111836 - How the caliph of the Muslims is appointed

the question

How did the Islamic state organize its affairs? How did the government rule in the earliest period?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The Muslim ruler must appoint people who are qualified to hold positions of high office in the state, and he must also hold consultations with people of knowledge and those who are specialized in various fields. That should not be left to the common folk or the masses for everyone to elect his relative or a member of his party, or to elect the one who will pay the most.

Shaykh Saalih ibn Fawzaan (may Allaah preserve him) said:

Official positions that are lower than that of caliph or ruler: Appointing people to these positions was the job of the caliph or ruler. He had the authority to select for them people who were competent and had integrity. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): “Verily, Allaah commands that you should render back the trusts to those, to whom they are due; and that when you judge between men, you judge with justice” [al-Nisa’ 4:58]. This is addressed to rulers and those in authority. Trusts (amaanaat) here refers to official positions and positions of high office in the state, which Allaah made a trust that is entrusted to the ruler. The way in which it is to be fulfilled is by choosing people who are competent and have integrity, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and the caliphs who came after him and the Muslim rulers after them appointed to various positions those who were fit to hold those positions and were able to fulfil these duties as prescribed in sharee’ah.

With regard to elections as they are known today in different states, they are not part of the Islamic system and they may lead to disorder and chaos and personal ambitions. They are subject to favouritism and greed, and may lead to fitnah (tribulation) and bloodshed. They do not achieve

the purpose they are meant to achieve; rather they are more like auctions, buying and selling, and false propaganda. End quote.

Al-Jazeerah newspaper, issue no. 11358.

The imam (ruler) or caliph was appointed to lead the Islamic state by one of three methods:

1-

He was chosen and elected by the decision makers (ahl al-hall wa'l-'aqd). For example, Abu Bakr al-Siddeeq became caliph when he was elected by the decision makers, then the Sahaabah unanimously agreed with that and swore allegiance to him, and accepted him as caliph.

'Uthmaan ibn 'Affaan (may Allaah be pleased with him) became caliph in a similar manner, when 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allaah be pleased with him) delegated the appointment of the caliph to come after him to a shoora council of six of the senior Sahaabah, who were to elect one of their number. 'Abd al-Rahmaan ibn 'Awf consulted the Muhaajireen and Ansaar, and when he saw that the people were all inclined towards 'Uthmaan, he swore allegiance to him first, then the rest of the six swore allegiance to him, followed by the Muhaajireen and Ansaar, so he was elected as caliph by the decision makers.

'Ali ibn Abi Taalib (may Allaah be pleased with him) became caliph in a similar manner, when he was elected by most of the decision makers.

2-

Appointment to the position by the previous caliph, when one caliph passes on the position to a particular person who is to succeed him after he dies. For example, 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab became caliph when the position was passed on to him by Abu Bakr al-Siddeeq (may Allaah be pleased with him).

3-

By means of force and prevailing over others. When a man becomes caliph by prevailing over the

people by the sword, and he establishes his authority and takes full control, then it becomes obligatory to obey him and he becomes the leader of the Muslims. Examples of that include some of the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid caliphs, and those who came after them. This method is contrary to sharee’ah, because it is seized by force. But because great interests are served by having a ruler who rules the ummah, and because a great deal of mischief may result from chaos and loss of security in the land, the one who seizes authority by means of the sword should be obeyed if he seizes power by force but he rules in accordance with the laws of Allaah.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al-‘Uthaymeen (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

If a man rebels and seizes power, the people must obey him, even if he seizes power by force and without their consent, because he has seized power.

The reason for that is that if his rule is contested, it will lead to a great deal of evil, and this is what happened during the Umayyad period when some of them seized power by means of force and gained the title of caliph, and people obeyed them in obedience to the command of Allaah. End quote.

Sharh al-‘Aqeedah al-Safaareeniyyah (p. 688).

For more information on this topic, and to find out how the state should operate and how its affairs should be run, please see Ahkaam al-Sultaaniyyah by Abu’l-Hasan al-Maawardi al-Shaafa’i and Ahkaam al-Sultaaniyyah by Abu Ya’la al-Farra’ al-Hanbali, and al-Tarteeb al-Idaariyyah by al-Kattaani.

And Allaah knows best.