и културног ангажовања, укаже на нека осетљива, важна и централна питања у овој области, као и да отвори и промовише интелектуалну и академску дебату и разумевање овог муслиманског модела и да да ново светло објашњења ове појаве. Иако је *Исламскијерусалим* најделикатнија тема између две стране које су у конфликту, аутор се нада да ће овај модел омогућити боље разумевање за светске лидере који покушавају да врате мир овом региону.

**Кључне речи:** разноликост, плуралитет, мултикултурализам, културно ангажовање, мирна коегзистенција, међусобно поштовање, Ислам, муслимани, Исламскијерусалим

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