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# Understanding Muslim - Jewish Relationship in Medina during the Era of Prophet Muhammad

Hız. Peygamber Zamanında Medine'de  
Müslüman-Yahudi İliřkilerini Anlamak

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### Abstract

From the first years of Islam, the Jews had been regarded as the most important non-Muslim community for the Muslims because they represented the majority of the communities in Medina. Although their knowledge of prophethood, the Jews are known for their denial of Prophet Muhammad. This paper explains how Prophet Muhammad treated the Jewish in Medina during his era by reviewing narrations in early sources, verses about Jews, and related modern studies. It is shown that Prophet Muhammad practices kindness towards others, including the enemies, as well as practicing firms in his decision and actions. It should be emphasized that the article is not seeking a new claim on the treatment of the Jews in Medina. However, the critical points by reviewing the related traditions were presented in order, and the historical data about the Medina era has been evaluated to reach some findings. The most important one of the findings was that the Prophet intended to keep the agreement with the Jews until the last moment, and he avoided war. However, in three independent examples which are given in the article, the party that broke the agreement was the Jews. Once the contract was broken, they were treated harshly; the Muslims showed their strength by expelling them from their lands and dooming their men to death.

**Keywords:** Islamic History, Muslims, Jews, Prophet Muhammad, Medina Treaty

### Öz

İslamiyet'in ilk yıllarından beri Yahudiler, Müslümanlar açısından en önemli gayrimüslim topluluk olarak sayılmaktaydılar. Çünkü İslam'ın erken döneminde Medine'deki toplulukların çoğunluğunu temsil ediyorlardı. Nitekim Yahudiler, peygamberlik hakkında ön bir bilgiye sahip olmalarına rağmen, Hz. Peygamber'in peygamberliğini reddetmişlerdir. Bu makale, erken dönem İslam Tarihi kaynaklarındaki rivayetleri, Yahudiler hakkındaki ayetleri ve ilgili çalışmaları gözden geçirerek Medine'deki Yahudilerin nasıl muamele gördüğünü açıklamak üzere yazılmıştır. Makalede, Hz. Peygamber'in, karar ve eylemlerinde net duruşunun yanı sıra düşmanları da dahil olmak üzere başkalarına karşı iyi muamelesi ortaya konulmuştur. Makale, Hz. Peygamber'in Yahudilere muamelesi konusunda yeni bir yaklaşım ortaya koymayı iddia etmeksizin rivayetlerin gözden geçirilmesi neticesinde öne çıkan hususları belirli bir düzen içinde sunmayı ve tarihi kayıtları Medine dönemi özelinde değerlendirerek birtakım sonuçlara ulaşmayı hedeflemiştir. Yahudilerle olan ilişkiden çıkarılan en önemli sonuç ise Hz. Peygamber'in onlarla yapılmış olan anlaşmayı son ana kadar koruma niyetinde olduğu ve savaştan kaçındığıdır. Nitekim makalede verilen birbirinden bağımsız üç örnekte de görüldüğü üzere anlaşmayı bozan taraf Yahudiler olmuştur. Bir kez anlaşma bozulunca onlara karşı katı muamele sergilenmiş; yurtlarından sürülüp ölüme mahkûm edilmek suretiyle Müslümanlar güçlerini göstermişlerdir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İslam Tarihi, Müslümanlar, Yahudiler, Hz. Muhammed, Medine Sözleşmesi

## Introduction

The arrival of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)<sup>[1]</sup> in Medina was well celebrated by the people of Medina. The Arabs in Medina understood and acknowledged divinity and his prophethood because they mingled with the Jews who professed their faith to Prophet Musa (AS). The Jews had also reminded them regarding the coming of a prophet and messenger.<sup>[2]</sup> Ibn Ishaq narrates the conversation between the Prophet and some Jews before the Hijrah. According to the narration, the Jews were curious about his prophecy and asked some key things that they already knew by means of Tawrāt. They asked firstly about spirit, and Prophet Muhammad answered them as soon as a revelation came about it. Their other question was about Tawrāt, and in the answer, he had implied the lack of this book compared to the knowledge of Allah.<sup>[3]</sup> After such conversations, the Jews had some clue for the authenticity of prophethood as they were informed about an expected prophet. However, most of them were unwilling to accept this new Prophet because he was not among the Jews.

The migration of Prophet Muhammad and the Muhajirun had changed the composition of residents in Medina. The composition of residents in Medina had become three large clusters. The immigrant Arabs from Mecca (the Muhajirun), the Arabs from Medina (the Helpers or Ansar), and the Jews.<sup>[4]</sup> Before the arrival of the Prophet in Medina, he had planned and formed the Medina Charter to ensure the unity between the Muhajirun and Ansar<sup>[5]</sup>, as well as all the communities in Medina. This Medina Charter must be adhered to by all the people of Medina, including the Jews. The Jews were the majority of the community during the early era of Prophet Muhammad in Medina.

Some of the Jews anticipated the arrival of Prophet Muhammad and recognized him as the awaited one. They accepted the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad and joined him as followers. However, most Jews who origin from Medina did not join the community. They did not consider him a prophet of

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- [1] Peace and blessings of Allah be upon Him, Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam (SAW), for the rest of the article wherever His name comes.
- [2] Embong Zaleha et al., "Analysis of Ethnic Relations in the Medina Charter", *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 10/10 (2020), 24; Embong Zaleha, "Conflict Management in the Constitution of Medina: An Analysis", *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 8/12 (2018), 400.
- [3] Muhammad b. Ishāk b. Yasār, *Siyar Ibn Ishāq*, trans. Muhammed Hamidullah (İstanbul: Düşün Yayıncılık, 2012), 268-269. Unfortunately Ibn Ishāq does not give any further detail which reflects Muslim-Jews relationship. Hamidullah emphasizes that the Sirah literature is not helpful to understand the policy of the Prophet against the Jews. Muhammed Hamidullah, *İslam Peygamberi* (İstanbul: Beyan Yayınları, 2013), 462.
- [4] Zaleha et al., "Analysis of Ethnic Relations in the Medina Charter"; Zaleha, "Conflict Management in the Constitution of Medina: An Analysis", 25.
- [5] Al-Jawhary Rohaily, *Muhammad Rasul Terakhir*, ed. Mohd Nor Masniza (Batu Caves, Selangor, Malaysia: Must Read Sdn. Bhd., 2020), 189.

God even though they heard the stories about some other Jews who did believe in his prophetic status. These were the major of the Jews, and it seems to reflect the historical reality.<sup>[6]</sup>

As the denial of most of the Jews towards the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad, this study is conducted to find out the treatment of the Prophet towards the Jewish in Medina.

### A. The Jewish in Medina

During the Era of Prophet Muhammad in Medina, Banū Qaynuqa', Banū Qurayza, and Banū Nadir were the three main tribes of Jewish. Banū Qaynuqa' was an ally of the Khazraj Tribe living in Yathrib, while Banū Qurayza and Banū Nadir were the allies of Aws Tribe, and they were living out of Yathrib. These three main tribes had been one of the reasons for the disputes between the Banū Aws and the Banū Khazraj, as they were the ones that incited both the Arab tribes in Medina into war since long before.<sup>[7]</sup>

The Hijra of the Prophet Muhammad and the Muhajirun awaken the Arab Tribes in Medina on the Jewish domination. This domination was cultural and social as well as economic. Even though Medinans use Arabic in their daily life, the names of some places in Medina were in Hebrew.<sup>[8]</sup> On the other hand, they had economic domination because of their wealth.<sup>[9]</sup> The arrival of Prophet Muhammad and the Muhajirun had helped them in escaping from the Jewish hegemony. Meanwhile, the advent of Prophet Muhammad dismayed the Jewish as they felt his arrival as a catastrophe and a threat to their current position. Therefore, they disliked and hostiles Islam but never had enough courage to show their true colours until the upcoming days.<sup>[10]</sup>

### 1. The Treaty: A Desire or a Necessity?

A treaty was prescribed in Medina to create a peaceful relationship as the Medina community consisted of a plural society.<sup>[11]</sup> Hence, the Medina Charter (or Constitution of Medina)<sup>[12]</sup> was enacted to ensure that the relations among

[6] Reuven Firestone, "Muhammad, the Jews, and the Composition of the Qur'an: Sacred History and Counter-History", *Religions* 10/63 (2019), 4.

[7] Hamidullah, *Islam Peygamberi*, 475.

[8] Nuh Arslantaş, "Hz. Peygamber'in Çağdaş Yahudilerin Sosyo-kültürel Hayatlarına Dair Bazı Tespitler", *İSTEM* 11(2008), 20.

[9] Mark R. Cohen, Islamic Policy toward Jews from the Prophet Muhammad to the Pact of 'Umar, Meddeb, Abdelwahab, and Benjamin Stora, (eds.) *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations: From the origins to the present day* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 59.

[10] Rohaily, *Muhammad Rasul Terakhir*, 184.

[11] Zaleha, "Conflict Management in the Constitution of Medina: An Analysis", 401.

[12] See Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia, "Constitution of Medina", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (Accessed 4 December 2021).

the community were well organized as well as to restructure the political and social system of Medina. It contained 47 Clauses and was divided into two parts. The first part constituted Clause 1 to Clause 23, related to the Muhajirun and Ansar relations, while the second part, which constituted from Clause 24 to Clause 47 concerned with the rights and obligations of the Jews. The first part was completed before the Battle of Badr, while the second was subsequently completed after the Battle of Badr.<sup>[13]</sup> In this Constitution, Muhajirun and Ansar articles were satisfactory for their Arab tribe understanding because of emphasizing the Muslim brotherhood. On the other hand, Jews were counted only as allied with Muslims in accordance with their conception for a treaty. There are some discussions about the content of the charter and the reasons of Jews for having a treaty with Muslims.<sup>[14]</sup> It seems that the Jews did not have a desire to make an agreement with Muslims, but it was a necessity for them. Although their unwillingness and “conditional yes” to the treaty, they were regarded as in the one community with Muslims as having equal rights.

Clause 25 in the Medina Charter mentioned, *“And the Jews (Banū Awf) shall be considered as one community (Ummah) along with the believers –for the Jews their religion, and for the Muslims, theirs, be one client or patron. He, however, who is guilty of oppression or breach of treaty, shall suffer the resultant trouble as also his family, but no one besides.”* It was also mentioned one by one in Clause 25 to Clause 34 on the position of the Jewish Tribes being one Ummah together with the Muslims.<sup>[15]</sup>

Some other passages mentioned on the Jews in the Medina Charter were:

- i. Whoever among the Jews embraced Islam, and they will receive aid and defense as long as they were no longer together with them, collaborating and doing cruel things.
- ii. The Jews can collaborate with the Muslims in certain things, even though they remain anti-religion.
- iii. The Jews and the Muslims must agree as long as they do not battle.
- iv. This ruling cannot be amended; whoever is free to come in and out to live in Medina, except those who did cruel things and committed sins. Indeed, Allah is with those who did good and pious, as well as Prophet Muhammad.

[13] Zaleha et al., “Analysis of Ethnic Relations in the Medina Charter”, 26.

[14] Hüseyin Yılmaz, “Medine Sözleşmesi Bağlamında Birlikte Yaşama Kültürü”, *Cumhuriyet İlahiyat Dergisi* 25 (2021), 239-258. Mustafa Yayla, “Islam and Tolerance: A Need for a Contemporary Madinah Constitution”, *Journal of Human Sciences* 13 (2016), 2431-2440.

[15] Zaleha, “Conflict Management in the Constitution of Medina: An Analysis”, 403.

As it was mentioned before, the Jews were the majority in Medina during that time. Despite secretly harboring hostilities towards Islam, they did not express any enmity yet. Hence, Prophet Muhammad immediately agreed with them, ensuring peace, not hostile or expelling them.<sup>[16]</sup>

The Jews were recognized as citizens per the Medina Charter as long as they contributed to their responsibilities.<sup>[17]</sup> The concept of Ummah was implemented in the Medina Charter, which resulted in the formation of the love and justice relationship among the society. This situation proved that Prophet Muhammad practiced the principles of tolerance, love, respect, justice, and responsibilities. However, the three main Jews Tribes, Banū Qaynuqa', Banū Nadir, and Banū Qurayza, breached out their treaty and thus were expelled from Medina.

## 2. The Breaking out the Treaty

Banū Qaynuqa' was the first amongst the three Jewish Tribes expelled from Medina because of their betrayal.<sup>[18]</sup> The expulsion of Banū Qaynuqa' happened after the Battle of Badr. Two factors are narrated that led to them breaking out of the treaty. The first factor was the dissatisfaction with the victory of the Muslims in the Battle of Badr. Their discontent and hatred were shown when Prophet Muhammad told them, *"O the tribes of Jewish, fear the wrath of Allah as what happened to the Quraish. (Come and) embrace Islam as you know that I am the Prophet sent to you as stated in your book and Allah's promise to you."* As they heard the speech of Prophet Muhammad, they replied arrogantly, *"O Muhammad, do not be proud of your victory killing the Quraish (as they) are not well in the battle. If you are brave enough, face us (and) you will know that we are the people that you have not ever met yet."* The second factor was when a Jewish man had made fun of a Muslim woman and tied her garment. When the Muslim woman got up from her seat, her back was exposed. Therefore, the Jewish laughed at her. The Muslim woman shouted for help. One Muslim man across quickly came. Due to his anger as the honor of Islam had been insulted, he killed the Jewish. As the Jewish friends saw the incident, they attacked the Muslim man and killed him. Therefore, the conflict between the Muslims and the Jewish occurred. Banū Qaynuqa' had violated the peace treaty in the Constitution of Medina.<sup>[19]</sup>

[16] Rohaily, *Muhammad Rasul Terakhir*, 190-192.

[17] Ahmad Ibrahim - Dzafir El-Qasimy, *Piagam Madinah: Pandangan Dan Ulasan* (Kuala Lumpur: Gelanggang Kreatif, 1985); Zaleha, "Conflict Management in the Constitution of Medina: An Analysis", 403-404.

[18] Ibn Jarir al-Tabarī, *Ta'riḫ al-Tabarī*, trans. Cemalettin Saylık (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 2019), 2/464.

[19] Hamidullah, *İslam Peygamberi*, 166.

Banū Nadir was the second of the Jewish Tribe to breach out their treaty. This event occurred in the 4th year of Hijrah. As the Battle of Uhud ended, they exposed their courage to betray the Muslims. Banū Nadir secretly conspired with the Mushriks of Mecca to defeat the Muslims even to the plan of killing Prophet Muhammad after the event of al-Raji' and the Well of Ma'unah that many of Muslims had been martyred.<sup>[20]</sup>

As per the constitution of Medina, the Jewish must pay the ransom. Prophet Muhammad and his sahāba met them in collecting the ransom for the two men from Banū Kilab who were killed by Amr b. Umayya al-Damri. While accumulating the ransom from the Jews, Prophet Muhammad was requested to wait outside of their house. Meanwhile, the Jews had planned to crush a big rock on the head of the Prophet. Amr b. Jihash was the one who was preparing for this assassination.<sup>[21]</sup> Sallam bin Mishkam, one Jewish, advised them to cancel this plan as it was a betrayal of the treaty between them and Prophet Muhammad. However, they were determined to continue their evil plot. Jibril met Prophet Muhammad and told him about the Jews' plan. Prophet Muhammad quickly left to Medina and notified his sahāba about the Jews' scheme.<sup>[22]</sup>

Banū Qurayza, the last Jewish Tribe in Medina to breach out their treaty. During the preparation of The Battle of Khandaq (Ghazwah of Khandaq; means ditch, trench, or moat), the leader of Banū Nadir, Huyay b. Akhtab met Ka'ab bin Asad, the leader of Banū Qurayza. He suggested they breach their treaty with Prophet Muhammad. Ka'ab initially refused and expressed his loyalty to Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims, but Huyay urged him to the point that Ka'ab prepared to breach out their treaty and had conspired with Quraish. They gathered and promised to beat Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims together. Prophet Muhammad received the news of their betrayal; thus, he urged Sa'd b. Mu'adh to investigate the truth of this news. He told Sa'd to use figurative language during the conversation until he knew the truth. As the betrayal of Banū Qurayza was confirmed, Sa'd met Rasulullah. He welcomed him with Takbir and his speech, "O Muslims, be happy with the help of Allah and the promise of victory." As the Muslims already know about the betrayal of Banū Qurayza, the Munāfiqūn spread doubts among Muslims and frightened them with the news that the enemies would come from every corner. One of them said, "Muhammad promised us before that we will be consuming the wealth of Kisra and Qaisar, but now even to defecate, we do not feel safe."<sup>[23]</sup>

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[20] Rohaily, *Muhammad Rasul Terakhir*, 259-260.

[21] Tabarī, *Ta'rikh al-Tabarī*, 2/529.

[22] Tabarī, *Ta'rikh al-Tabarī*, 2/531.

[23] Tabarī, *Ta'rikh al-Tabarī*, 2/547 ff.

The Muslims won the Battle of Khandaq without going through any battle. Nu'aym b. Mas'ūd, a former Mushrik who had a good relationship with Quraish and the Jews, embraced Islam. He offered himself to Prophet Muhammad, and he gave him the task to break the enemies' forces. As the news of Nu'aym b. Mas'ūd becomes a Muslim was not well-known yet, he met Banū Qurayza and suggested them not to start the war before they were guaranteed by 70 leaders of Quraish as a bet so that the Quraish would not leave them in Medina to face the Muslims after the war, which Banū Qurayza agreed. Next, Nu'aym b. Mas'ūd went to meet the leaders of Quraish and told them that Banū Qurayza repented their actions and secretly made alliances with Prophet Muhammad to kidnap the leaders of Quraish and Ghatfan to be killed. Therefore, when Banū Qurayza met the Quraish to ask a few of their leaders for the bet, the Quraish did not send anyone of them.<sup>[24]</sup>

## B. The Expulsion of the Jewish

As stated earlier, Banū Qaynuqa' was expelled from Medina due to the two factors of them breaking out the treaty in the Constitution of Medina. Prophet Muhammad had surrounded their village for 15 days from Shawwal to the early of Dhulkaedah on the second year of Hijrah. After being surrounded for so long, the Jewish were fear and depressed. Finally, they surrendered and were ready to accept the decision of Prophet Muhammad.<sup>[25]</sup>

Prophet Muhammad urged for their men to be tied and killed. When the Muslims almost did, Abdallah b. Ubayy b. Salūl<sup>[26]</sup>, one of the allies of Banū Qaynuqa' with the Khazraj Tribes before, begged for the apology from Prophet Muhammad. He forgave and released them with a condition, which they needed to leave Medina and abandon all their belongings. Tabarī gives detail about this ask for the mercy of Abdallah b. Ubayy b. Salūl.<sup>[27]</sup> According to him, Abdallah asked for mercy for the Jews, describing them as his mawālī<sup>[28]</sup>, and he was not kind to the Prophet in this request.

Allah had stated in the Quran,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضُهُمْ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ  
مِّنْكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

[24] Tabarī, *Ta'rikh al-Tabarī*, 2/552 ff.

[25] Tabarī, *Ta'rikh al-Tabarī*, 2/363 ff.

[26] One of the leaders of Medina. See Watt, W. Montgomery, "Abd Allāh b. Ubayy", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, (Accessed 3 October 2021).

[27] Tabarī, *Ta'rikh al-Tabarī*, 2/464–465.

[28] Arabic word which is rooted mawlā means being connected with someone or something. See Wensinck, A. J. and Crone, P., "Mawlā", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, (Accessed 3 October 2021).

*“O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.”* (Surah al-Maidah, verse 51)

As mentioned earlier in the above subtopic, Banū Nadir was the second of the Jewish Tribes to breach out their treaty and the second of the Jewish Tribes expelled from Medina. After sending a treatment by the Mushriks of Mecca to the Ibn Ubayy and some of the pagans in Medina as well as Banū Nadir Jews, they started to think about the betrayal to the Muslims. Upon receiving the news on the Jews’ plan by Jibril<sup>[29]</sup>, Prophet Muhammad quickly left to Medina and told his saḥāba about the Jews’ scheme. He sent his people to meet Banū Nadir and strictly told them, “Leave Medina as you should for the aggression you have committed. I will give you ten days. Anyone (of you) I see after those periods will be beheaded.”

Banū Nadir realized they had already breached their treaty, and there were no other ways except to leave Medina in 10 days. However, Ibn Ubayy sent his people to persuade Banū Nadir not to give up and persevered in their fort. He promised that 2000 supporters would join the defences and promised to live and die together with Banū Nadir. The support from Abdullah b. Ubayy restored their confidence to challenge Prophet Muhammad. Huyay b. Akhtab, the leader of Banū Nadir, chose to defend their village and prepared to oppose Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims. Upon receiving this feedback, Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims started preparing a battle against Banū Nadir. They went to the village of Banū Nadir and surrounded them. As Banū Nadir saw the Muslims, they hid in their fort. They throw stones and spears from their fort. Their palm dates grove became their fortress.<sup>[30]</sup>

Prophet Muhammad commanded the grove to be cut down to demonstrate Muslim’s determination. Banū Nadir shouted for Prophet’s action as they said it was Prophet Muhammad who forbids the act of damaging and condemning the perpetrators. Allah defend His Messenger as stated in the Quran,

مَا قَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ لَبَنَةٍ أَوْ نَضِيبٍ أَوْ أَصُولٍهَا فَبِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلِيُخْزِيَ الْفَاسِقِينَ

*“Whatever you have cut down of [their] palm trees or left standing on their trunks - it was by permission of Allah, and so He would disgrace the defiantly disobedient.”* (Surah al-Hashr, verse 5)

[29] Zuhri narrated that a Jewish women informed Muslims. This means not all the Jews came together to break the treaty. Some of them still on the side of Prophet and the Muslims. See, Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri, *al-Maghazī*, trans. Mehmet Nur Akdoğan (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 2016), 61-62.

[30] Tabarī, *Ta’rikh al-Tabarī*, 2/528 ff.

Banū Nadir, however, was not assisted by the other Jewish Tribes as well as by the Mushriks who had promised all lies. After being surrounded for 15 nights, Allah placed the fears in their heart. They sent their people to meet Rasullullah, surrendered, and prepared to leave Medina. The prophet accepted their request with conditions.<sup>[31]</sup>

The last Jewish Tribe expelled from Medina was Banū Qurayza. The battle with Qurayza occurred after the Battle of Khandaq. Upon the return of Prophet Muhammad from the Battle of Khandaq, Jibril told him to go towards Banū Qurayza by pointing to their village. This was stated in a hadith<sup>[32]</sup>,

عن عائشة رضي الله عنها، قالت: لما رجع النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم من الخندق، ووضع السلاح واغتسل، أتاه جبريل عليه السلام، فقال: « قد وضعت السلاح؛ والله ما وضعناه، فاخرج إليهم قال: فإلى أين؟ قال: ها هنا، وأشار إلى بني قريظة، فخرج النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم إليهم ”

*Aisha RA narrated,*

*When Prophet returned from Khandaq and laid down his armours and took a bath, Jibril AS came and said, “You have laid down your armours? By Allah, we have not laid them down yet. So set out for them.” The Prophet said, “To where?” Jibril said, “Towards this side,” while pointing towards Banū Qurayza.” So the Prophet went out towards them.*

(Sahih al-Bukhari, no 4117)

Prophet Muhammad urged towards the village of Banū Qurayza. As soon as their arrival, the Muslims surrounded them for 25 nights. Allah placed the fear into the hearts of the Jewish until they surrendered. Ibn Hisham stated that as they saw Prophet Muhammad stand there and did not let them release, Ka’ab bin Asad, the leader of Banū Qurayza, suggested three options to his people by saying:

- i. *“We follow this man (Muhammad) and agree with him. By Allah, it is clear for us that he is the Prophet, His apostle, as (we) can see that in our book and our children and wife will safe.” His followers answered, “We will not leave the Tawrāt.”*

[31] Tabarī narrates this part from Ibn Ishaq. The fear in their hearts obviously was the turning point and shows the help of Allah for the Muslims. Otherwise, it is also given in the Qur’an they had strong castles and could withstand more than fifteen days. Tabarī, *Ta’rikh al-Tabarī*, 2/531–532. They must leave Medina, together with their family and belongings just as a load of their camels and without bringing any weapons. They accepted for the sake of their lives and their family. Before leaving Medina, they destroyed their houses, took the windows and the doors together. They also bring a big amount of gold and silver, drums, and flutes together with 600 camels.

[32] Muhammad bin Ismail Al-Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Beirut, Lubnan: Dar Tawq al-Najah, no date), 5/111.

- ii. *"If so, let us kill our children and wife and face Muhammad and his saḥāba with (our) swords. If we win, we can marry and have kids again."* His followers replied, *"What is their fault for us to kill them?"*
- iii. *"You rejected this option too. Then tonight is Saturday night. Muhammad and his saḥāba must not expect us to do anything. Let us ambush them."* They said, *"Do we need to ruin our Holy Saturday just as whence the people before we had cursed to be the apes?"*

Ka'ab was in a dilemma. Finally, they let the decision to Prophet Muhammad. As Banū Qurayza was the ally of Aws Tribe, Prophet Muhammad passed the decision to be made by Sa'd bin Mu'adh, one of the leaders from Aws Tribe who was still injured due to an arrow at Khandaq. Sa'd come and decided that those involved in battling the Muslims must be killed, and their family would be enslaved.<sup>[33]</sup> Prophet Muhammad was pleased with the decision made by Sa'd as he mentioned that the decision was made as per the law of Allah. As his wound worsened, Sa'd passed away due to blood loss. (Banū Qurayza was then ordered to leave their fort. Their men were killed, including Huyay bin Akhtab who incited Banū Qurayza to breach their treaty. The women and their kids were enslaved. The booties were 1500 swords, 300 armors, 2000 arrows, and 500 shields. As Banū Qurayza had expelled, all the Jewish Tribes left the Medina. There were no more threats and conspiracies from them.<sup>[34]</sup>)

### C. The Policy against Jews: Between Kindness and Force

During the early Era of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina, most of the community are Jews. Jews started to express their hostility towards Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims after the arrival of Prophet Muhammad due to them being spiteful with the advent of Islam and apostleship of Prophet Muhammad.

The Jews began spreading false information (rumors) about Prophet Muhammad and Islam to prevent this religion from spreading and people's faith towards Islam. Allah mentioned in the Quran,

بِئْسَمَا اشْتَرَوْا بِهِ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أَنْ يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بَغْيًا أَنْ يَنْزِلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ  
 مِنْ عِبَادِهِ فَبَاءُوا بِغَضَبٍ عَلَى غَضَبٍ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ

*"How wretched is that for which they sold themselves - that they would disbelieve in what Allah has revealed through [their] outrage that Allah would send down His favour upon whom He wills from among His servants. So they returned having [earned] wrath upon wrath. And for the disbelievers is a humiliating punishment."* (Surah al-Baqarah, verse 90)

[33] Rohaily, *Muhammad Rasul Terakhir*, 275.

[34] Tabarī, *Ta'rikh al-Tabarī*, 2/557 ff.

Jews are known for their hostility towards Islam. However, there are some Jews who embraced Islam. One of them is Abdallah b. Salam, or his other name, al-Husayn b. Salam. He was one of the leaders of Banū Qaynuqa'. He had embraced Islam after listening to the recitation of al-Quran. He even invited all his family to embrace Islam. The other Jews were resented his action.<sup>[35]</sup>

The Jews continued with their rude actions and impolite ethics towards Prophet Muhammad, as mentioned in a hadith<sup>[36]</sup>,

أَنَّ عَائِشَةَ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا - قَالَتْ دَخَلَ رَهْطٌ مِنَ الْيَهُودِ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالُوا السَّامَ عَلَيْكَ. فَفَهَّمْتُهَا فَقُلْتُ عَلَيْكُمُ السَّامُ وَاللَّعْنَةُ. فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ « مَهْلًا يَا عَائِشَةُ، فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الرِّفْقَ فِي الْأَمْرِ كُلِّهِ ». فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَوْلَمْ تَسْمَعْ مَا قَالُوا قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ « فَقَدْ قُلْتُ وَعَلَيْكُمْ ».

*Aisha RA narrated,*

*A group of Jews came to Rasulallah and said, "Al-Samu 'Alaika " (Death be on you), and I understood it and said to them, "Alaykum Al-Samu wa al-la'na (Death and curse be on you)." Prophet Muhammad said, "Be calm! O Aisha, Indeed, Allah loves that one should be kind and lenient in all matters." I said. "O Rasulallah! Haven't you heard what they have said?" Prophet Muhammad said, "I have (already) said (to them), 'Wa alaykum (upon you).'" (Sahih al-Bukhari, 6256)*

Then, Allah stated in the Qur'an,

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَا يَكُونُ مِنْ نَجْوَى ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَا آذَنِي مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْثَرَ إِلَّا هُوَ مَعَهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كَانُوا ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

*"Have you not considered that Allah knows what is in the heavens and what is on the earth? There is no private conversation three but that He is the fourth of them, nor are there five but that He is the sixth of them - and no less than that and no more except that He is with them [in knowledge] wherever they are. Then He will inform them of what they did on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed, Allah, He knows all things." (Surah al-Mujadalah, verse 7)*

This evidence mentioned in the Quran and stated in the Hadith proved great kindness practiced by Prophet Muhammad in treating the enemies of Islam, particularly the Jews in Medina. This is reasoned by his actions towards the Jews, even though they showed impolite ethics and were rude towards him.

[35] Rohaily, *Muhammad Rasul Terakhir*, 196-197.

[36] Al-Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 8/57.

The implementation of the Medina Charter effectively managed the conflict in a plural society, as the community of Medina during the Era of Prophet Muhammad consists of the diversity of races, religions, and tribes, including Aws and Khazraj, Christians and Jews, and others. It is a model that meets the needs of a plural society, which is manifested from the Qur'an and practiced in real life. The community of Medina developed by Prophet as one Ummah produced tolerance, respect, and responsibilities towards maintaining the harmony of Medina among each other<sup>[37]</sup>. However, the Jews violated their treaty and actively collaborated with Quraysh in destructing the Muslims instead of helping the Muslims. They revived their old bloody feud, which had been resolved by Prophet to mess up the Muslims, and they even attempted to assassinate Prophet Muhammad several times. The Jews had proven that they could not be trusted or relied on in any situation, as proved by these actions and behavior.<sup>[38]</sup>

Despite expressing kindness towards the Jews at first, Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims in Medina faced the Jews and expelled them from the city. This situation occurred as a result of the Jews' breach of their treaty. Banū Qaynuqa' was the first one who breached the treaty, and they followed by Banū Nadir and Banū Qurayza. As the treaty was breached, the Jews Tribes were commanded to leave Medina. Although some Jews were expelled to Khaybar and had settled down here, Muslims captured this place too in a few years. Prophet Muhammad made another treaty which was based on land tax with the Jews who were engaged in farming. They could stay on these territories by paying half of their profit to the Muslims until they were expelled to an external zone of the Arabian Peninsula by Caliph Omar.<sup>[39]</sup>

## Conclusion

Prophet Muhammad implemented the Medina Charter by referring to the Quran and practicing it in real life to develop harmony among the communities of Medina, including the Muslims and non-Muslims, who among them are the Jews and Christians. Prophet Muhammad had always treated all the communities of Medina very well, including the Jews. He shows kindness and persuades people to be lenient, do good deeds, and spread the good to others. This was shown when he told Aisha (RA) to be kind towards the Jews even when the Jews were rude towards them. However, Prophet Muhammad

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[37] Zaleha et al., "Analysis of Ethnic Relations in the Medina Charter", 26.

[38] S. M. Yunus Gilani - Islam Tazul, "Religious Conflict in Early Islam: A Study of Its Causes from Qur'an Sunnah Perspective", *International Journal of Quranic Research* 6/2 (2014), 17.

[39] Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, critical ed. Muhammad Abdulhafiz al-Manāsir (Amman: Dār Kunūz al-Ma'rifa al-Ilmiyyah, 2009), 233-234.

had also demonstrated his firm side when the Jews breached their treaty. He commanded them to leave Medina as soon as possible if they wanted to be safe.

The acts of Prophet Muhammad have taught the Muslims to follow the principles of Islam, guided by the Quran and his Sunnah. This includes the relationship that should be done between Muslims and non-Muslims. The Muslims must practice kindness all the time, being lenient and spreading good deeds to others. On the other hand, the Muslims must also be firm in certain situations to show pride.

This article expresses the attitude of Prophet Muhammad to the Jewish communities in Medina as well as the relationship between two communities; the Muslims and the Jews. This relationship has several perspectives, such as religious, social, and economical. Jews were non-Muslims, but they were regarded as *ahl al-Kitab*, which means they were heralded by a prophet and a testament. Obviously, they were close to Islam compared to pagans. However, they showed misbehavior to the Muslims even though they agreed in the very first days of the Medina life of the Prophet. If they had not violated the agreement, Muslims would have tolerated them and continued their lives in Medina. However, we know that they were the party who broke the deal, as is expressed clearly in Qur'an. In addition to this, we have significant details of their betrayal as all the sources agree on it. Muslims changed their attitude after these betray. Thus, their punishment had been given in different ways; as expel or execution.

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