

Islamic Scholars' Perspective on Voting and Elections

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What Islamic Scholars say about voting

I'm only sharing what the below scholars and Imams had to say in support of elections and voting. I'm not responsible for, endorse or familiar with the all the view points of said scholars on other matters. - Ahmed Bedier

“It is incumbent upon Muslims to actively participate for the following reasons: 1) In order to protect our rights as American citizens, we must be involved in politics. 2) Our involvement can facilitate our support of our fellow Muslims around the world. 3) Our interaction with non-Muslims and our involvement will help to spread Islam's message. 4) It helps to convey the universality of Islam... Our participation is an obligation in Islam, and not merely "a right" that we can choose to forfeit at will. It affords us the opportunity to protect our human rights, guarantee the fulfillment of our needs, and work for the improvement of living conditions for Muslims and non-Muslims in America and abroad... Whatever helps us to achieve these noble goals becomes Islamically obligatory. This includes: ... Supporting (both politically and financially) those non-Muslim candidates whose beliefs and values are most compatible with ours as Muslims, and who most address and support our issues and causes... Registering to vote and then voting. Although separate acts, they are both an essential part of the electoral process. Our participation in that process is mandatory.”

[Shaykh Taha Jabir al-Alwani, Muslim World League, Makkah; OIC Islamic Fiqh Academy]

“I'll just give you one specific example. Suppose you have two candidates for president, for example. Both of them might be not even sympathetic to just Muslim causes, suppose. In most cases that is actually the situation... However, in terms of relative harm and benefit which is a rule of Shariah it may be the collective wisdom, for example, of Muslim voters that one of them would do even greater harm to Muslim causes than the other... Well in that case, obviously, the lesser of the two harms, i.e. electing or voting for someone who will do less harm to Muslims obviously would be much better than sitting on the sidelines and just criticizing both and doing nothing about it... Voting for them and supporting them in elections is not necessarily an agreement with everything that the law, by way of laws and regulations. But at least it would be for that particular, limited purpose.”

[Dr. Jamal Badawi, Islamic Society of North America; Islamic Information Foundation]

“There is nothing wrong with Muslims casting their votes in favor of the less evil candidate. In any case, this is the matter of *ijtihad* (effort to make decision) based on the principle of weighing up the pros and cons, what is in the interests of Islam and what is detrimental... No one should imagine that anyone who says that it is OK to vote is thereby expressing approval or support for kufr. It is done in the interests of the Muslims, not out of love for kufr ”

[Shaykh Muhammad Salih al-Munajjid,; student of Shaykhs Bin Baz and Ibn Uthaymeen]

“As Muslims, we have the duty to command good and forbid evil. When we translate this into political action, we are to support those candidates who uphold the values or principles we cherish; so if we find a candidate who upholds the values or principles that we cherish, then we are to support him, if, however, we do not find such a candidate but we are left with two and each of them has positive and negative sides, then we should support the one whose positive side outweighs the negative.”

[Shaykh Ahmad Kutty, Islamic Institute of Toronto; Islamic Center of Canada]

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“In a situation where there is no worthy candidate (as in non-Muslim countries, where at least the ideologies and beliefs of the relevant parties are contrary to the teachings of Shariah), then the vote should be given to the one who is the better and more trust worthy than the other candidates... Vote should be given to the candidate that one believes will give people their rights, prevent oppression, and so on... If it is thought that a particular candidate or party will be of benefit to the general public in their day to day affairs, then the vote should be given to him. And by voting a particular party, it will not be considered that one agrees with all their ideologies and beliefs... At times, voting becomes necessary. Sayyiduna Abu Bakr (rAa) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (sAas) said: "If people see an oppressor and don't prevent him, then it is very likely that Allah will include all of them in the punishment" (Sunan Tirmizi & Sunan Abu Dawud). Therefore, if you see open oppression and transgression, and despite having the capability of preventing this oppression by giving your vote, you don't do so, then in the light of this Hadith you will be sinful...”

[Mufti Muhammad ibn Adam al-Kawthari, Dar al-Iftaa; Darul Uloom; student of Mufti Taqi Usmani]

“For their protection and for their identity to be preserved it is vital that Muslims participate in the political process of the society that they are living in.”

[Shaykh Aurangzeb Khan, Imam of Dar-us-Salaam, Nottingham, UK]

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“Since seeing that voting is a testimony (giving Shahadah) and being aware that a particular party will be more willing to fulfill our Islamic rights, not to vote for this party will be tantamount to transgression and breach of trust in the eyes of Shariah.”

[Mufti Ibrahim Desai, Darul Ifta, South Africa]

“I hold the opinion that it is lawful to participate in elections, as this may reduce suffering, and it is a way to choose the better among the available candidates. I believe participating in elections will, in any event, contribute to the reduction of evil and be a forum for countering bad policies and exposing their deficiencies, as well as being an opportunity to present proposals of a different kind that may help people.”

“As for participation in politics itself, we should consider that if the parliaments and congresses of these countries do not have any Muslim members, then this will pave the way for the opposition to come forth with their harmful views and policies, which will consequently be incorporated into the laws of their countries and bring harm to the Muslims. I hold this opinion to participate in elections and to vote for those who seem to be good or at least less harmful than others.”

[Shaykh Salman Al Awdah, Imam Bin Saud Islamic University]

"All efforts should be made, bearing in mind the political situation of a particular country, to ensure full participation in the political process. This is an absolute necessity. Muslims should not be reticent about their involvement in this regard. Rather, they should make progress in this matter."

[Maulana Khalilul Rahman Sajjad Nomani Nadwi, Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama and Madinah University]

This is our country and it would be foolish not to participate in the political processes which eventually shape our future and that of Islam. I support marching in the streets to raise awareness about certain issues. However, if we really want to change the status-quo then we have to influence those who walk the corridors of power. Muslims need not only to vote but put forward Muslim candidates in all the mainstream and serious independent parties. We need to be represented or be present at the tables around which policies are discussed, made and agreed.

Sayyiduna Yusuf (as) put himself forward in the political process of Egypt - the rest is history! [Refer to Quran 12:55]. He saved countless lives, united people with God and showed how rulers ought to rule. Are Muslims in our country saying they do not want to unite people with God and save them from eternal doom? Do we want to remain "slaves" under the dominion of others without power of any sort? Or do we want to become masters; just, caring and merciful? The right to vote is one of Allah's blessings over us which we can use to benefit society. There are many in the world who do not have this blessing. Allah says in the Quran:

"Allah presents an example: a slave (who is) owned and unable to do a thing and he to whom We have provided from Us good provision so he spends from it secretly and publicly. Can they be equal? Praise be to Allah! But most of them do not know." [Quran 16:75]. So get up and use that blessing!

[Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra, Former Chair, Mosques and community relations committee at the MCB; Graduate of Dar-ul-Uloom, Holcombe; Al-Azhar University; S.O.A.S, London]

Looking at the situation of the Muslim community and their need to have their interests met, it becomes advisable for the Muslims to achieve this purpose through the available political system. Through voting, a man can bring to Parliament such candidates who sympathize with the Muslim cause. The vote can be treated either as a good intercession (Ayah 85, Surah An-Nisa), or as Naseehah (hadith narrated by Tamim Ad-Dari in which Naseehah is to be advanced for the betterment of the Muslims in general), or it can be treated as Tawkeel (deputizing someone on your behalf to achieve a certain task). Whichever you take, by voting you can bring a better change in the affairs of this country.

[Shaykh Suhaib Hasan, Secretary, Islamic Sharia Council of Great Britain; Chairman, Masjid & Madrasah al-Tawhid, London; Graduate of Islamic University at Madinah]

The opinion of imams and scholars on taking part in election are clearly in favor of taking part in the democratic process. This gives us an opportunity to choose the candidate who will best serve the interest of our community. Not taking part in election will deprive us of the political prowess and clout that we command in certain inner city areas of Britain. That is not our interest. I urge every one to use their vote effectively.

[Dr. Musharraf Hussain, Director & Imam, Karimia Institute, Nottingham; graduate of Al Azher University]

It has long been my position that any type of participation in democracy is a type of approval of that system. I have no doubt that democracy is antithetical to Islam. **However**, having read and listened to the sayings of many scholars on this issue, and being faced with the reality of a growing Muslim population here in the UK, who for all intents and purposes consider this their home, it has become clear to me that we must participate in every aspect of society as much as possible to ensure our rights and continued existence and well being in this society. This participation most certainly includes voting for whichever party or candidate best serves the needs and interests of the UK and indeed world wide Muslim population. This does not mean approval or acceptance of the ideal of democracy, but the intention is to use the means and avenues available to benefit the Muslims. The Prophet (saws) did not approve of the system of tribalism in Arabia, in fact he condemned it, but this did not stop the Prophet (saws) from accepting the protection of his uncle and the tribe of Banu Haashim. In addition to that it seems to me that the evil of participation is far less than the evil that will befall the Muslims if we do not, and the Shariah teaches us always to choose the path of lesser evil. This has been expounded and clarified by the scholars.

[Shaykh Abdur Raheem Green, Dawah Administrator, Central Mosque, London]

Muslims are recommended or even obliged to vote for the party who will be of most benefit on a national and international level, who will increase upon that which is good, or at the least, lessen the extent of the current evil prevalent in the world today.

[Shaykh Haitham Al-Haddad, Imam, Khateeb and Cultural Manager of al-Muntada al-Islami, London; BSc in Law & Islamic Law from Umdurman University, Khartoum, Sudan]

Voting for a non-Muslim candidate who would serve the Muslim community in the country and deal with Muslim countries on the basis of justice and fairness is not only permissible but required. It is the responsibility of the Muslim minorities in non-Muslim democratic countries to participate in public life, including voting and financing campaigns in order to be able to positively influence the political decision in these countries.

[Shaykh Muhammad Al-Mukhtar Al-Shinqiti, Islamic Center of South Plains, Texas]