



20677 - Is it permissible according to Islamic teachings for a woman to be a ruler?

the question

Is it permissible according to Islamic teachings for a woman to be a ruler? I hope that you will give evidence from the Quran.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

We appreciate the questioner's keenness to learn and follow evidence from the Holy Quran, but there is not necessarily specific evidence from the Quran for every issue. Rather many rulings are based on evidence from the authentic prophetic Sunnah, but not on evidence from the Quran. What is required of the Muslim is to follow the evidence of both the Quran and Sunnah.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{O you who believe, obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those of you who are in authority. If you are in dispute over any matter, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you [truly] believe in Allah and the Last Day; that is better and more seemly in the end} [An-Nisa' 4:59].

Thus Allah, may He be Exalted, has enjoined us to obey Him and obey His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and He has enjoined us to refer matters concerning which people dispute and disagree to His Book and the Sunnah of His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

And Allah, may He be Exalted, says:



{And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty} [Al-Hashr 59:7].

Ibn Majah (12) narrated from al-Miqdam ibn Ma`dikaarib al-Kindi that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Soon there will come a time when a man will be reclining on his pillow, and when one of my hadiths is narrated to him, he will say: 'The Book of Allah is (sufficient) between us and you. Whatever it states is permissible, we will take as permissible, and whatever it states is forbidden, we will take as forbidden.' Verily, whatever the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) has forbidden is like that which Allah has forbidden."

Classed as authentic by al-Albani in *Sahih al-Jami`* (8186).

Secondly:

The evidence from the Quran and Sunnah indicates that it is not permissible for a woman to be appointed to a position of public office, such as the position of caliph, vizier (government minister), judge and so on.

1. Evidence from the Quran

Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, says:

{Men are in charge of women, because Allah has made one of them excel the other, and because they spend of their wealth [on them]} [An-Nisa' 4:34].

Al-Qurtubi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Allah's words {Men are in charge of women} mean: They are responsible for spending on their maintenance and protecting them. Moreover, the positions of rulers, commanders and fighters (in Allah's cause) are exclusively for men, and none of these positions are for women.

End quote from *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, 5/168.



Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

That is, the man is in charge of the woman, meaning that he is her leader and has control over her, and disciplines her if she misbehaves.

{because Allah has made one of them excel the other} that is, because men are superior to women, and a man has better qualities than a woman, hence prophethood is only for men, and the position of ruler or head of state is only for men, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “No people will ever prosper who appoint a woman in charge of their affairs.” Narrated by al-Bukhari. The same applies to appointing a woman to the position of a judge.

End quote from *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, 1/492.

2. Evidence from the Sunnah

It was narrated that Abu Bakrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: When news reached the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that the Persians had appointed the daughter of Khusrau as their ruler, he said: “No people will ever prosper who appoint a woman in charge of their affairs.” Narrated by al-Bukhari (4163).

Ash-Shawkani (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This indicates that a woman is not qualified for public office, and it is not permissible to appoint a woman to such a position, because people should avoid doing anything that could lead to them not prospering. End quote.

Al-Mawardi (may Allah have mercy on him) said, when discussing the position of a vizier or minister:

It is not permissible for a woman to take up such a position, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “No people will ever prosper who appoint a woman in charge of their affairs.” Moreover, such positions require a person to give advice based on mature thinking



and to have strong resolve, which are things that women may lack. People in such positions are also expected to go out and meet people in order to fulfil their responsibilities, which is disallowed for women.

End quote from *Al-Ahkam as-Sultaniyyah*, p. 46.

Ibn Hazm (may Allah have mercy on him) said, discussing the issue of caliphate:

There is no difference of scholarly opinion regarding the fact that this position is not permissible for a woman.

End quote from *Al-Fasl fil-Milal wal-Ahwa' wan-Nihal*, 4/129.

In *Al-Mawsu'ah al-Fiqhiyyah*, 21/270, it says:

The jurists are agreed that the conditions required of the ruler include being male, so it is not valid for a woman to be appointed as ruler, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "No people will ever prosper who appoint a woman in charge of their affairs." That is so that he can mix with men, and be able to devote his time to running the affairs of state, because this position requires handling extremely serious matters and carrying heavy burdens, and that is appropriate for males only. End quote.

Shaykh `Abd al-`Aziz ibn `Abdillah ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked the following question:

What does Islam say about a woman nominating herself as head of state or as head of the government or as prime minister?

He replied:

Appointing or electing a woman as ruler of Muslims is not permissible. The Quran, Sunnah and scholarly consensus indicate that. In the Quran, Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{Men are in charge of women, because Allah has made one of them excel the other} [An-Nisa'



4:34].

This ruling mentioned in this verse is general in application; it covers a man's position of authority in his family and, more appropriately, also applies to public office. This ruling is also confirmed by the fact that the verse mentions the reason for that, which is men's superiority in terms of reason, mature thinking and other qualities that are required for ruling and leadership.

In the Sunnah, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "No people will ever prosper who appoint a woman in charge of their affairs." Narrated by al-Bukhari.

Undoubtedly this hadith indicates that it is prohibited to appoint a woman to public office, or to appoint her as governor of a region or a city, because all of that comes under the heading of public office, and the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said that those who appoint a woman to such a position will never prosper, and prospering refers to winning and attaining what is good.

Moreover, what may be determined on the basis of rational thinking to be in the nation's best interests dictates that no position of public office should be given to a woman, because what is required of the one who is chosen to be head of state is that he should have a great share of reason, resolve, shrewdness, strong will and good managerial skills. These qualities are contrary to those which are naturally instilled in women of lack of reason and mature thinking, in addition to their being very emotional. Therefore electing a woman to such positions is not in the best interests of the Muslims, and it will hinder the Muslims' aspirations. And Allah is the source of strength. May Allah send blessings and peace upon our Prophet Muhammad and upon his family and companions.

End quote from *Majallat al-Mujtama`* (issue no. 890).

And Allah knows best.