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Problems of Studying Minorities in the Middle East

P R Kumaraswamy *

The Middle East like many other regions of the world, is heterogeneous and comprises of numerous ethnic, national, religious and linguistic societies, groups and sects.[1] Much of the troubles facing this region revolve around the treatment or mistreatment of its minority population. Most of the post-Ottoman states are yet to evolve a national identity that would encompass and reflect their multi-ethnic social composition.

At the same time, discussions on minorities have often been controversial and politically loaded. States by their very nature are sensitive towards any outside criticisms over their treatment of their minority population and consider it to be a sovereign and inviolable subject. Simultaneously, they do not hesitate to use the treatment of minorities by their adversaries as a useful foreign policy instrument.[2] Great powers and regional players have used the plights of Tibetans in China, Muslims in India or Christians in Indonesia to promote their narrow national agenda. The Middle East is no exception to this prevailing trend and discussions on the treatment of Middle Eastern minorities such as Egyptian Copts, Israeli Arabs, Turkish Kurds or Iranian Bahais have been highly politicized.

It is undeniable that substantial gaps exist between the official positions vis-à-vis minorities and the perceptions of the latter concerning their status. Whenever a society is threatened by an external enemy or an internal crisis over its identity,

minorities -- the distinct other-- become the prime and immediate target. Even liberal democratic societies in the West are not immune to xenophobic tendencies against minorities. Though the Middle East is not an exception to this general situation, the minorities of this region suffer from a number of additional predicaments. A modest attempt is made here to delineate some of the problems in studying minorities of the Middle East.

Who are the Minorities?

Islam, the pre-dominant religion of the Middle East, classifies society into two distinct religious entities, namely, Muslims and non-Muslims. The latter is further divided into *Dhimmi* and non-believers. People with revealed sacred scriptures or *People of the Book*, such as Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians come under the category of *Dhimmi* and are offered certain conditional protection under Islamic rule.[3] This limited protection is not available to other religious groups not recognized by Islam. This categorization governed and dominated the lives of non-Muslims in the ever-expanding Islamic rule in the Middle East and Europe.

This classical approach, however, suffers from a number of inbuilt problems. The excessive and even exclusive focus on the *Dhimmi* has proved to be detrimental to the understanding of other smaller groups living under Islamic rule. The *Dhimmi* framework could not explain the emergence of heterodox Islamic sects and the awakening on ethno-national consciousness. The broad two-tier approach towards non-Muslims is becoming increasingly inadequate and insufficient to explain and understand the contemporary Middle East.

The region is home to numerous groups that are distinct from the majority because of their religious believes, ethnic roots, cultural identities and territorial nationalisms [**SEE TABLE**]. Writing at the end of the World War II, Albert Hourani

defined minorities in the Arab world as those communities that differ from the *Sunni Arab majority* in their religious affiliation and/or in their ethno-cultural identity.[4] Hourani used this broad definition to identify minorities in Egypt, Mandate of Palestine, Transjordan, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq.

If one applies this definition to the entire region, it is possible to identify the following *religious minorities* in the Middle East.

- Groups that are ethnically and culturally *Arab but are not Sunni Muslims*: Various Christian denominations including Copts, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Maronites, Latins and Protestants; heterodox Islamic sects such as Shias, Alawis, Druze

Similarly *ethno-cultural minorities* would be

- Non-Arabs Sunni Muslim groups such as Kurds, Circassians and Turkomans
- Non-Arab and non-Muslim groups such as Jews, Armenians, Assyrians, Christian tribes and animists in southern Sudan

This *non-Arab-and-non-Sunni formulation* is dated and insufficient to portray and explain certain unique situations such as Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain or Jordan.

Therefore, it is possible to classify the contemporary Middle Eastern minorities into five broad categories, namely, religious minorities, ethno-national minorities, heterodox Islamic minorities, political minorities and majoritarian minorities.

- *Religious minorities*: Jews, Christian dominations such as Copts, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Maronites, Latins and Protestants, Israeli Arabs
- *Ethnic/national minorities*: Kurds, Druze, Armenians, Circassians, Assyrians, animists of southern Sudan, Berbers, Turkomans, Israeli Arabs

- *Heterodox Islamic minorities*: Alawis, Druze, Ahmadias, Ismailis, Bahais
- *Political minorities*: Shias in Saudi Arabia, Sunnis in Iran
- *Majoritarian minorities*: Shias in Iraq and Bahrain, Sunnis in Syria and Palestinians in Jordan

While the first four categories are obvious, the last one needs a brief explanation. Even though demographically these groups are in a majority, they are marginalized politically and do not wield power commensurate to their numerical strength. In Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan and Syria, the identified groups form the absolute majority or constitute the largest group yet they suffer from all the negative consequences of a minority. In other words, the largest ethnic or religious groups are treated and marginalized as minorities.

This classification is neither complete nor watertight. Some of these groups spillover into more than one category. Druze for example are ethnic as well as heterodox minorities and similarly, Israeli Arabs are both religious as well as ethno-national minorities. In case of Iran, for example, converts do not enjoy certain privileges bestowed upon the officially recognized Christian minorities.

The difficulty of categorization however, is only a part of the problem facing the Middle Eastern minorities.

Denial of Existence:

The most severe and immediate problem facing the minorities is the denial of their existence which operates at two levels. At the theological level, the denial is limited to the discriminatory part. There is a powerful trend among contemporary Islamic scholars to defend and portray the glorious and benevolent treatment of minorities living under Islamic rule. In their assessment, the *Dhimmi* was and continues to be the ideal framework for minorities. “If Muslim residents in non-

Muslim countries receive", one commentator observed, "the same treatment as *Dhimmi* in the Islamic regime, they would be more than satisfied; they would be grateful."[5] Presenting an unblemished picture, it is often argue that under Islam 'there was no inequality', Islam 'treated all people as equal', 'Muslims and non-Muslims lived together as equals' or Islam 'secured complete equality for the non-Muslims.'[6]

It is not uncommon to find claims such as, "All humans have the right to live in the Islamic state, and with the Muslims they *enjoy equality, justice and liberties* that crystallize the reality of human brotherhood."[7] Writing in 1949, Sayyed Qutb who had significant influence upon Islamic revivalism in the Middle East categorically maintained: "Islam grants non-Muslims *complete political and religious freedom* and protection to practice their religious duties."[8] Moreover, Islamic scholars tend to focus on the teachings of Prophet Mohammed and Quran towards minorities but rarely address the practices of Islamic rulers towards them.

Other narratives, especially by the *Dhimmi* however, present a different picture. It is essential to distinguish *tolerance* from *equality*. Religious tolerance, personal protection and conditional communal security of the *Dhimmi* in return for their allegiance to the Islamic rule are very different from equality. Bernard Lewis aptly summed up this fundamental dilemma facing Islam:

> it is only very recently that some defenders of Islam began to asset that their society in the past accorded equal status to non-Muslims. No such claim is made by spokesman for resurgent Islam, and historically there is no doubt that they are right. Traditional Islamic societies neither accorded such equality nor pretended that they were so doing. Indeed, in the old order, this would have been regarded not as a merit but as a dereliction of duty. *How could one*

> *accord the same treatment to those who follow the true faith and those who willfully reject it? This would be a theological as well as a logical absurdity*.[9]

In other words, if the believer and *Dhimmi* are equal, where is the need to separate them politically as well as socially?

The denial strategy also operates at the national-political level. Troubles over the presence and mistreatment of minorities compel a number of Middle Eastern states to adopt an official policy of denial. Despite the evidence to the contrary or because of it, states seek to dismiss the problem by pretending that minorities do not exist. This denial strategy is not confined to official circles but is also percolating.

For long, the Turkish authorities refused to recognize the Kurds as a distinct people and proscribed the usage of Kurdish language. Officially portrayed as 'mountain Turks', the Kurds have languished as 'non-people.' The May 1971 statement of a Turkish official epitomized this posture: "We accept no other nation as living in Turkey, only the Turks. As we see it, there is only one national in Turkey: the Turkish nation. All citizens living in different parts of the country are content to be Turkish."[10]

The Coptic question, likewise, largely remains a religious-cultural question in Egypt and any treatment of Copts as minorities evokes strong resentment and disapproval. The efforts of renowned sociologist Saad Eddin Ibrahim to highlight the plight of the Copts got him into trouble not only with the Egyptian authorities but also with Egyptian intellectuals. If the Egyptian authorities throttled his attempts to host a conference on minorities, veteran journalist Muhammed Heikal dismissed Copts as a distinct group but portrayed them as "a part of Egypt's unbreakable fabric."[11]

For long Israel also adopted such an attitude towards the Palestinians. As the Palestinians managed to secure international recognition and acceptance, Prime Minister Golda Meir dismissed Palestinians as people and maintained that there was no such thing as 'Palestinian people.' Similarly, the refusal of the Arab and Islamic countries to recognize Jews not only as a religious community but also as a national group inhibits their ability to reconcile with the Jewish State.

Such attitudes of denial prevents any serious discussion in the Middle East concerning its minorities.

Territorial Nationalism:

The emergence of modern Middle East from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire has indeed worked against the minorities. Not only the territorial boundaries of most of the post-Ottoman states were artificial, they also undermined regional homogeneity. Thus, either different ethnic/national groups were clubbed together or same group was dispersed into different states. Furthermore, driven by the need to evolve new national identities based on territorial loyalties, most of them sought an all encompassing national identity. Some even aspired for supra-national identities such as Arab nationalism and pan-Islamism. Besides, the The formation of new states reflected the then prevailing imperial interests and the emergence of new political entities was often accompanied by a leadership imposed from outside. As a result, the evolution of a national identity became problematic as most of the newly carved entities not only most lacked ethnic/national cohesion but also some of the significant attributes of a nation. The parceling of erstwhile *umma* into different smaller political units raised questions over the legitimacy of the state as well as its ruler.

Likewise, Israel's self-portrayal as the national home of the Jewish people prevents the Arab minority from identifying itself with the core Israeli identity and its

explicit Jewish symbols such as flag, national anthem, etc., The formation of a non-religious Israeli territorial identity, would be a pre-condition for the Arab-Jewish equality and peace between two distinct nations living inside Israel.

The heterogeneous nature of the states, need to evolve new national identity based on territorial boundaries created by imperialism, absence of political legitimacy of some of the rulers and emerging authoritarian tendencies proved to be detrimental to the minorities. The new states strived for artificial homogeneity and viewed any other identities as divisive, counter-productive, externally sponsored or unpatriotic. Internal diversity came to be viewed as a divisive factor and a 'potential challenge' to the unity of the nation.[12] As a result, unlike other citizens, minorities have to suffer *not only as individuals but also as communities*.

Conflicting Estimates:

The minorities suffer from the absence of reliable and periodic population statistics. The figures are either not available or are highly disputed. Without such figures, it is difficult to understand the composition of the minority population and evaluate its political status, social distribution or economic powers.

In Lebanon, one of the most heterogeneous countries of the Middle East, the minority sees census as a political move to unseat it from power. When the last national census was held in 1932, the Christians constituted about 53 percent of the population, while the Muslims and Druze made up 43 percent. This 1932 position formed the basis of the 1943 power sharing arrangement evolved at the time of Lebanese independence.[13] Over the years, the population has shifted in favor of the Muslims but the Maronite Christians are not prepared to relinquish their stronghold over the state and hence have vehemently opposed any new census. Even the Taif Agreement of 1989 which brought an end to the civil war, stipulated equal Christian

and Muslim representation in the national assembly. This parity comes against the background of growing population of the Muslims who currently constitute more than 60 percent of the Lebanese population.

Other minorities are less fortunate. While the official estimates tend to present a lower figure, the concerned minority group often exaggerates its strength. Such a discrepancy highlights the discards that exist between official circles and targeted minority groups. The presence of substantial, often overwhelming, overseas migrant population poses unique problems for the Arab states along the Persian Gulf and despite periodic census, the population distribution often remains sketchy.

The problems of Shias in Saudi Arabia are rather acute, as the government tends to underestimate their strength. Their predominant presence in the oil rich Eastern Province makes them a political issue. Seen as a security as well as ideological threat, the regime is sensitive about any discussion on the Shias. This apprehension reflects in the conflicting estimates about the Shias; while conservative estimates put the figure at 275,000, Shias claim as much as "2.5 million, thus representing 12.5-25 percent of the total population."[14] The same trend can be noticed among the Copts. While the official estimates put the Copts at about 3.3 million or 5.6 percent of the total Egyptian population, Copts suggest a much higher figure of 11 million or 18 percent of the total population.[15] Likewise, one can notice population discrepancies among Kurds and estimates range from seven to 17 million.[16] Their distribution in a number of contiguous states only complicates the picture further.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan faces a different set of problems. Concerns over domestic stability inhibit Jordan from discussing accurate estimates of its citizens of Palestinian origin who are believed to be the majority. For example, in December 2001, Jordanian population is estimate at 5,182,000 and out of this, the

Palestinian Authority lists as much as 2,560,000 as Palestinians.[17] This suggests that Jordanian-Palestinians constitute a majority in Jordan. However, for long a powerful section in Israel argued that Jordan is a Palestinian state without a Palestinian head of state[18] and the Hashemite Kingdom tended to view any suggestion of Palestinian majority as a concerted effort to undermine the Jordanian state and its stability.

External Linkages:

Historically the Middle East has an unenviable record of external interventions on behalf of its minority populations, especially the *Dhimmi*. The most resented and exploitative Capitulatory System primarily began as a concerted European effort to keep its citizens and subjects outside the purview of the Ottoman legal system. In 1535, the French succeeded in gaining exemption for its Christians subjects living in the Ottoman Empire from paying *jizya* or poll tax. This privilege was gradually extended to other European powers and eventually to all non-Muslim subjects employed by European powers. The removal of *Dhimmi* status in Egypt in 1923, likewise, was preceded by the Egyptian recognition of the British 'right' to protect Egyptian minorities.[19]

The *Dhimmi* benefited from such external linkages and succeeded in eventually removing social restrictions that accompanied the protected status. Indeed, the protection and patronage offered by non-Muslim European powers significantly contributed to the political aspirations of some of the Middle Eastern minorities. The European linkage was extremely important for the realization of the Jewish national aspirations in Palestine. The autonomous Mount Lebanon region and the subsequent formation of Maronite-dominated Lebanese state were the result of the linkage forged between a European power and a *Dhimmi* subject of the Ottoman Empire.

Such external linkages which benefitted the *Dhimmi* also played a significant role in the destruction of the Ottoman Empire and the eventual disappearance of the Caliphate. As a result, a number of post-Ottoman states view linkages between Middle Eastern minorities and outside world, especially non-Arab peoples, societies and powers with great distrust, suspicion and even hatred. What is seen as a political assert and leverage for the minorities became a potential threat for the newly born states.

Any attempt of outside, especially European powers, to champion the cause of a minority groups, is strongly resented by Middle Eastern states as well as societies. The continued European political, economic and military interventions in the regional as well as internal developments of a number of post-Ottoman states exasperate the situation. While improving the status of some of the Christian communities, European intervention also made these Christian communities "the objects of Muslim hostility."[20] Such apprehensions often move towards paranoia or xenophobia. There are apprehensions in the Middle East that some of the Christian priests who come and work in the region misuse their privileges. Some even fear that "many priests and missionaries who have come to the Third World from the West have spied for Western governments."[21]

Diaspora

The external linkages are nurtured and facilitated by those Middle Eastern minorities living outside the region. The strong religious-cultural linkages that some of the ethno-religious minorities forge with their respective Diaspora communities pose a different set of problems for the understanding of minorities. The declaration of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people and its desire to encourage, facilitate and absorb Jews from various Arab and Islamic countries intensified a sense of

apprehension. The Law of Return which guarantees right of immigration to Jews in the Diaspora transformed Jews from a religious people into a national community. The erstwhile *Dhimmi* thus became a political, ideological and military adversary and the distinction between Jews and Israelis is blurred, if not eliminated.

One can notice similar but less dramatic attitude towards other minority Diaspora communities. The emigration of ethno-national communities to the West and their growing political influences in their newly found homes have become a source of suspicion. The Coptic Diaspora, for example, is active in highlighting the plight of Copts in Egypt and often results in subtle American intervention. Due to their activism, the discriminations faced by the Copts receive widespread attention in US media as well as official circles.[22]

At the same time, as highlighted by the Kurdish example, the dispersal of minorities across and beyond national boundaries also works against the minorities. The Kurdish territorial continuity is accompanied by their dispersal in Turkey, Iran and Iraq and these post-Ottoman political boundaries prevent the Kurds from evolving a comprehensive plan and cohesive strategy for autonomy. On the contrary, the national interests considerations enable the contiguous states to use and exploit the Kurdish problem. Despite competing and conflicting political calculations, all the three countries are weary of Kurdish autonomy. Iran reversed its prolonged policy of supporting the Iraqi Kurds following the 1975 Algiers accord. Likewise, American support for the Kurds desire to overthrow Saddam Hussein was hampered by its desire to accommodate Turkish concerns over a separate Kurdistan.

Autonomous Tendencies:

The external linkages, which often proved to be detrimental to the majority communities come against the background of autonomous or secessionist tendencies

among certain influential groups. Demands for special protection and privileges articulated and accomplished during the era of capitulation spurred a feeling of autonomy from the central Islamic authority. This has been more prevalent among certain Christian sects and along with the mainstream "Christian subordination in the Middle East", observed Walid Phares, "lies a minor tradition of Christian enclaves."[23] He identifies five such aspirations: Maronites in Lebanon, Assyrians of the Fertile Crescent's highland, Nubians of the Nile Valley, Copts of Egypt and Syriacs of northern Syria. The Maronites provide the most successful autonomous attempt when at the beginning of the twentieth century they managed to carve out a larger Lebanese state. They others were less successful.[24]

At the same time, the failure of these Christian sects to achieve autonomy could be attributed to a number of impediments faced by these communities. Unlike the Maronites, other groups did not enjoy strong external patronage. Their meager presence in the region and their lack of concentration in specific geographic areas precluded any bid for secession. Moreover, Coptic nationalist were unable to secure strong support from fellow members who preferred to join the Muslims in championing Egyptian nationalism and hence their idea of a Coptic state in Upper Egypt was largely rejected by the majority of their Coptic brethren. At the same time, the success of the Jewish nationalism in Palestine and the limited success of the Maronites highlight an ominous trend for the governments of the region about autonomy and secession.

Security Concerns

The restrictions and discriminations vis-à-vis minorities are often presented and justified through a security prism. Israel is a classic example for this security-oriented approach towards minorities. Discussions on Israeli Arabs are often

accompanied by a caveat of them posing a security threat to Israel being a Jewish national home. Israel has approached its Arab citizens through a security not democratic framework. The suspicion towards its Arab population and a policy of separation prevented Israel from evolving an integrative national identity. Arab demands for equality and non-discrimination are often seen as an indirect attempt to nullify the state-building exercise. As a result, national debates such as territorial concession vis-à-vis neighboring Arab states are often accompanied by a demand for restrictions upon if not exclusion of, its Arab citizens.[25] Likewise, the impending Palestinian statehood has led to new debates about Palestinian irredentism and its implications for Israel as well as Jordan.

This security-related argument, however, is not unique to the Jewish state. Traditional as well contemporary restrictions upon *Dhimmi* are often justified within the ambit of security. Islamic states, for example, provide religious freedom and worship to *Dhimmi* so long as the latter "do not abuse such privileges and threaten the security and integrity of the state."[26] Another Islamic scholar went a step further and argued: "individual's freedom of worship and thought should be controlled by society's beliefs and practices."[27]

Such a broad canvas enables a number of Middle Eastern states to adopt and institutionalize religious as well as political discrimination vis-à-vis the minority population. The growing Islamization process only complicated the situation further. Under the realm of social welfare, a number of Arab and Islamic countries had constitutionally excluded the minorities from holding senior positions in the government.

Arab-Israeli conflict:

The prolonged Arab-Israeli conflict cloud and even poison any meaningful debate on Middle Eastern minorities. Driven by strong national interest calculations, Israel sought to identify, patronize and even exploit internal divisions and diversities among the non-Jewish communities in the Middle East. At the domestic level, this policy led to the identification and nurturing of various non-Sunni Muslim minority communities within Israel such as, Christian Arabs, Druze, Circassian, Bedouins, and Bahais. Such a deliberate divide-and-rule policy has come under severe criticisms and is seen as a calculated attempt to undermine the position of Arabs both inside and Israel.[28]

Moreover, since the pre-state days, Israel looked to the non-Muslim Maronites as a potential ally in the Middle East and a commentary in *Middle East Quarterly* aptly summed up the Israeli approach to the Middle Eastern minorities:

> Itself a Jewish enclave in a predominantly Muslim region, Israel at first encouraged the idea of a mosaic of mini-states that would undermine the Arab hegemony over non-Arabs. Well before the establishment of the state, Jewish Agency representatives contacted Maronites, Kurds and other minority groups in the Levant. During the first Sudan civil war, Israeli assistance was evident among the southern guerrilla forces. In northern Iraq, Israeli intelligence agents supported the Kurds. But it was in Lebanon that the Jewish State played the card of a Christian enclave to its fullest…

Indeed, he went on to suggest that following the June war of 1967, "a group of radical Coptic activists offered to help establish a Coptic state in the occupied Sinai Peninsula."[29] Thus, the willingness of some of the minority groups to seek political

support from Israel not only worked against their interests but also made them suspicious vis-à-vis their Arab governments and majority populations.

At the same time, the Arab-Israeli conflict provides a convenient cover and excuse for the countries of the region to dismiss any discussion on minorities as an Israeli or Zionist conspiracy. The willingness of Israeli scholars to discuss a taboo subject like the treatment of minorities in Arab and Islamic countries are dismissed as another manifestation of Israel's hegemonic designs. The interests of these countries concerning the status and welfare of Arab minorities in Israel are complimented by a conspicuous silence vis-à-vis minorities in their respective countries.

Conclusion

None of the Middle Eastern states is homogeneous and each state has a number of ethnic and/or religious minorities. Most of these minorities pre-date state formation in the Middle East. In their desire to evolve national identities based on arbitrarily drawn territorial boundaries, most of the states tended to ignore, belittle or undermine the existence of ethnic, national and religious minorities. Prolonged external intervention on behalf of minorities and resultant dismantlement of the Ottoman Empire considerably hardened the region against minority rights. Demands for autonomy and external linkages often provide a rouse to dismiss concerns over discrimination and inequality suffered by the minorities. The prolonged Arab-Israeli conflict has only muddled the debate.

As a result, a number of states tend to deny the existence of minorities or pretend that they are not discriminated. At the same time, most of the conflicts in the Middle East are closely linked to ethnic or religious minorities and their vulnerable status in society. Instead of perceiving the issue as a conspiracy against national unity and integrity, the states of the region could view the minorities as an integral part of

the Middle Eastern mosaic and try and evolve a new national identity that would accept, recognize and incorporate various ethnic, national, religious as well as linguistic minorities.

* Associate Professor, Centre for West Asian and African Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

Minorities in Middle East

	Ethnic-Majority	Ethnic-Minority	Religious-Majority	Religious-Minority
Algeria	Arab	Berber, others	Sunni Muslims	Christian, Jews
Bahrain	Arabs	South Asian, Persian, other	Shia Muslims	Sunni Muslim
Egypt	Arabs	Greeks, Italian Armenian, Nubian	Sunni Muslim	Copts, other Christians
Iran	Persian	Azeris, Gilaki &Mazandarani, Kurds, Arabs, Balouchis, Turkmen, Lurs, others	Shia Muslim	Sunni Muslim, Jews, Christian, Zoroastrian, Bahai, others
Iraq	Arabs	Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians and others	Shia Muslim	Sunni Muslim, Christian, Yazidi, others
Israel	Jews	Arabs, Druze and others	Jews	Muslims, Christians, Druze and others
Jordan	Arabs	Circassians, Armenians	Sunni Muslim	Greek Orthodox and other Christians
Kuwait	Kuwaiti	Other Arabs, south Asian, Persians and others	Sunni Muslim	Shia Muslim, Christian, Parsis, Hindus and others
Lebanon	Arabs	Armenians, others	Shia Muslims	Sunni Muslim, Druze, Alawi, Maronites Greek orthodox, Greek catholic, Armenians (orthodox and catholic) others
Libya	Arabs	Berbers, Greek, Maltese, Italians, Turks	Sunni Muslim	Christians and others
Morocco	Arabs	Berbers, European	Sunni Muslim	Christians, Jews, others
Oman	Arabs	Africans,	Ibadi Muslim	Sunni Muslim,

		Persians, south Asian		Shia Muslim, Hindus
Palestine	-	-	Sunni Muslim	Christians
Qatar	Arabs	South Asian, Persian,	Sunni Muslim	Shia Muslim, others
Saudi Arabia	Arabs	Afro-Arabs, others	Sunni Muslim	Shia Muslim, Christians
Syria	Arabs	Kurds, Armenian, others	Sunni Muslim	Alawi, Druze, Shia Muslim, Christians (Greek orthodox, Gregorian, Armenian, Catholics, Syrian orthodox, Greek Catholics)
Tunisia	Arabs	Berbers, European	Sunni Muslim	Christian, others
Turkey	Turkish	Kurds	Sunni Muslim	Alevis (Shia Muslim) Christians Jews
UAE	South Asian,	Arabs, Persians, Emiri, others	Sunni Muslim	Shia Muslim, others
Yemen	Arabs	Afro-Arabs	Sunni Muslim	Shia Zaydi Muslim, Shia Ismaili Muslim, others
Sudan	Nilotics	Arabs	Sunni Muslim	Indigenous beliefs, Christians [Coptic, Greek orthodox, catholic, protestant]

Source: Complied from *Middle East Military Balance 2001-2002*, (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 2002)

NOTES

[1] The term Middle East is applied in a larger context and denotes all countries ranging from Morocco on the West to Iran in the East. Hence it includes Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the Palestinian Authority, Tunisia, Turkey, UAE and Yemen.

PT[2] TPAnnual *Report on International Religious Freedom* published by the US State Department highlight this basic dichotomy. While presenting a survey of international tolerance towards religious minorities and groups, the report is silent on the practices in the US. If the same yardsticks were applied, the US would find itself in an unenviable position, especially in the wake of its post-September 11 treatment of ethnic minorities from the Middle East.

[3] For a discussion on *Dhimmi* see, C L Cahen, "*Dhimmi*", in Bernard Lewis, et al (ed), *Encyclopedia of Islam*, (E.J. Brill), vol.2, pp.227-30

[4] Albert H Hourani, *Minorities in the Arab World*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), p.1

[5] Muhammad Hamidullah, "Relations of Muslims with non-Muslims", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol.7, no.1, January 1986, p.9

[6] Huseyin Gazi Yurdaydin, "Non-Muslims in Muslim societies: the historical view", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol.3, 1981, pp.183-8.

[7] Sayed Khatab, "Citizenship rights of non-Muslims in the Islamic state of *Hakimiyya* espoused by Sayyed Qutb", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol.13, no.2, 2002, p.163. Emphasis added.

[8] Quoted in ibid., p.167. Emphasis added.

[9] Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987, pb), p.4 Emphasis added.

[10] Quoted in Edwar Chaszar, "International protection of minorities in the Middle East: A status report", *Middle East Review*, vol.18, no.3, Spring 1986, p.41

[11] For a detailed discussion of the controversy see, Ami Ayalon, "Egypt's Coptic Pandora's box", in Ofra Bengio and Gabriel Ben-Dor, (ed), *Minorities and the State in the Arab World*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner, 1999), pp.63-7. See also, Karim al-Gawhary, "Copts in the 'Egyptian fabric'", *Middle East Report*, vol.26, no.3, July-September 1996, p.21.

PT[12] TPPhilippe Fargues, "Demographic Islamization: Non-Muslims in Muslim countries", *SAIS Review*, vol.21, no.2, Summer-Fall 2001, p.109

[13] For an interesting assessment on the early phase of the implementation this confessional arrangement see, Ralph E Crow, "Religious sectarianism in the Lebanese political system", *The Journal of Politics*, vol.24, no.3, August 1962, pp.489-520

[14] Madawi al-Rasheed, "The Shia of Saudi Arabia: A minority in research of cultural authenticity." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.25, no.1, May 1998, p.132. See also, *The Economist*, 17 June 2002

[15] Ayalon, n.11, p.53; Fargues, n.12, p.109. See also, *The Economist*, 11 March 2001, p.51; David Zeidan, "The Copts- equal, protected or persecuted? The impact of Islamization on Muslim-Christian relations in modern Egypt", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol.10, no.1, 1999, pp.53-4; and J D Pennington, "The Copts in modern Egypt", *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.18, no.2, April 1982, pp.158-9

[16] Chaszar, n.10, p.40

[17] *Statistical Abstracts of Palestine, 2001*, (Ramallah: Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics, 2001), p.35

[18] Raphael Israeli, "Is Jordan Palestine?", in Efraim Karsh and P R Kumaraswamy, (ed), *Israel, the Hashemites and the Palestinians: The Fateful Triangle*, (London: Frank Cass, 2003), pp.49-66

[19] Saad Eddin Ibhrahim, et al *The Copts of Egypt*, (London: Minority Rights Group International, 1996), p.12

[20] Zeidan, n.15, p.55

[21] Fazlur Rahman, "Non-Muslim minorities in an Islamic state", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol.7, no.1, January 1986, p.13

[22] Ibhrahim, n.19. See also, Scott Kent Brown II, "The Coptic church in Egypt: A comment on protecting religious minorities from nonstate discrimination", *Brigham Young University Law Review*, vol.2000, no.3, September 2000, pp.1049-98.

[23] Walid Phares, "Are Christian enclaves the solution?", *Middle East Quarterly*, vol.8, no.1, Winter 2001, p.61

PT[24] TPIbid., p.63. Phares also refers to "the Assyro-Chaldean polity within the Kurdish autonomous zone" as an example of the successful Christian secession. This however is a post-Kuwait accomplishment and it future remains uncertain.

[25] P R Kumaraswamy, "'Special majority' for Golan: Democratic dilemma of the Rabin-Peres governments, (1992-1996), *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.22, no.2, Spring 1999, pp.30-56.

[26] Ahmad Yousif, "Islam, minorities and religious freedom: A challenge to modern theory of pluralism", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol.20, no.1, 2000, pp.34

[27] AbdulHamid A AbuSulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, (Herndon, Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1994) second edition, p.90.

[28] For example see, Lisa Hajjar, "Israel's interventions among the Druze", *Middle East Report*, vol.26, no.3, July-September 1996, p.2.

[29] Phares, n.23, pp.63 and 67