

THE RIGHTLY GUIDED CALIPHS: UTHMAN IBN AFFAN (PART 2 OF 2)

Rating:

Description: A short biography of Prophet Muhammad's companion, friend and the third Rightly Guided Caliph of Islam and a brief look at some of Uthman ibn Affan's achievements and challenges.

Category: [Lessons](#) › [Prophet Muhammad](#) › [His Companions](#)

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Objective:

- To learn about the life of Uthman ibn Affan and understand his importance in the history of Islam.

Arabic Terms:

- Khalifah* (plural: *Khulafa'*) – Caliph. Sometimes spelled Khalif. He is the chief Muslim religious and civil ruler, regarded as the successor of Prophet Muhammad. A Caliph is not a monarch.
- Ummah* – Refers to the whole Muslim community, irrespective of color, race, language or nationality.
- Rakah* – unit of prayer.

One day while the Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him, was on the Mount of Uhud in Madinah, it shook and he struck it with a stick and said: "O Uhud, be firm! Indeed upon you is a Prophet, a *Sid'deeq* (truth-teller) and two martyrs." The term '*Sid'deeq*' was in reference to Abu Bakr, the first Caliph in Islam,



and the two martyrs were Umar and Uthman. Uthman became a *khalifah* (caliph) after the assassination of Umar ibn Al-Khattab in 644 CE. He reigned for 12 years, and during his rule, all of Iran, most of North Africa, the Caucasus and Cyprus were added to the Islamic Caliphate. As he lay dying, Umar, the second Caliph of the *Ummah* appointed a council of six men to choose a new leader. Thus Uthman ibn Affan was appointed Caliph through a process of consultation and careful deliberation. Uthman was turning 70 when he took up this appointment. For many years he had refrained from the pleasures of this life in order to seek nearness to Allah so when he addressed

the people as the newly elected Caliph it was no surprise that he set a tone of piety and concern and that this would be the symbol of his reign.

Uthman was the first Caliph to organize a navy. He reorganised the administrative divisions of the *Ummah* and expanded and initiated many public projects. Under Uthman's rule many mosques, schools and guest houses were built throughout the ever expanding Caliphate. He oversaw the building of canals to encourage agriculture and lifted the restrictions on buying land in the conquered territories. People loved Uthman as he was extremely generous and he organized a structured welfare system for those who were less fortunate. Through this system people enjoyed luxuries that the Caliph himself didn't enjoy. Along with this exemplary quality, Uthman was very firm and strict when it came to matters of justice. He had no favoritism towards his family in this regard; once his half-brother was brought forth to be punished for a crime that he had done, the punishment wasn't lessened or waived on account of his relation to the Caliph.

Uthman was also a very humble and could be seen sleeping alone in the mosque wrapped in a blanket with no companions or body guards around him, or riding on a mule. He was a devout man who loved the Quran with a passion. It was during his reign that the various dialects in which the Quran can be recited were standardized into one copy known today as '*Mushaf Uthman*'. This standardized copy was unanimously accepted by the *Ummah* and it is the same copy that we read today.

Although the Caliphate was expanding rapidly, people with ulterior motives began to spread seeds of dissent among the young and inexperienced; thus, the final years of Uthman's reign was marked by a rebellion. The Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him, prophesized that this would occur, as he said: "Islam will run smoothly as a well placed grinding stone, until the year 35." The year 35 marks the year in which Uthman, may Allah be pleased with him, was killed.

The rebels who had gathered in Madinah from various parts of the Caliphate besieged the home of Uthman for 40 days, in which he was even prevented access to drinking water. Uthman came out to address them, but some of them were unconvinced. At first, they were held at bay by the battalion of companions that stood guard by his home among whom were Al-Hasan and Al-Hussain (the children of Ali), may Allah be pleased with them all. Uthman ordered them all back to their homes as he did not want to shed the blood of anyone. After they left the rebels broke into his house and murdered him in front of his wife. As the assassin's sword struck, Uthman was reciting the following: **"So Allah will suffice for you against them. And He is the All Hearer, the All Knower."** (Quran 2:137)

Prophet Muhammad had prophesized that Uthman would be placed in a very difficult situation when he said, "Perhaps God will clothe you with a shirt, Uthman, and if the people want you to take it off, do not take it off for them." Although these rebels demanded he step down as Caliph, he refused and did not give in to their demands. His love for God and his Messenger kept him both strong and humble in the face of old age and extreme difficulty.

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