

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - Defiance of Muawiyah

Proclamation of Jihad

In order to meet the challenge of Muawiyah Ali ordered the raising of levies with a view to undertaking an expedition against Syria. Dispatches were sent to the various provincial governors to send reinforcements and provide whatever succor they could. Ali as Caliph issued the decree of Jihad and exhorted the people to join the campaign in large numbers for the vindication of the truth of Islam. When the Muslims of Madina gathered in the mosque, he addressed them in the following terms: "Now or never If you fail to fight you will lose power, and these accursed schismatics will destroy the solidarity of Islam. I have, however, high hopes in the mercy of God, Who will set right that which these people are bent on setting wrong."

The appeal did not have the desired result, and the response to Ali's call to arms in the defense of Islam was poor. Ali felt grieved at the apathy of the people of Madina to Jihad. He called a special gathering of the people of Madina in the Prophet's mosque, and addressed them on the importance of Jihad. His speech is preserved in the collection of his writing bearing the title Nahj-ul-Balagha. He addressed the people in the following terms: "Jihad is one of the doors of heaven. God opens it for his friends. It is the dress of piety. It is a useful and beneficial armor with which the faithful should be equipped. It is a strong shield for the believers. If a man gives it up, God will make him wear the robes of disgrace and shame. He will be the victim of misfortune. He will be dishonored. Beware! I urge you to take up arms against the upholders of falsehood. I want you to attack them before they attack us. By God! Know that those who shift their responsibilities to others court ruin and disaster. Know that Muawiyah has attacked Amber with his cavalry and has killed Hasan b Hasan Balcri the chief of that place. I am told that one of his soldiers entered a house, and took away ornaments and jewels of the lady of the house. It is both surprising and heartrending. Followers of Muawiyah are misguided and mistaken, yet they are united, and though you are the upholders of a true cause, you are disunited and divided. How sad that they kill you and you cannot destroy them. They fight against you and you evade fighting. The commandments of God are being defied and sins are being committed in open daylight, and you see these things as passive onlookers. When I ask you to march in the summer season, you request me to delay the expedition till the hot season is over, when I ask you to march in the winter, you complain of excessive cold, and want me to postpone the campaign till the cold season is over. These are lame excuses. If you are afraid of the excessive heat or cold, you are apt to run away at the sight of the sword. O men, you do not deserve to be called men. By God, I am ashamed at the sight of you. May God destroy you. You have broken my heart you have made me lose my temper. You have upset all my plans through your sins and disobedience. You have always made me drink the draught of sorrow. The Quraish now say that the son of Abu Talib is undoubtedly brave, but he is ignorant of the art of war. Is there any one from amongst their ranks who was more steadfast in war than me? I have been fighting in wars when I was barely twenty years old and now I am sixty. I do not know what should I do with you, for suggestions and plans are of lime value to men who do not act upon them."

From the historical accounts and the biographies of Ali that have come down to us, it is not very clear what exactly happened which made Ali address the people of Madina in such strong and bitter words. Reading between the lines of the speech of Ali, it seems that he felt annoyed with the attitude of the people of Madina, and he even reproached and cursed them. It appears that Ali had a plan for an immediate attack on Syria. But the plan did not materialize as adequate response from the people of Madina was not forthcoming. From the account of Tabari it appears that Ali had in fact given an order for the march to Syria. He had handed over the war standard to his son Muhammad b Hanifa. He had appointed Abdullah b Abbas, Umar b Abi Salma, and Abu Laila b Umar b Al Jarah as his Generals to command the various wings of the army. Ali was to lead the army in person and he had appointed Qatam b Abbas as the Governor of Madina during his absence. The people of Madina were loath that the Muslims should fight among themselves, and before the army of Ali could march to Syria many persons chose to withdraw. In

the circumstances for one reason or the other, the expedition to Syria was delayed, and this delay worked to the advantage of Muawiyah and the disadvantage of Ali. Things became further difficult when Ali had to face another crisis, namely the defection of Talha and Zubair who had sworn allegiance to him.

[View Page](#)

Source : Alim.org-Ali bin Abu Talib History