

AN ANALYSIS OF THE HISTORY AND CONTENT OF THE CAIRO DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN ISLAM

Khudoyberdiyev Rashid Zokir og'li,
Karimova Pokiza Ulug'bek qizi
Tashkent State Medical University

Human rights are one of the most important values and criteria of social development in modern society. The level of progress of any state is primarily determined by the respect it shows for human dignity and fundamental freedoms. The adoption of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** by the **United Nations (UN)** in 1948 marked a major step toward establishing universal human rights standards. In response, the Muslim world, based on its own religious and moral principles, adopted the **Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam** in 1990.

This declaration serves as a **legal, political, and moral framework** for the member states of the Islamic world. The Cairo Declaration was adopted on **August 5, 1990**, in Cairo by more than **45 member countries** of the **Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**. The document consists of **25 articles**, each based on the **Qur'an and the Sunnah**, aimed at upholding human dignity, ensuring justice, and protecting freedom. All articles of the Declaration are grounded in the fundamental sources of Islamic law — the Qur'an and Hadith.

Main Provisions of the Cairo Declaration.

- 1. Human Dignity and Equality.** The Declaration emphasizes that all human beings — men and women — are equal in human dignity and rights. Discrimination based on origin, color, or language is strictly prohibited (Article 1).
- 2. Freedom of Religion and Belief.** Islam recognizes freedom of religion; however, the Cairo Declaration forbids a Muslim from leaving Islam (apostasy). This principle differs from Western interpretations of religious freedom.
- 3. Privacy and Family Protection.** The Declaration affirms the sanctity of family life and its significance in social development. Family values are protected within the boundaries of Sharia law.
- 4. Freedom of Expression and Access to Information.** Freedom of speech is recognized, but it must not contradict the principles of Islam and Sharia (Article 22).
- 5. Economic and Social Rights.** The rights to work, education, social security, and property ownership are all defined within the framework of Islamic principles and ethics.

Critical Approaches to the Cairo Declaration

The Cairo Declaration has faced **criticism** from several international human rights organizations and scholars.

The main points of criticism include:

- **Sharia limitations:** Human rights are defined strictly within the boundaries of Sharia, which may conflict with certain international norms.
- **Religious freedom differences:** The restriction on the right of Muslims to leave Islam (apostasy) has been criticized in the West as a violation of religious freedom.
- **Gender equality issues:** The differences between men's and women's rights under Sharia law are said to be inconsistent with modern international standards of gender equality. Despite these criticisms, Muslim countries view the Cairo Declaration as a **means of expressing their social, moral, and religious values** on an international level. For them, it represents an authentic, faith-based model of human rights rooted in divine law.

Methods

This research applies **historical-analytical, comparative, and legal methods**. The content of the Cairo Declaration was analyzed in comparison with international human rights norms, particularly the **UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)**. The views of Muslim scholars on Islamic civilization, Sharia principles, and human rights were also examined to understand the conceptual and legal differences between Islamic and Western frameworks.

Discussion

The Cairo Declaration differs **fundamentally** from Western human rights documents. While the **UN Declaration** is based on **secular and universal principles**, the **Cairo Declaration** grounds human rights in **religious and moral values** derived from Islam. This difference has often been criticized by Western scholars, who claim that it restricts universal rights. However, within the Islamic world, the Declaration is viewed as a **just, moral, and natural legal system** that reflects divine justice and social balance.

Modern analyses show that the Cairo Declaration has provided Muslim-majority countries with an **independent legal foundation** for defining human rights based on Islamic teachings. It represents a distinctive model of human rights that integrates faith, morality, and law — ensuring that justice and human dignity are preserved within an Islamic framework.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the **Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam** is a historically significant document that introduced the **Islamic concept of human rights** to the world. It harmonizes **religious values, morality, justice, and human dignity** into a unified framework.

The Declaration holds an important place in history as the only comprehensive Islamic human rights document that expresses the worldview of Muslim nations. It continues to serve as both

a **political and moral guideline** for Muslim countries and contributes to the global pursuit of **justice, equality, and respect for human dignity** in the modern world.

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