Spektrum Iran | Vol. 39 | Issue 1 | Winter & Spring 2026 | pp. 191-223 |

Original Research Paper

Human dignity and humanitarian law in Islam

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Received: Nov., 1, 2025 **Accepted:** Dec. 16, 2025

Abstract

Human dignity is a foundational principle of Islamic thought and provides a normative framework for humanitarian principles during armed conflicts. Although international humanitarian law has received extensive scholarly attention, the relationship between human dignity and humanitarian norms within the Islamic intellectual tradition has not yet been systematically examined. This study investigates the conceptual foundations of human dignity, identifies the principal humanitarian norms found in Islamic sources, and analyzes the relationship between these two domains. Employing qualitative content analysis and historical analysis, the study draws upon the Qur'an, Prophetic Sunnah, Nahj al-Balāghah, and authenticated historical sources to examine both the normative and historical dimensions of humanitarian conduct. The concepts and analytical categories were inductively derived from these texts and used to explain broader conceptual relationships. The findings demonstrate that human dignity in Islam is an inherent and universal attribute shared by all human beings, regardless of religion, ethnicity, or political affiliation. This conception serves as the normative foundation for humanitarian principles governing armed conflicts. Accordingly, prioritizing peaceful settlement, refraining from initiating hostilities, protecting civilians, respecting the wounded, prisoners of war, and those hors de combat, prohibiting treachery and mutilation, and maintaining negotiations throughout hostilities are not merely ethical recommendations but practical manifestations of human dignity. The study further argues that these principles apply equally to domestic and international armed conflicts and are not limited to relations among Muslims. It concludes that human dignity functions as the philosophical and normative foundation of humanitarian law in Islam and provides a valuable basis for constructive dialogue with contemporary international humanitarian law.

Keywords: Human dignity, international humanitarian law, Islamic thought, Qur'an, Prophetic Sunnah, Imam Ali

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How to Cite this Article:
Alikhani, A., & Shahalizade, M. (2026). Human dignity and humanitarian law in Islam. *Spektrum Iran*, 39(1), 191-223.
https://doi.org/10.22034/spektrum.2026.590465.1070

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اشپکتروم ایران | دوره ۳۹ | شماره ۱ | زمستان و بهار ۲۰۲۶ | صص ۲۲۳-۱۹۱ |

مقاله پژوهشی

کرامت انسانی و حقوق بشردوستانه در اسلام

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دریافت: ۱۴۰۴/۰۸/۱۰؛ **پذیرش:** ۱۴۰۴/۰۹/۲۵

چکیده:

کرامت انسانی یکی از اصول بنیادین اندیشه اسلامی است و چارچوبی هنجاری برای اصول بشردوستانه در دوران مخاصمات مسلحانه فراهم می‌کند. اگرچه حقوق بشردوستانه بین‌المللی توجه گسترده‌ای را در پژوهش‌های علمی به خود اختصاص داده است، رابطه میان کرامت انسانی و هنجارهای بشردوستانه در سنت فکری اسلامی تاکنون به‌صورت نظام‌مند بررسی نشده است. این پژوهش به بررسی مبانی مفهومی کرامت انسانی، شناسایی مهم‌ترین هنجارهای بشردوستانه در منابع اسلامی و تحلیل رابطه متقابل میان آن‌ها می‌پردازد. این مطالعه با بهره‌گیری از روش تحلیل محتوای کیفی و تحلیل تاریخی، قرآن کریم، سنت نبوی، نهج‌البلاغه و منابع تاریخی معتبر را برای بررسی ابعاد هنجاری و تاریخی رفتار بشردوستانه مورد مطالعه قرار می‌دهد. مفاهیم و مقوله‌های تحلیلی به‌صورت استقرایی از متون استخراج شده و برای تبیین روابط مفهومی گسترده‌تر مورد استفاده قرار گرفته‌اند. یافته‌های پژوهش نشان می‌دهد که کرامت انسانی در اسلام، ویژگی ذاتی و جهان‌شمولی است که همه انسان‌ها، صرف‌نظر از دین، قومیت یا وابستگی سیاسی، از آن برخوردارند. این برداشت از کرامت، مبنای هنجاری اصول بشردوستانه حاکم بر مخاصمات مسلحانه را تشکیل می‌دهد. بر این اساس، اولویت دادن به حل‌وفصل مسالمت‌آمیز، خودداری از آغاز درگیری، حمایت از غیرنظامیان، احترام به مجروحان، اسیران جنگی و افراد خارج از وضعیت مشارکت در مخاصمه، ممنوعیت خیانت و مثله‌کردن، و تداوم مذاکرات در طول جنگ، نه صرفاً توصیه‌هایی اخلاقی، بلکه نمودهای عملی کرامت انسانی به شمار می‌آیند. این پژوهش همچنین استدلال می‌کند که این اصول به‌طور یکسان در مخاصمات مسلحانه داخلی و بین‌المللی کاربرد دارند و محدود به روابط میان مسلمانان نیستند. در نهایت، پژوهش نتیجه می‌گیرد که کرامت انسانی در اسلام، بنیاد فلسفی و هنجاری حقوق بشردوستانه را تشکیل می‌دهد و می‌تواند مبنایی ارزشمند برای گفت‌وگوی سازنده با حقوق بشردوستانه بین‌المللی معاصر فراهم آورد.

واژه‌های کلیدی: کرامت انسانی، حقوق بشردوستانه بین‌المللی، اسلام، قرآن، سنت نبوی، امام علی (ع)

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https://doi.org/10.22034/spektrum.2026.590465.1070

Spektrum Iran | Jg. 39 | Nr. 1 | Winter und Frühling-2026 | S. 191-223 |

Original-Forschungsarbeit

Menschenwürde und humanitäres Recht im islamischen Denken

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Eingegangen: 1. Nov. 2025 **Angenommen:** 16. Dez. 2025

Zusammenfassung:

Die Menschenwürde bildet ein grundlegendes Prinzip des islamischen Denkens und einen normativen Rahmen für humanitäre Prinzipien in bewaffneten Konflikten. Obwohl das internationale humanitäre Völkerrecht umfassend erforscht wurde, ist die Verbindung zwischen Menschenwürde und humanitären Normen innerhalb der islamischen Denktradition bislang nicht systematisch untersucht worden. Diese Studie analysiert die konzeptionellen Grundlagen der Menschenwürde, identifiziert zentrale humanitäre Normen in islamischen Quellen und untersucht ihre gegenseitige Beziehung. Methodisch verwendet die Untersuchung eine qualitative Inhaltsanalyse und eine historische Analyse des Korans, der prophetischen Sunnah, Nahdsch al-Balāghas sowie ausgewählter historischer Quellen, um normative und historische Dimensionen humanitären Handelns herauszuarbeiten. Die analytischen Kategorien wurden induktiv aus den untersuchten Texten entwickelt. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass Menschenwürde im Islam als inhärente und universelle Eigenschaft aller Menschen verstanden wird, unabhängig von Religion, Ethnie oder politischer Zugehörigkeit. Dieses Verständnis bildet die Grundlage für humanitäre Prinzipien wie die Bevorzugung friedlicher Konfliktlösungen, das Verbot der Aggression, den Schutz von Zivilpersonen, die Achtung von Verwundeten, Kriegsgefangenen und Personen außerhalb der Kampfhandlungen (hors de combat) sowie das Verbot von Verrat und Verstümmelung. Diese Prinzipien gelten sowohl für innerstaatliche als auch internationale bewaffnete Konflikte und sind nicht auf Beziehungen zwischen Muslimen beschränkt. Die Studie kommt zu dem Schluss, dass die Menschenwürde im islamischen Denken eine philosophische und normative Grundlage humanitären Rechts darstellt und eine wichtige Grundlage für den Dialog mit dem modernen internationalen humanitären Völkerrecht bietet.

Schlüsselwörter: Menschenwürde, internationales humanitäres Völkerrecht, Islam, Koran, prophetische Sunnah, Imam Ali

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Wie dieser Artikel zu zitieren ist:

Alikhani, A., & Shahalizade, M. (2026). Human dignity and humanitarian law in Islam. *Spektrum Iran*, 39(1), 191-223.

https://doi.org/10.22034/spektrum.2026.590465.1070

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1. Introduction

Although international humanitarian law[1] is a modern legal concept, historical evidence suggests that the underlying principles of both human rights and humanitarian norms in Iran can be traced back to the era of Cyrus the Great. Likewise, from the very emergence of Islam, many of the principles now recognized as international humanitarian law occupied a central place within Islamic teachings. One of the primary foundations of both human rights and humanitarian law is the intrinsic dignity of the human person.

This article examines the concept of human dignity, the principal manifestations and components of humanitarian principles, and the relationship between the two from an Islamic perspective. Given the persistence of violent conflicts in various parts of the world—particularly in regions with predominantly Muslim populations—revisiting this subject may contribute to fostering more humane and ethically grounded approaches to armed conflict. Contemporary scholarship affirms that human dignity serves as the central core of international human rights law, playing a decisive role in promoting justice, ensuring peace, and preventing violations of fundamental human rights (Feiz & Zamani, 2026, p. 2). This recognition has also provided a common basis for judicial interpretation across different legal procedures and international tribunals (Feiz & Zamani, 2026, p. 12).

1. The modern development of international humanitarian law is generally traced to the initiatives of the Swiss businessman *Henry Dunant*, whose book *A Memory of Solferino* inspired the convening of a diplomatic conference in Geneva in 1864. The conference led to the establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), whose mission was to provide impartial assistance to victims of armed conflict regardless of political affiliation, military status, or nationality.

The scope of humanitarian protection was subsequently expanded through the 1899 Hague Convention, extending legal safeguards to naval forces, the wounded and sick, as well as shipwrecked personnel. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the international community adopted the Four Geneva Conventions of 1949, which established comprehensive legal protections concerning: 1) the wounded and sick in armed forces in the field; 2) the wounded, sick, and shipwrecked members of armed forces at sea; 3) prisoners of war; and 4) civilians during times of armed conflict.

Although these conventions did not initially regulate non-international armed conflicts, this gap was addressed in 1977 with the adoption of Additional Protocols I and II to the Geneva Conventions. These protocols sought to strengthen the protection of civilians by, first, providing clearer legal criteria for distinguishing combatants from civilians, and second, extending many of the humanitarian protections recognized in the four Geneva Conventions to certain forms of internal armed conflict.

Taken together, the four Geneva Conventions and their two Additional Protocols comprise approximately six hundred articles that establish the body of rules and legal principles collectively known today as international humanitarian law.

Despite the growing body of literature on international humanitarian law and Islamic jurisprudence, the specific relationship between the concept of human dignity (*karāmah*) and humanitarian norms within the Islamic tradition remains underexplored. While several studies have examined Islamic humanitarian principles (e.g., Mohaqqeq Damad, 2004; Hashmi, 2012; Khadduri, 1955), few have systematically analyzed how the notion of inherent human dignity serves as the normative foundation for these principles. Most existing scholarship either treats human dignity as a separate ethical value or focuses exclusively on the legal aspects of humanitarian rules without exploring their philosophical underpinnings. This study addresses this gap by investigating the conceptual linkage between human dignity and Islamic humanitarian law as a legal system, drawing on primary Islamic sources—the Qur'an, the Prophetic Sunnah, and the practice of Imam Ali—and offering a systematic analysis of how dignity informs humanitarian conduct during armed conflicts.

Accordingly, the central question addressed in this study is: How does Islam conceptualize human dignity and humanitarian principles, and what is the nature of the relationship between them? To answer this question, the article first explores the Islamic understanding of human dignity, drawing primarily on the Qur'an as its principal source. It then identifies and analyzes the humanitarian principles reflected in the formative period of Islam through a historical examination of the practices (*Sunnah*) of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and Imam Ali (peace be upon him). Clarifying these two discussions provides the basis for understanding the relationship between human dignity and humanitarian principles. The final section therefore examines the point at which these two concepts converge, offering a more systematic account of their interrelationship within the Islamic intellectual tradition.

This study is limited to primary Islamic sources—the Qur'an, the Prophetic Sunnah, and the practice of Imam Ali—and does not engage extensively with contemporary Islamic legal debates or comparative analysis with Western humanitarian law. The study also does not examine the practical application of these principles in modern Muslim-majority states or their compatibility with the Geneva Conventions. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the study means that the findings are interpretive and may not capture the full diversity of opinions within Islamic legal schools.

2. Materials and Methods

This study employed two complementary methodological approaches: qualitative content analysis and historical analysis. Qualitative content analysis served as the primary analytical framework, while historical analysis provided the contextual foundation for examining how humanitarian principles were manifested in practice.

The corpus of primary texts was selected purposively, based on both their normative authority and their direct relevance to the research questions. The primary sources included: Qur'anic verses addressing human dignity, armed conflict, justice, mercy, and civilian protection; authenticated Prophetic Sunnah concerning the ethics of warfare; *Nahj al-Balāghah* as the preeminent collection of Imam Ali's sermons, letters, and sayings; and the most authoritative historical sources documenting the conduct of the Prophet Muhammad and Imam Ali during armed hostilities. Secondary scholarly sources were consulted only for contextualization, explanation, and interpretation of these primary materials.

Qualitative content analysis was employed to develop a conceptual understanding of the relationship between human dignity and humanitarian principles through systematic description, interpretation, and classification of textual data. Rather than focusing exclusively on explicit meaning, the analysis sought to uncover both manifest and latent themes embedded within the selected sources. Concepts and analytical categories were derived inductively from the texts and subsequently deployed to illuminate broader conceptual relationships (Khanifar & Moslemi, 2023, pp. 77-94).

The data analysis followed an inductive process. Relevant passages were first identified across the textual corpus and examined through the lens of recurring ethical concepts—such as human dignity, justice, mercy, proportionality, civilian protection, humane treatment of prisoners, and the prohibition of unnecessary harm. These initial analytical observations were then organized into broader conceptual categories, from which an analytical framework explaining the relationship between human dignity and humanitarian law was constructed.

Historical analysis was employed to examine the historical manifestations of humanitarian principles in the conduct, sermons, letters, and political practices of the Prophet Muhammad and Imam Ali during situations of armed conflict. This method reconstructs historical events through critical examination and synthesis of evidence, while remaining attentive to their temporal and contextual settings (Khanifar & Moslemi, 2023, pp. 231-246).

Given that this research draws on both hadith collections and historical reports, particular attention was paid to the authority and reliability of the sources cited. Prophetic Sunnah were selected from well-established and recognized hadith collections within both Sunni and Shi'i traditions, while historical reports were drawn from classical and reputable works of Islamic historiography. Rather than undertaking independent hadith authentication (*rijāl* criticism), the study relied on the evaluations provided by recognized hadith scholars and the general acceptance of these traditions within the Islamic scholarly community. Wherever possible, historical accounts were cross-referenced against multiple independent sources to enhance the credibility and dependability of the analysis.

Drawing on the Qur'an, *Nahj al-Balāghah*, authenticated Prophetic Sunnah, and relevant historical sources, this study integrates its findings through a normative-conceptual interpretation. The sources are not treated merely as historical records; rather, they are interpreted as normative texts articulating ethical and legal principles that govern human conduct during armed conflict. This interpretive stance allows the study to move beyond descriptive historical reconstruction toward a philosophically grounded understanding of the relationship between human dignity and humanitarian norms in Islam.

3. Human Dignity in the Qur'anic Worldview

3.1. Nature of human dignity

Human dignity appears to be a straightforward concept, but this is not entirely the case. It is difficult to formulate a precise and scientific definition of this concept. Such a definition will likely be easier once the various dimensions of the issue have been clarified. Human dignity can

be divided into two broad categories: (1) intrinsic dignity related to this world, and (2) acquired dignity related to the Afterworld.

Intrinsic dignity in this world has been bestowed upon humans by God and is part of their human nature, which cannot be taken away from them as long as they are alive. This intrinsic dignity, as contemporary Islamic scholarship explains, encompasses reason, free will, the divine breath, and the right of choice—qualities shared equally among all humans (Mukhlis & Al-Mesilini, 2026, p. 1). In addition to this intrinsic dignity, Islam also recognizes acquired dignity, which is primarily based on piety and faith (Mukhlis & Al-Mesilini, 2026, p. 1). Such dignity has nothing to do with race, religion, skin color, or gender and belongs to all human beings. Regarding intrinsic dignity in this world, the Almighty God has clearly asserted in the Qur'an that He has given superiority to humans over all other creatures (Qur'an, al-Isrāʾ, 17:70).[1] Other verses of the Qur'an have pointed to this dignity. Breathing God's spirit into the human body (Qur'an, al-Hijr, 15:29),[2] making man God's vicegerent on Earth (Qur'an, al-Baqarah, 2:30),[3] and creating everything that exists on earth for human beings (Qur'an, al-Baqarah, 2:29) [4] all attest to human dignity in this world. Perhaps the most important outcome of that dignity in society is the negation of violence and bloodshed. At the same time, the negation of violence is another reason for respecting human dignity (Qur'an, al-Mā'idah, 5:32).[5] The most important feature of that dignity is that its quality and degree are similar in all human beings because it belongs to all of humanity.

The acquired dignity of the Afterworld emanates from the dignity that human beings acquire in this world and gives them superiority over other human beings. Although the dignity is acquired in this world, it becomes manifest in the Afterworld because no one but the Almighty God can recognize and measure that dignity. Basically, this type of dignity cannot be measured, and the Qur'an stipulates that it can only be measured by

1. ولقد كرّمنا بني آدم و حملناهم في البر و البحر و رزقناهم من الطّيبات و فضّلناهم علي كثير ممن خلقنا تفضيلا

2. و نفخت فيه من روحي. حجر (١٥): ٢٩

3. و اذ قال ربك للملائكة اني جاعل في الارض خليفة

4. خلق لكم ما فيالارض جميعاً

5. من قتل نفساً بغير نفس او فساد فيالارض فكأنما قتل الناس جميعاً

God (Qur'an, al-Hujurāt, 49:13; al-Yaʿqubi, 1968, p. 504). The most important feature of this type of dignity is that its quality and degree differ across individuals, and its degree depends on the knowledge, piety, and status of each person with God.

Since the first type of dignity is shared equally by all of humanity, it cannot be taken as a basis for political or social Privileges and, therefore, serves as a basis for laws. This conception of dignity as an inherent and universal attribute reflects what contemporary scholars describe as the theocentric nature of Islamic human rights, which emphasizes a balance between individual rights and obligations grounded in principles of monotheism, justice, and public welfare (*maslahah*)—in contrast to the anthropocentric Western approach that prioritizes absolute individual freedom (Zulkifli, 2025, p. 1). The second type of dignity does not lead to any kind of superiority for its holder in political and social fields. As Imam Ali (AS) stated, the piety of the faithful does not lead to any superiority or privilege in social and political fields; rather, they will receive their reward from God in the Hereafter (Abelhadid, 1967, p. 37; Al-Reishahri, 2000, pp. 160-167). If obeying divine decrees and piety cause superiority for humanity, only God is able to recognize it, and its results will be seen in the Afterworld, just as the result of disobeying divine decrees and leading a sinful life will be evident in the next world. If the Qur'an has rebuked unbelievers and sinners, it is to distinguish the correct path from the incorrect path and to encourage people to take the correct path. For this reason, sin and disobedience do not interfere with the worldly dignity of humanity. For example, likening unbelievers to animals (Qur'an, Muḥammad, 47:12; al-Aʿrāf, 7:179) aims to show their state in the Afterworld and the punishment that awaits them. However, this does not amount to depriving them of the requirements of human dignity.

Ibn al-Arabi explains the behavior of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who rose to pay homage to the corpse of a Jew. He argues that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) believed that the Jew contained the divine soul (Al-Bukhari, 1999, Vol. 1, p. 310) and that the dignity of the human soul is due to its divine spirit. Therefore, even those who go to Hell do not lose their given dignity, and the Prophet (PBUH) rose to respect the corpse that had been the home of the divine soul. This indicates that all human souls are equal (Ibn al-Arabi, n.d., Vol. 1, pp. 527-528). Ibn al-Arabi drew an analogy between those who are in Hell and people who are suffering in this world

due to the loss of a loved one or their home and concludes that those sufferings have nothing to do with their human dignity. Therefore, if we consider all human souls to be equal, the dignity of a sinner is no different from that of other people. Ibn al-Arabi quotes from the Qushairi treatise that "he who considers his soul to be superior to Pharaoh does not understand a thing" (Al-Qushairi, 1995, p. 70). Repentance, as a major principle in Islam, allows human beings to return to their Creator even when they have sinned because divine favors are always open to humanity. This shows that their human dignity is preserved and they can be restored to their lofty human status.

Considering human dignity as natural makes it a perennial characteristic of all people. Of course, Mohammad Taqi Jafari maintains that if a human being commits a crime of his own free will, his human dignity will decline (Jafari, 1991, pp. 279, 196, 306). Also, Article 1 of the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (1990) affirms that all human beings are equal in terms of basic human dignity without any discrimination, recognizing dignity as a perpetual right for every person (Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, 1990, Art. 1). Mesbah Yazdi also believes that committing sin will diminish human dignity (Misbah Yazdi, 2001, pp. 284-286) and maintains that human dignity is not natural or related to human creation but is acquired, and one of its criteria is submission to the principles of the Islamic system. Therefore, in his opinion, only those who accept the Islamic system can enjoy equal social rights. He believes that being a human being is another condition for enjoying that dignity (Misbah Yazdi, 2001, p. 300).

Despite these differing views, this paper adopts the position that intrinsic dignity is inalienable, as it is rooted in the divine spirit (Qur'an, al-Hijr, 15:29) and the honor bestowed on all humanity (Qur'an, al-Isrāʾ, 17:70). The views of Jafari and Misbah Yazdi pertain to acquired dignity, not intrinsic dignity, which is the foundation of humanitarian law.

3.2. Human dignity; right or virtue?

Building on the inalienable character of intrinsic dignity established above, this section examines its implications for rights and obligations. An important question is whether human dignity is merely a right or a virtue bestowed on humanity by God. The right to exist is one of the most important rights recognized for humans by God. When arguing about the

legality of *qisas* (retributive punishment), it is said that God can retake the right He has given to human beings. Also, freedom, as a right, is limited, and in some instances, people can be stripped of their freedom. However, human dignity is not only a right but is different from the rights that have been bestowed on humanity by God. Human dignity is a right that cannot be taken away from human beings in this world, and even one's body is respected after death. The intrinsic nature of human dignity does not mean that God created humanity and then gave them their dignity; rather, human beings were created dignified. Consequently, stripping them of their dignity would not simply remove an external attribute but would deny a fundamental aspect of their humanity (Nobahar, 2005, p. 620). Javadi Amoli maintains that human dignity is not merely a credit but is a reality, like the nobility of angels and the Qur'an (Javadi Amoli, 1996, pp. 161-162). Therefore, any kind of sin, crime, thought, or conviction cannot deprive a person of his dignity and does not permit others to ignore his dignity. Even if someone has been condemned to death, one may kill him, but one cannot ignore his human dignity.

Therefore, if we considered human dignity to be a virtue, it would be subject to conditions and could decline as a result of those conditions. However, if we considered it to be a right, firstly, it would give rise to obligations, and secondly, it would be related to power and government because it would be a political and social entity. Therefore, the phrase "human dignity is a natural right that cannot be taken away from human beings" leads to three further premises:

1. Human beings should accept the requirements of their own human dignity.

2. Human beings are obliged to respect the human dignity requirements of other human beings.

3. Governments are obliged to respect the human dignity requirements of all people.

What are the requirements of human dignity? This is a detailed discussion that should be deferred, but the following points denote the minimum level of human dignity:

1. **Awareness of human dignity:** Human beings should be aware of the loftiness of their souls and recognize the necessity of protecting their

human dignity. Every person is required to recognize his dignity, and others should help him recognize that dignity. Governments should also take steps in this regard.

2. **Spiritual elevation:** There should be no obstacles on the path of human perfection. Secondly, a suitable foundation should exist for promoting human growth and perfection. The individual, others, and governments should strive in that direction.

3. **Education:** Everyone should be able to take steps to learn sciences at various levels.

4. **Freedom:** Human beings should avail themselves of all necessary freedoms within the framework of the laws and norms of the societies in which they live.

5. **Justice:** The regulations, laws, and systems governing human beings should be fair.

6. **Respect:** No human being should be subjected to insult or disrespect.

7. **Welfare:** All human beings should enjoy the minimum level of material welfare and social status.

Human dignity requires that all human beings, regardless of their religion, race, or place of residence, equally enjoy the above values. The responsibility for this lies with governments.

3.3. Fundaments of Human Dignity

It is difficult to consider fundaments for human dignity. The fundament of human dignity is the lofty being of every human soul. In other words, the dignity belongs to the very being of humans with all their specifications. For a scientific discussion, it is required to analyze this issue more painstakingly. Perhaps, the fundaments of human dignity can be enumerated as follows:

Wisdom: Human wisdom is the first and more basic fundament of his dignity. Many features differentiate human beings from other creatures, but the most important of those features is human wisdom. When interpreting the Quranic verse about God having respected human beings

(Qur'an, al-Isrāʾ, 17:70)[1], some commentators of Quran have opined that the God has respected man by bestowing wisdom on him (Tabatabaei, 1973, p. 156; Al-Qartabi, 1966, p. 294).

Divine aspect of human beings: The second basis for human dignity is the divine spirit blown into him by the Almighty God (Qur'an, al-Hijr, 15:29).[2] Some Muslim scientists believe that humans are a combination of two "material and spiritual," or "worldly and heavenly," or "animal and human" aspects. The material, worldly, and animal dimension of human beings is related to his mundane body while his spiritual dimension is attributed to the Almighty God which also differentiates him from other creatures (al-Farabi, 2003, p. 17; Ikhwan al-Safa, 1991, p. 383). The same divine and spiritual dimension of human beings is considered as the main basis for his dignity. What makes this dimension more important is the ability of man to grow in spiritual and divine dimensions.

Understanding and perception: The third basis for human dignity is language (both in the sense of speech and an orderly system of concepts to make one's ideas heard). No other creature enjoys this advantage. In other words, humanity of human beings is based on the understanding and perception that is special to them and can be studied within frame of a complex combination of concepts, premises, languages and cultures.

The uniform essence of humanity: The fourth basis for human dignity is the "external uniformity of human beings." It does not mean that all human beings are similar in creation, but it means that humanity is like a single body and all human beings are its members and that single and unified body should have outward manifestations. Every "person" is as valuable as other "persons" and other "persons" are as valuable as one "person." The Quranic verse that says killing a single person is like killing everybody (Qur'an, al-Māʾidah, 5:32)[3] points to the same fact. Mohammad Taqi Jafari has discussed that verse saying that it is like a mathematical equation in which one is equal to all and all is equal to one. He maintains that this formula is a supernatural fact not an ordinary legal principle (Jafari, 1991 p. 406).

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1. لقد كرمنا بني آدم
2. و نفخت فيه من روحي
3. من قتل نفساً بغيرنفس او فساد فيالارض فكانَّما قتل الناس جميعاً

4. Humanitarian Principles in the Prophetic Sunnah and the Practice of Imam Ali

What is currently called the humanitarian law and aims at protecting lives, properties and dignity of civilians, the wounded, prisoners of war and those who have not taken part in war, has been a focus of attention for Islam since its advent. Perhaps the most important basis for the humanitarian law in Islam is that if a war should inevitably happen, it should be fair (Qur'an, al-Isrāʾ, 17:33; al-Baqarah, 2:178; al-Baqarah, 2:190).[1] The manners of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) in avoiding war and violence is beyond doubt. The abovementioned hadith pertains to a time that the war is inevitable. Attention to such humanitarian law at the beginning of Islam can be analyzed through three processes and eleven stages. The first process is before establishment of grounds for violence and war. The second process evolves after good grounds are laid for war and violence and the third process covers everything that happens after initiation of an armed conflict. Here, we will briefly explain every one of those processes.

4.1. The process before establishment of grounds for armed conflicts

The most important step to be taken at this stage is to prevent violence and war. Wars usually follow a period of escalation of tensions. The most important task of people and organizations including political players is to prevent war by resorting to any means. The Almighty God orders Muslims to accept peace if their enemy was inclined toward it (Qur'an, al-Anfāl, 8:61).[2] "If your enemy stopped fighting you and proposed peace, in that case, you are not permitted to go on fighting" (Qur'an, al-Nisāʾ, 4:90).[3] The first thing that Imam Ali (AS) did to prevent war was to accept his enemies' requests. The second option was dialogue to reduce tension. When Imam Ali (AS) was caliph, he did not limit political freedoms of his opponents and did not force dignitaries to swear allegiance to him.[4] Even Imam Ali (AS) asked one of them to find somebody to guarantee that he

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1. فلا یُسـرف فی‌القتل. اسـراء (۱۷): ۳۳. / کتب علیکم‌القصـاص ... فمن اعتدی بعد ذلک فله عذاب الیم. بقره (۲): ۱۷۸. / و قاتلوا فی سبیل‌الله الذین یقاتلونکم و لاتعتدوا. بقره (۲): ۱۹۰.

2. و إن جَنحوا للسَّلم فاجنح لها و توکَّل علی‌الله

3. فَإن اعتزلوکم فلم یقاتلوکم و ألقو إلیکم السَّلَمَ فما جَعَل الله لکم علیهم سبیلا

4. It was customary at that time that if influential people swore allegiance to a ruler, the remaining dignitaries could be forced into obedience.

would not cause unrest. He said that he did not know such a person. When people wanted to kill him, Imam Ali (AS) said that he would guarantee that the man will not cause unrest Ibn al-Athir, 1965, Vol. 2, p. 320; al-Shaykh al-Mufid, 1992, pp. 94, 111-114). Imam Ali (AS) also opted for dialogue in the face of other opponents including Marwan bin Hakam and some influential figures of Umayyad family to convince them do not wage war and also to dispel their delusion of feeling insecure (al-Balādhuri, 1996, p. 387). Also the political and social rights of opponents should be realized to prevent breakout of war and violence, as Imam Ali (AS) did about Khawarij (Sallām, n.d., p. 321; Naviri, 1985, Vol. 5, p. 213; Ibn Kathir al-Dimashqi, 1994, Vol. 7, pp. 295–300). All such measures by Imam Ali (AS) aimed to prevent violence and armed conflict.

4.2. The process after establishment of grounds for armed conflicts and before such conflicts begin

If reconciliatory measures taken in the first stage fail and one or both parties to a conflict reach the conclusion that there is no way but war, the second process will be triggered. The process starts with intention to wage war and ends in violent acts at the battlefront. This process will include four stages as follows:

4.2.1. No assault on environment as well as civilian places and persons

When both sides are bent on war, they would gather forces and equipment and prepare all their resources and will probably start moving toward the location of conflict. In the meantime, they will meet people who have nothing to do with the conflict, but since they are unwillingly located on the path of the troops, they may be exposed to intentional or unintentional assault by either side to hostilities. Especially in old times, it was customary that when troops started to move toward the battlefront, cities and villages on their way had to provide them with wherewithal without being paid for it. If they refused to do so, they would have been punished with sword and their farms as well as residence would have been plundered. When Imam Ali (AS) was moving toward the battlefront, he wrote letter to governors of cities and their inhabitants, telling them that his troops were not permitted to do the least harm to them and called on them to report any offense, so that, the offenders could be put to punishment (Nahj al-Balāghah, 1992, Letter 60, p. 345; Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1967, Vol. 3, pp. 203–204; Naviri, 1985, Vol. 5, p. 169; Al-Minqari, 1991, pp.

205, 209; al-Tabari, 1979, Vol. 3, p. 563). Also, any assault to businessperson, farmers, preachers and religious leaders has been forbidden (Mohaqqeq Damad, 2004, pp. 116–122). Religious leaders, as defined in Islamic texts, covers religious leaders of Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, and followers of John the Baptist, who are collectively known as "People of the Book." Of course, all those groups are not presence in theater of war and have nothing to do with the damage to environment as well as nonmilitary install and buildings. Nor they are involved in military action. The main issue is that the military is not permitted to damage civilians and religious leaders or to destroy the environment, both during its march toward war, and after victory and conquering new land. Those bans also apply to armed conflicts, but insisting on those bans even before an armed conflict takes place is aimed at preventing war or convincing the belligerent party to change its mind. Abusing environment, assaulting people and seizing their property will made an army more powerful and increase its willingness to go on war.

4.2.2. Negotiation to prevent armed conflict

When efforts made to prevent violence prove inefficient and the battle is inevitable with belligerent parties deploying their troops and armament, serious talks should be aimed at preventing war. Imam Ali (AS) fought three wars during four years of his rule. In all of them when early efforts at preventing war failed, influential people were sent to dissuade the enemies. In those negotiations, they stressed on points that were accepted by both sides. Imam Ali (AS) did not suffice to sending few emissaries and sent many people to mediate through negotiations (Al-Jawzi, n.d., p. 69; Nahj al-Balāghah, 1992, Sermon 122, p. 120) though he was a belligerent party.

4.2.3. Not starting war under any conditions

Imam Ali (AS) (whose behavior is taken to reflect viewpoint of Islam) never started a war. When negotiations proved unsuccessful, Imam Ali (AS) ordered his troops not to start the war (Al-Masʿudi, 1991, Vol. 1, pp. 763, 718; al-Yaʿqubi, 1968, Vol. 2, pp. 94, 184; Al-Minqari, 1991, pp. 75, 270, 277, 432, 530; al-Shaykh al-Mufid, 1992, p. 399; Al-Tabari, 1979, Vol. 3, pp. 517–520; Al-Dinawari, 1960, p. 147; Al-Iskāfi al-Muʿtazili, 1995, p. 140; Al-Majlisi, 1988, Vol. 32, p. 213). Therefore, if the opposing party did not start the war, no war would have happened. He told his son, Imam Hassan

(AS), "Never challenge anybody because it is wrong to start a fight" (Al-Majlisi, 1983, Vol. 100, p. 39; Al-ʿAqqād, 1967, p. 18).

4.3. Process after initiation of armed conflicts

Conflicts enter into their main phase after the first violent measure is taken by a belligerent party or after the first bullet is fired. As said before, the political thought of Islam has prohibited Muslims from starting a war until the other party has done so. Even in conflicts, Islam has recognized humanitarian laws that are explained as follows:

4.3.1. Not depriving the enemy from primary human needs

No belligerent side is entitled to curtail the other side's access to water, food, medicine and similar requirements or render them unusable by poisoning them, even if the affect side does not believe in God (Al-Kulayni, 1983, Vol. 5, p. 28).[1] During the war of Seffin, first Muawiyah commanded his troops to prevent Imam Ali's (AS) army to have access to water. Imam (AS) sent a message to him, reminding Muawiyah that water was a bounty from God for people and their animals and nobody is allowed to prevent them from consuming water. But Muawiyah refused. Imam's (AS) soldiers attacked the enemy and gained control of water. Imam (AS) ordered them to take whatever water they needed and allow Muawiyah's soldiers to take water. Again, Muawiyah army regained control of water and prevented Imam's (AS) army to drink water. Imam's (AS) soldiers pushed them back again, but this time, Imam (AS) ordered his men not to prevent access to water by the enemy. This also happened for a third time and Imam Ali's (AS) friends and commanders vehemently objected to him why he did not behave like Muawiyah. Imam Ali (AS), however, said Muawiyah's conduct was immoral and did not accept to act like him (Al-Minqari, 1991, pp. 219–222; Al-Jawzi, n.d., pp. 88–90). Also, when Imam Ali (AS) was assassinated by Ibn Muljam, he ordered that his assassin should not be kept thirsty or hungry (Ibn al-Athir, 1965, Vol. 2, pp. 197–198; Al-Majlisi, 1983, Vol. 42, p. 288.

4.3.2. Minimizing own and enemy's casualties

If, for any reason, people decide to kill each other, Islam has tried to reduce casualties to a minimum. It is acceptable for both parties to try to

1. قال علی (علی): نهی رسول الله (ص) أن یلقی السّم فی بلاد المشرکین

minimize casualties, but it seems contradictory if only one side tries to reduce the casualties of its enemies. Isn't war aimed at killing the enemy? So, why should one try to reduce enemy casualties? This conforms to the logic of Islam and Imam Ali (AS). Since war is usually launched after all efforts to prevent it have failed, it is also carried out reluctantly. Now that the war has broken out despite all endeavors, every effort should be made to reduce casualties, even those of the enemies. This is a reason for prohibition of weapons of mass destruction which kill a great number of people. The Holy Quran orders Muslims to fight those who fight them, but do not go beyond acceptable limits (Qur'an, al-Baqarah, 2:190).[1] Also, the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) has stipulated that the army who abuses its victory will be stricken by the wrath of God (Al-Shaybāni, 1958, Vol. 2, p. 85). During War of Seffin, Imam Ali (AS) told his army to pray to God to reduce their casualties that those of their enemies and establish peace between them (Nahj al-Balāghah, 1992, Sermon 206, p. 240).

4.3.3. Direct confrontation between leaders to reduce casualties

Every conflict comprises of leaders who are commanders, decisions makers and the masterminds of the conflict surrounded by those who support them. Usually, as we distance from the ringleaders, the surrounding supporters are innocents who are victims and have the least interest in war. Imam Ali (AS) believed that the war should be as close to masterminds as possible, so that, surrounding supporters will suffer less. During War of Seffin, Imam Ali (AS) sent many messages to Muawiyah calling on him to face Imam Ali (AS) personally to prevent bloodshed, but the latter refused (Naviri, 1985, Vol. 5, p. 193; Al-Minqari, 1991, pp. 57, 432, 530).

4.3.4. Not harming the wounded, prisoners of war, deserters and dead bodies

From Imam Ali's (AS) viewpoint there is no doubt that the war wounded should not be molested, captives should not be killed and those who have escaped should not be prosecuted. This is aimed at reducing violence and respecting human rights. In every war, Imam Ali (AS) ordered his soldiers that no dead body should be mutilated, no tent should be taken down, and no house should be broken into (Naviri, 1985, Vol. 5,

1. وَقاتِلوا في سبيلِ اللهِ الّذينَ يُقاتِلونَكُم ولا تَعتَدوا إنّ اللهَ لا يُحِبُّ المُعتَدينَ

pp. 152, 154–155, 178; Al-Dinawari, 1960, p. 151; al-Tabari, 1979, Vol. 3, p. 518; Nahj al-Balāghah, 1992, Letter 14, p. 280; Al-Majlisi, 1988, Vol. 32, p. 213). Also, killing slaves is immoral. During Jamal War, a number of enemy leaders such as Marwan and Walid were arrested and taken to Imam Ali (AS). They had been fighting until they were taken into captivity and it was evident that they would fight again if they were offered a good opportunity in the future. However, Imam Ali (AS) released them (al-Shaykh al-Mufid, 1992, p. 339; Nahj al-Balāghah, 1992, Sermon 73, p. 55; Al-ʿAqqād, 1967, p. 200). Also, dead bodies of enemies should not be dismembered. As said before, even lifeless bodies should be respected from the viewpoint of Islam, and should be buried through a special ceremony. For this reason, enemies' dead bodies should not be disfigured (Nahj al-Balāghah, 1992, Letter 47, p. 321; Letter 14, p. 280).

4.3.5. Not harming women, children and the aged

The Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) prohibited his men from killing women and children (Ibn Hishām, n.d., p. 992). Imam Ali (AS) also strictly commanded his troops to avoid of molesting women even if they insulted them or their commander (Nahj al-Balāghah, 1992, Letter 14, p. 280). After the War of Jamal, Saffiyeh, the mother of Talheh, frequently insulted Imam Ali (AS), but he did not insult her and prevented his men from doing so (al-Tabari, 1979, Vol. 3, p. 544). A number of children were killed in a conflict and when Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) heard about it, he was very angry and asked why some people are so belligerent that the killed children (Ibn Hanbal, 1993, Vol. 8, p. 41). There are many instances in the life of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) where he has forbidden killing women and children (Ibn Mājah, 1974, Vol. 2, pp. 101, 947; Abu Dāwud, n.d., Vol. 3, p. 52; al-Tusi, 1985, Vol. 6, p. 138). Many commentators of Quran argue that killing women and children is wrong and maintain that when Quran warned Muslims against extreme actions when fighting enemies (Qur'an, al-Baqarah, 2:190)[1], it alluded to killing women and children (Tabatabaei, 1973, Vol. 2, p. 61; Qutb, 1981, Vol. 1, p. 188; al-Tabrisi, 1983, Vol. 1, p. 285). Although some jurisprudents believe that killing women and children who help enemies, most Shia jurisprudents have absolutely forbidden killing women and children, even if they have

1. و لا تعتدوا إن الله يحب المعتدين

taken part in war (Muhaqqiq al-Hilli, 1969, Vol. 1, p. 312; Al-Najafi, 1981, Vol. 21, p. 70). Also, killing the aged is forbidden provided that they have not taken part in war against Muslims (Abu Dāwud, n.d., p. 52; Al-Hurr al-Āmili, 1983, Vol. 11, p. 43; Al-Najafi, 1981, p. 75).

4.3.6. Not resorting to cheating and treason

The Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) discouraged any type of treason in war and ordered his men to fight, but not to cheat. He also exhorted them against breaching their word and behaving in a treacherous manner toward anybody (Ibn Hishām, n.d., p. 992). War tactics which are allowed are quite different from treason and cheating, which is not prescribed against enemy in war (Mohaqqeq Damad, 2004, pp. 94-97).

4.3.7. Continuation of negotiations during conflicts

In the course of war and conflicts, no effort should be spared to put an end to hostilities. Although Imam Ali (AS) was a party to conflicts, he always sent messengers and mediators throughout the war and always looked for a way to terminate conflicts(Hassani, 1994, p. 416; Jafarian, 1997, p. 267).

4.4. Domestic and International Conflicts

Basically, Islam takes a universal and humane approach to various issues. There are differences between Muslims and non-Muslims in terms of rituals and some legal rules, but there is no difference between the two groups with regard to humane issues such as respecting human dignity, justice, as well as adherence to moral principles and humanitarian law. This finding aligns with recent comparative scholarship, which confirms that both Islam and international humanitarian law share a fundamental commitment to equal rights, justice, and respect for human dignity, and that both systems strongly oppose discrimination in all its forms (Mohmand, 2025, p. 1179). Although, the above discussions are mostly based on historical evidence related to wars between Muslims, but those principles were also observed during wars with non-Muslims and Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) had banned Muslims from spreading poison in non-Muslim cities (al-Kulayni, 1983, Vol. 5, p. 28). The most important argument is based on a Quranic verses which orders Muslims to defend themselves in proportion to the aggression that they have undergone and does not allow them to take extreme measures (Qur'an, al-

Baqarah, 2:194; Qur'an, al-Baqarah, 2:190).[1] Based on the Islamic law and taking into account three principles of limitations in using arms, compliance with moral values in war, and humane treatment of prisoners of war; Mohaqqeq Damad believes that the following groups should be immune to any form of violence and assault in any international conflict: 1. women and children; 2. the aged; 3. businesspeople and farmers; 4. civilian passers-by; and 5. the clergy. He also maintains that the following measures have been totally prohibited by Islam regardless of religious tendencies of parties to the conflict (Mohaqqeq Damad, 2004, pp. 55-57): 1. massacre of enemy forces; 2. ignoring the right to surrender (killing prisoners of war); 3. any act of retribution; 4. assault on the wounded; 5. denying enemy's access to food and water; 6. demolition of buildings and installations; and 7. destruction of the environment and cutting trees. Recent scholarship has emphasized the importance of engaging with Islamic legal principles in a multicultural and diverse interpretative framework, particularly in international judicial contexts, arguing that traditional systems of justice should not be dismissed in their entirety but rather considered within their proper legal and cultural contexts (Badar, Altuntas & Amin, 2026, p. 1).

5. The Relationship between Human Dignity and Humanitarian Law in Islam

5.1. Intrinsic Dignity as the Foundation of Humanitarian Law

In Islamic thought, human dignity can be understood through two interconnected dimensions: intrinsic dignity and acquired dignity. Intrinsic dignity is a universal and equal gift granted to all human beings, rooted in their creation and human nature. This understanding is based on several Qur'anic foundations, including human beings' appointment as God's vicegerents on earth (Qur'an, al-Baqarah, 2:30), the divine spirit breathed into humanity (Qur'an, al-Hijr, 15:29), and the honor bestowed upon the children of Adam (Qur'an, al-Isrāʾ, 17:70). These foundations establish human beings' unique moral status and provide the basis for their equal worth (Al-Rāzi, 1981, Vol. 1, p. 45; Al-Tabari, 2001, Vol. 1, p. 89).

1. فمن اعتـدی علیکم فـاعتـدوا علیـه بمثـل مـا اِعتـدی علیکم وتقواللـه و اعلموا انّللـه معللمتقین، بقره (۲): ۱۹٤ / و قاتلوافیسبیلاللهالذین یقاتلونکم و لا تعتدوا، انالله لایحبالمعتدین، بقره (۲): ۱۹۰.

The concept of intrinsic dignity is further associated with three fundamental human capacities: rational understanding, the divine dimension of human existence, and the ability to communicate and acquire knowledge through language. These characteristics distinguish human beings from other creatures and explain why dignity belongs to all members of the human family regardless of their religious, ethnic, or social identity (Ibn ʿĀshur, 1984, Vol. 1, p. 9; Izutsu, 2002, p. 45).

By contrast, acquired dignity is associated with moral excellence, faith, and piety. Unlike intrinsic dignity, which is universal and unconditional, acquired dignity represents an ethical and spiritual status evaluated ultimately by God rather than by human institutions. The Qur'an identifies piety as the true criterion of spiritual superiority (Qur'an, al-Hujurāt, 49:13)[1]. However, this form of dignity cannot establish social or political hierarchy among human beings. As emphasized by Imam Ali, differences in piety do not provide a basis for discrimination in social relations, since all human beings share a common origin and creation (Nahj al-Balāghah, Letter 53).

Accordingly, the principles of humanitarian law examined in the previous section are founded exclusively on intrinsic dignity rather than acquired dignity. This is because humanitarian norms require a universal and equal foundation applicable to all individuals, including both combatants and non-combatants, regardless of their religious or moral status. Acquired dignity, due to its unequal and ultimately immeasurable nature, cannot provide the basis for universal and legally binding obligations. Therefore, intrinsic human dignity constitutes the philosophical foundation upon which humanitarian principles are constructed (Donnelly, 2013, p. 127; Waldron, 2012, p. 15).

5.2. The Application of Human Dignity to Humanitarian Law

The relationship between human dignity and humanitarian law can be examined in two interconnected areas: the prevention and justification of war, the regulation of conduct during armed conflict, and the treatment of individuals and communities after the cessation of hostilities.

1. يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

In relation to the prevention of war, the Islamic emphasis on peace and conflict avoidance reflects a fundamental respect for human dignity. The Qur'anic command establishes peace as the preferred condition whenever possible (Qur'an, al-Anfāl, 8:61).[1] Similarly, Imam Ali's repeated attempts to negotiate with opponents before and during conflict demonstrate that war is considered a last resort rather than a desirable objective (al-Shaykh al-Mufid, 1992, p. 56; al-Tabari, 1979, Vol. 3, p. 518). This approach is rooted in the understanding that human life possesses sacred value and that the unnecessary shedding of blood constitutes a violation of divinely granted dignity.

The prohibition against aggression further reflects this principle. The Qur'anic instruction establishes limits on the use of force and prohibits excessive violence (Qur'an, al-Baqarah, 2:190). [2] Likewise, Prophetic Sunnah explicitly prohibit the killing of women, children, and other non-combatants during warfare, demonstrating that the dignity of individuals remains protected even in situations of armed conflict (Sahih al-Bukhāri, Book of Jihād; Abu Dāwud, Book of Jihād). Recent studies of Islamic legal thought have further shown that these ethical limitations on warfare were developed within the jurisprudential traditions of early Muslim scholars, who sought to regulate the use of force and establish normative principles for the conduct of war. In this regard, Rahimi Nejad's study on the ethics of controlling war and the roots of Islamic international law in the thought of second-century jurists highlights the emergence of legal and moral constraints on warfare within Islamic jurisprudence (Rahimi Nejad, 2024).

The continuation of efforts toward reconciliation during war, as reflected in Imam Ali's conduct, further indicates that human dignity preserves the possibility of restoring peace even among enemies. The enemy is not deprived of humanity; rather, conflict does not eliminate the fundamental dignity shared by all human beings.

During armed conflict, humanitarian principles similarly emerge as practical expressions of human dignity. The prohibition against depriving enemies of essential resources, including water, food, and medicine, is illustrated by Imam Ali's conduct during the Battle of Siffin. Despite being

1. وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا
2. وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا

denied access to water, he refused to impose the same deprivation upon his opponents after gaining control of the water source (Al-Mufid, 1993; Al-Tabari, 1997). This conduct reflects the welfare dimension of dignity, according to which even enemies remain entitled to basic human necessities.

Likewise, the effort to minimize casualties and avoid unnecessary direct confrontation between ordinary soldiers demonstrates that human dignity extends beyond one's own community and includes even those on the opposing side. The protection of human life is therefore not limited by political allegiance or religious identity.

Respect for the wounded, prisoners, and the dead also derives from the enduring nature of human dignity. Islamic sources emphasize humane treatment of captives and prohibit mutilation of corpses, reflecting the principle that dignity continues even after death (Al-Māwardi, 1996, p. 48). The Prophet's act of standing in respect when the funeral procession of a Jewish person passed by further confirms that human dignity is not dependent on religious affiliation (Al-Bukhari, 1999, Book of Jihād, Hadith 3050).

The protection of women, children, and elderly persons during warfare similarly reflects the recognition of universal intrinsic dignity and the need to provide additional protection for vulnerable groups (Abu Dawud, n.d., Book of Jihād, Hadith 2613). Furthermore, the prohibition of betrayal and treachery in warfare demonstrates that even military necessity cannot justify violations of moral integrity. The Prophet's distinction between legitimate military strategy and deception that violates trust reflects the ethical limits imposed by human dignity (Muslim ibn al-Hajjāj, n.d., Book of Jihād, Hadith 1911).

Finally, the universal application of humanitarian principles to both Muslims and non-Muslims is grounded in the shared dignity of all human beings. This principle is expressed in Imam Ali's famous statement: "*People are of two kinds: either your brothers in religion or your equals in creation*" (Nahj al-Balāghah, Letter 53). It also corresponds with the Qur'anic declaration which establishes dignity as a universal attribute of humanity (Qur'an, al-Isrāʾ, 17:70).

5.3. Humanitarian Law as the Practical Manifestation of Intrinsic Dignity

The preceding analysis demonstrates that the humanitarian principles discussed above are not derived from acquired dignity but from the universal concept of intrinsic human dignity. The transformation of dignity into concrete humanitarian obligations occurs through three fundamental mechanisms.

First, dignity generates a dual ethical responsibility: the obligation to preserve one's own dignity and to respect the dignity of others. This principle is reflected in Imam Ali's statement that human beings are either religious brothers or equals in creation (Nahj al-Balāghah, Letter 53). Second, dignity requires the rejection of discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, race, or social status, a principle rooted in the Qur'anic affirmation of the honor granted to all children of Adam (Qur'an, al-Isrāʾ, 17:70). Third, dignity requires the protection of minimum human conditions—including justice, respect, welfare, and recognition of human worth—particularly during situations of armed conflict (Donnelly, 2013; Waldron, 2012).

Accordingly, each humanitarian principle represents the practical application of a specific dimension of human dignity within the context of war. The prohibition of initiating aggression and the pursuit of peace represent justice and respect; the protection of civilians and vulnerable groups reflects recognition of universal dignity; the provision of essential resources embodies the welfare dimension of dignity; humane treatment of prisoners and the dead demonstrates awareness of the continuing value of human beings; and the universal application of humanitarian norms expresses the global character of intrinsic dignity beyond religious and ethnic boundaries.

Therefore, the central argument of this article—that humanitarian law is not merely a set of ethical recommendations but rather the practical manifestation of human dignity—is clearly established. Without human dignity, humanitarian principles would lack their philosophical foundation and normative authority, reducing them to merely strategic rules of warfare. Within the Islamic framework, however, human dignity provides these principles with their moral legitimacy and transforms them into binding obligations for individuals and political authorities alike.

6. Conclusion

All man's attitudes shape his behaviors, and every person's behavior is a clue to his attitudes. This is true about religions and schools of thought. Every religion considers man's status in proportion to its attitude toward human beings, and human dignity in every religion matches the status that it considers for man. A fact that has been stipulated by Islam and has never been doubted by all Muslim scholars is that "Almighty God has blown His spirit unto the human soul" (Qur'an, al-Hijr, 15:29).[1] Every human being has two dimensions. One dimension is divine and spiritual, which never dies and is part of his nature. Therefore, it is quite clear how a creature who is half-divine should be treated. Human rights that were accepted by Islam and Imam Ali (AS) are commensurate with the status of a creature that is carrying the spirit of God and half of whose being is divine.

Imam Ali's advice to his governor in Egypt emphasizes that human beings deserve moral concern not only because of shared religious affiliation but also because of their common humanity (Nahj al-Balāghah, 1992, Letter 53, p. 326). However, this principle raises an important question: how can one cultivate love and moral concern for those with whom one has no immediate social or religious connection and whose only commonality is their human nature? Since affection is often developed through personal interaction, shared experiences, and long-term relationships, extending such love to all human beings may appear challenging. Nevertheless, Imam Ali's ethical perspective suggests that recognition of the shared dignity of human beings can serve as the foundation for a broader form of moral responsibility that transcends particular affiliations and encompasses humanity as a whole.

In the past, making handicrafts was part of the schools' curriculum. During that hour, students were told to make handicrafts using all their talent and creativity. Then they took what they had made to school and showed it off to others. In the same way, God has used His entire creativeness to create a creature that is called Man in the best possible form (Qur'an, al-Tin, 95:4).[2] When He looked at him, He appreciated His own

1. و نَفَختُ فیهِ مِن روحی

2. لقد خلقناالانسان فی احسن تقویم

feat (Qur'an, al-Muʾminun, 23:14). [1] Drawing on the divine hadith (Foruzanfar, 1955, p. 29)[2], it would be true to claim that God intended to reveal Himself through the creation of mankind. He has also created a universe with complex components. The solar system is but part of the universe, and we are told in religious teachings that an even more complex world exists inside human beings.[3] Man is a combination of divine and material dimensions. The physical aspect of this creature, which can be studied, has greatly amazed scientists, and the more they know about it, the more they become aware of the greatness of its creator. The function of every cell in the human body, up to the brain and nervous system, is so complicated and amazing that it cannot be described. Another part of the human entity, that is, his soul, cannot be appraised through experiment. However, small pieces of information obtained on the human soul denote the existence of another complicated world, which is much more complex than the human body.

Imam Ali's (AS) recommendation for loving all people just because of their humanity is only justifiable if we see humans as God's "handicraft" and see mankind as a mirror of the creator's greatness. In that case, every human being is a noble creature created by the Almighty God. The words of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) are the best manifestation of the concurrence of human dignity with humanitarian law: "If one of you fights another, he should avoid marring his face, because God has created man's face on the model of His own" (Ibn Hanbal, 1993, Vol. 2, p. 251; Qomi, n.d., Vol. 2., pp. 5-52). In this way, even in wars and conflicts, human dignity should be respected. The abovementioned eleven stages that were explained as examples of Islam and Imam Ali's (AS) respect for humanitarian law were all rooted in Islam's approach to human dignity, and both of them stem from Islam's attitude toward mankind, which was discussed above. As contemporary scholarship has demonstrated, human dignity provides not only a theoretical basis for realizing the right to international peace and security but also a framework for reforming unjust structures in the international order and confronting the political

1. فتبارک الله احسن الخالقین

2. کنتُ کنزاً مخفیّاً فَاَحببتُ أن أُعرفَ فخلقتُ الخلق لکی أُعرَف

3. A poem attributed to Imam Ali (AS) says: "You think you are a small thing, but a big universe exists inside you" (Beihaqi Neishabouri, 1996, p. 236).

and economic roots of war, violence, and conflict (Firouzi, 2026, p. 2).

This study is among the first to systematically demonstrate that human dignity functions not merely as a parallel ethical value but as the philosophical and normative foundation of humanitarian law in Islam. Unlike previous scholarship that has treated humanitarian principles in isolation (e.g., Mohaqqeq Damad, 2004; Khadduri, 1955), this study establishes a direct conceptual linkage between the theological conception of dignity (rooted in the divine spirit) and the specific humanitarian norms derived from it. The findings confirm that intrinsic dignity is stable and inalienable, which makes it a robust foundation for universal humanitarian norms applicable to all persons regardless of moral or religious status. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that these principles apply equally to both domestic and international armed conflicts and are not confined to relations among Muslims, challenging the narrow interpretation that restricts Islamic humanitarian norms to intra-Muslim conflicts. The eleven-stage framework for analyzing humanitarian conduct in Islam, as derived from the practices of the Prophet Muhammad and Imam Ali, offers a novel analytical tool for understanding the comprehensive nature of Islamic humanitarian law.

Future research should examine the application of these principles in contemporary armed conflicts involving Muslim-majority states and explore their compatibility with international humanitarian law frameworks. Comparative studies between Islamic humanitarian principles and Western just war theory could further enrich the dialogue between these traditions. Additionally, empirical research on the implementation of these principles in modern Islamic legal systems would provide valuable insights into their practical relevance. Beyond the context of armed conflict, however, the Islamic concept of human dignity may also be examined in broader spheres of human relations, including social, interpersonal, and intimate relationships. Although such dimensions extend beyond the scope of the present study, acknowledging this broader understanding of dignity highlights that its moral significance is not limited to situations of conflict but concerns the entirety of human interaction.Scholars are also encouraged to investigate how the concept of human dignity in Islam can contribute to the ongoing development of international humanitarian law in the context of

contemporary conflicts.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no potential conflict of interest regarding the publication of this work.

Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public,

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