**First Civil War of Islam and Rise of Extremism**

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In 657 AD, on the banks of the Euphrates River in Siffin, the current Syrian town of Raqqa, two Muslim armies confronted each other. One was led by Caliph Ali ibn Abi Talib and the other by Mu&#39;awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan, the governor of Syria, appointed under the reign of Caliph Usman bin Affan. The conflict began when Usman ibn Affan, the third caliph, was assassinated at the end of a siege upon his house by Muslim insurgents. Ali ibn Abi Talib was chosen as the fourth caliph by the
Muslim after the assassination of Usman. Muawiyah from the same tribe as Usman blamed Ali for failing to punish those involved in the killing.

The two armies encamped in Siffin for almost three months, before launching into a real war. The battle lasted three days, the number of people killed fell, and Ali&#39;s army seemed to win, when Muawiyah played one final ploy, on the advice of, Amr ibn al-Aaṣ he ordered his soldiers to put pages of the Quran on their lances and asked Ali to allow the dispute to be resolved by reference to Quranic rules. When the army of Muawiyah raised copies of the holy Koran on their lances and demanded to go to the Quran, regardless of Ali&#39;s opposition, most of his army asked for arbitration.

The Syrians chose Amr bin al-Aas as their leader, to speak on behalf of Muawiyah. Ali Ibn Abi Talib wanted Malik al-Ashtar or Abdullah bin Abbas to be appointed to arbitrate for the people of Kufa, but the Qurra (&quot;Quran readers&quot;) protested strongly. They appointed Abu Musa al-Ashari as their arbiter, who they had appointed as governor of Kufa during the Caliphate of Usman Ibn Affan after the deposition of the governor of Usman. Ali found it appropriate to accept this choice to ward off
the bloody strife in his army.

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Amr bin al-Aas convinced Abu Musa al-Ashari to consider it necessary to deprive Ali and Muawiya of the caliphate and give the Muslims the right to elect the caliph. As the time for announcing the verdict approached, the people belonging to both parties assembled. Amr bin al-Aas asked Abu Musa to take the initiative to announce the decision he was promoting. Thus Abu Musa al-Ashari announced the removal of Imam Ali from power, but when it came to Amr bin al-Aas, instead of announcing the removal of Mu&#39;awiya from power, he confirmed the dismissal of Ali by Abu Musa, and appointed Mu&#39;awiya as the Caliph.

Ali refused to accept the verdict of him stepping down and for an election to be held. Most vociferous opponents of Ali in his camp were the very same people who had forced Ali to appoint their arbitrator, the Qurra. It is generally believed that the emergence of Kharijites can be traced back to the arbitration event. They declared Ali and Muawiyah to be infidels and vowed to fight against both. Later, in 661, Ali Ibn Abi Talib was stabbed on 19 Ramadan while praying in the Kufa Grand Mosque. The Kharijite, Abd-al-Rahman ibn Muljim, attacked him during the Fajr prayer, inflicting death upon him with a poisoned sword. Muawiyah then gained recognition as a caliph through his Syrian supporters and his ally Amr bin al-Aas, who conquered Egypt from the governor of Ali Ibn Abi Talib in 658.

The Kharijite movement was known for its members&#39; fanaticism and staunch opposition to the Muslim ruling establishment, which later developed into an anarchist movement that plagued successive governments as late as that of Harun al-Rashid who died fighting them. Kharijites considered the caliphate of Abu Bakr and Umar ibn Khattab to be legitimate and had a high regard for them, but believed that Usman had deviated from the path of justice and truth in the latter half of his caliphate and hence was liable to be killed or displaced. They also believed that Ali Ibn Abi Talib committed a grave sin when he agreed to the arbitration with Mu&#39;awiyah, although he too was legitimate caliph before the arbitration.

Kharijites also asserted that faith without accompanying deeds is useless and anyone who goes against injunctions of religion is an apostate and a polytheist and must repent to re-enter the religion else he would be subject to death. They thus deemed Ali Ibn Abi Talib and Mu&#39;awiya and all those who agreed to the arbitration as disbelievers, as they had breached the rules of the Quran. Many Kharijites groups believed that the act of sinning is analogous to kufr and that every grave sinner was
regarded as a kafir unless they repent.

The Kharijites uprising against the Abbasid Caliphate between 866 and 896, centred in the districts of Mosul and in the province of al-Jazira, the rebellion lasted for approximately thirty years. They were eventually defeated in 896 after the caliph al-Mu&#39;tadid undertook several campaigns to re-establish Caliphate authority in the area.

After almost 1400 years city of Raqqa and Mosul faced the similar situation. In the course of the Syrian civil war, the city of Raqqa was captured by the Syrian opposition and later by the Islamic State in 2013.Islamic State took complete control of Raqqa by 13 January 2014 and declared it its capital. Islamic State proceeded to execute Alawites and suspected supporters of Bashar al-Assad in the city and destroyed the city&#39;s Shia mosques and Christian churches such as the Armenian Catholic Church of the Martyrs, which was then converted into an Islamic State police headquarters and an Islamic centre. Most non-Sunni religious structures in the city were destroyed, most notably the Shia Uwais al-Qarni Mosque. The Christian population of Raqqa, estimated at 10% of the total population prior to the outbreak of the civil war, largely fled the city.

At the start of the 21st century, Mosul and its surroundings had an ethnically and religiously diverse population; the majority of Mosul&#39;s population were Arabs, with Assyrians, Armenians, Turkmens, Kurds, Yazidis, in addition to other, smaller ethnic minorities. From a religious standpoint, the dominant Sunni Islam was the largest religion.

On June 10, 2014, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant took control of Mosul, following the escape of Iraqi troops. Once the home of at least 70,000 Assyrian Christians, perhaps none remained in Mosul after the takeover of Islamic State; all those who remained had to pay a tax to remain Christians and lived under the constant threat of violence. The indigenous Assyrians of ancient Mesopotamian ancestry, who have a history in the region dating back over 5,000 years, suffered their Christian churches and monasteries being vandalized and burned down, their ancient Assyrian heritage sites dating back to the Iron Age destroyed, and their homes and possessions seized by Islamic State.

The Islamic State is not a new movement or sect; it dates back to the first civil war of Islam. The Kharijites were the first cult in Islamic history which seceded from the Muslim community and were known for their practice of ex-communication and attacking other Muslims who did not accept their interpretation of the Quran. Since that time, the Kharijis have become synonymous with extremism.