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Q: Express the principles of accountability of rulers according to the Holy Quran and Sunnah.

## Expounding Islamic Political System

Islam has been referred to as Din. It consists of a set of beliefs, rituals, social customs and a complete code of life. This means that Islam not only provides a complete code of life but also helps in leading that life beautiful and peacefully in this mortal world and then how to become successful in the life hereafter. The code of life given by Islam gives a just political system for the humanity to follow. This political system encompasses every aspect starting from the "selection of the ruler" according to the will of the people to the rules necessary for the establishment of welfare state. Moreover, Islam also defines the principles for the accountability of rulers.

Allah, the Exalted, says Islam a Deen in glorious Quran:

"This day I have perfected your deen for you, completed my favor upon you, and have chosen Islam for you as your deen."

(Surah Maidah Verse 3)

# Explicating Democratic Spirit of Islam

It is not over-exaggerated to say that Islam has finished the absolute monarchy in Arab and introduced a democratic system in which the will of the "governed" was given importance.

In Islamic political system, a special criteria is defined for the selection of rulers. According to which the Shura and the people of the state elects the Caliph/ruler.

## Selection of Caliph by the state :

**Example of selection of Hazrat Abu Bakr (R.A.) as a caliph :-** After the demise of Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.), there was an argument between Ansar (and) Medinah and Muhajireen of Quraysh about political leadership. Umar bin Khattab (R.A.) hastily took Abu Bakr's hand and pledged his loyalty to him. On seeing this, the people did the same.

## Criteria for the selection of Ruler defined by Islam

- Must be a Muslim
- Must be a sane
- Must be a scholar of Quran and Sunnah
- Must be capable of conducting Ijma and Ijtihad
- Must be impartial

# Accountability of Ruler of an Islamic state

Islam is a multifaceted religion where the awareness of Divine rights has been given on the one hand and a functional network of an Islamic state has been laid down on the other. It not only expounds an effective system for the management of state but also conceptualized the accountability of the state authorities in order to keep the holders of power under effective check.

The true essence of an Islamic state: Sovereignty belongs to Allah Almighty

“Blessed is He in Whose hand is the sovereignty and He is the Possessor of power over all thing.”  
(Surah Mulk Verse 1)

## Levels of Accountability of Rulers

### 1- Accountability before Masses:

In Islam, people are the real state holders of the state and a ruler is elected by the mutual consent of the people in Islamic political system. So, ruler is accountable before masses.

### a. Accountability before Shura:

According to Quran and Sunnah, ruler must be accountable before Shura for their actions, performance

and decisions.

### 3- Accountability before courts:

According to Quran and Sunnah, the judiciary must be free enough to give their decisions even against to rulers of the state.

Allah Almighty says that

“O you who believe! Be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allah, even though it be against yourselves or parents or near relatives, whether (the case be of) a rich man or a poor man.” (Surah Nisa : 135)

### 4- Accountability before Allah

Among the entire creation of Allah, He has only chosen the human beings for stringent accountability and appropriate requital on the Day of Judgement.

Allah Almighty says about His Caliph

“I will create a Vicegerent on Earth.”

(Surah Baqarah : 30)

## Principles for the Accountability of Rulers

### 1- Sovereignty of Allah:

In Islamic democratic system, the sovereignty belongs to Allah Almighty and authority is the blessing of Allah for the ruler and he has to perform all the powers and functions within the boundaries of Islam. Because he is accountable

to Allah for all his power and functions.

Allah Almighty says:

“Then we appointed you viceroys in the land after them that We might see how you behave.” (Surah Yunus : 14)

## 2- Protection of Basic fundamental Rights

It is the responsibility of the ruler to protect the basic fundamental rights of all humans living in the state despite the differences in their color, creed or race.

Allah Almighty says that

“That is why we ordained <sup>for</sup> the children of Israel that whoever takes a life - unless for punishment for a murder or mischief in the land - it will be as if they killed all of humanity: and whoever saves a life it will be as if they saved all of humanity.” (Surah Maidah Verse 30)

## 3- Provision of education

The ruler is accountable regarding the welfare of his state. It is responsibility of the state to provide all basic needs (food, shelter, education) to the people of the state.

Hadith: “seeking knowledge is mandatory for every man and woman.”

#### 4- (Transparency) Meritocracy

The ruler must be transparent in his rulership. He must follow strict merit regarding appointments of higher officials of the state.

Commanders appointed by the caliphs on strict merit: Like Khalid bin Waleed and Amar bin Aas (R.A.) were appointed as commanders on the basis of expertise in military expeditions.

#### 5- Public welfare

It is the responsibility of the ruler to provide basic needs to the people. Hazrat Umar (R.A.) used to take personal care of public administration. He fixed stipends for the poor and disabled during his reign.

#### 6- Agricultural reforms

It is ruler who is responsible for land policies because farmers are usually deprived sector of any community. That's why Islam has forced on the accountability of rulers regarding agricultural reforms.

Special care of Hazrat Umar (R.A.) for the lands for farmers:

- He had dug a number of canals for irrigation.
- A number of gardens were planted on his order.
- He supported both Muslim and non-Muslim farmers.

## 7. Religious Freedom

The idol worshippers and Jews of Madinah lived peacefully in Madinah along with Muslims in Islamic state under the leadership of Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.).

Allah Almighty says

“There shall be no compulsion in religion.”

(Surah Baqarah: 256)

## 8. Freedom of speech

The ruler will be accountable for the freedom of speech of the people of the state. In Islam, people have given enough freedom to speak against the ruler in case of his disobedience to Allah Almighty.

**Hadith:** A Muslim has to listen to and obey (the order of the ruler) whether he likes it or not as long as his orders do not involve disobedience (to Allah). But if an act of disobedience (to Allah) is imposed, one should not listen to it or obey it.

## 9. Protection to Minorities

A ruler of an Islamic state is accountable for the protection of rights of minorities. The social contract of Madinah also emphasized on it.

**Article 20 of Madinah Accord:** Minorities (Jews) will enjoy basic rights and equality in an Islamic state of Madinah if they respect the state and do not help enemies against Muslims.

## 10 - Social Justice

It is important for the ruler of an Islamic state to ensure social justice. Every rich or poor, Muslim or non-Muslim must enjoy equal legal rights.

In article 31 and 40 of charter of Madinah, equality in legal rights was discussed.

Article 31 of Madinah Accord: Jews of Banni Najjar have same rights as to Jews of Bani.

Article 40 of Madinah Accord: All tribes of Jews will enjoy rights like Muslims.

## 11 - Foreign Policy of the state

It is the principle of accountability of the ruler of the state because it is his responsibility to design foreign policy of the state. He must follow 3 principles of foreign policy of Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.):

- 1 - Da'wah
- 2 - Peace
- 3 - Recognition of Muslims as a force to be reckoned with

## Concluding thoughts

Islam is a Deen that explains the complete process (start) starting from the selection of ruler to the principles of accountability of ruler. A ruler is completely responsible for the welfare of state. He is also responsible for the protection



of rights of minorities living in the state. He is responsible for every sector of his state. He is also accountable to Allah Almighty for the administration of the state. But all the authorities in the hands of ruler are temporary because all these powers are bestowed by Allah to him and it is a huge responsibility so he must be careful in exercising these powers.

Allah Almighty says in Surah Hashr:

"Had we sent this Quran upon a mountain, you would have seen it humble itself and cleave asunder for fear of Allah."

(Surah Hashr: 21)