

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - Battle for Basra

Othman b Hanif prepares for war.

On return from Ayesha, Imran b Husain advised Othman b Hanif that he should not involve himself in war with Ayesha for she had talked in the language of peace, and not in that of war. Abul Aswad the other member of the delegation, who was a staunch supporter of Ali, advised Othman b Hanif that as the Governor of Ali, he should fight against the enemies of Ali. Talha and Zubair had taken the oath of allegiance to Ali, and rebelling against Ali their purpose in coming over to Basra with an army could not be based on peaceful motives.

Othman b Hanif required the people of Basra to assemble in the mosque to consider what action should be taken against the confederates. The congregation was addressed in the first instance by Qais b Al Aqd. He was critical of the arrival of the confederates. He said that if these people had come to Basra to seek protection that was absurd for they themselves came from a place where even birds were assured of safety. He added that if they had come to seek vengeance for the blood of Othman, they should know that the people of Basra had not killed Othman. He exhorted the people of Basra to take up arms, and drive away the confederates from their city. Othman b Hanif addressed the people in the following terms: "O ye people, you have sworn allegiance to Ali in the name of God, and his hand is over your hands. Whosoever recants his allegiance is guilty before men and God. I swear by God that had there been a worthier candidate than Ali for the Caliphate, he would not have accepted the burden of the office. Had the people sworn allegiance to any one else except Ali, he would have also sworn allegiance to him. In that case Ali would have obeyed the Caliph without any reservation. Remember that Ali had no ill will against any of the companions of the Holy Prophet. Both Talha and Zubair took the oath of fealty to Ali, but their aim in taking such oath was not to obey God. Instead of seeking recompense from God they seek recompense from men. Now both of them assert that they had taken the oath under compulsion, when the sword was placed on their necks. We have to see what is the opinion of the people. Where there is majority, there lies the truth of guidance. It is an open secret that the majority have elected Ali as the Caliph, and there can be no doubt that the truth is on the side of Ali. It is therefore incumbent on you to fight against those who have rebelled against the authority of the Caliph, and thereby espoused the cause of falsehood. "

Hakim b Jabala, the Deputy Governor took a more violent stand. He exhorted the people of Basra to take up arms against the people who had rebelled against the authority of the Caliph. He added that should all the people forsake him, he would fight against the rebels single handed until he met his martyrdom fighting in the cause of the truth.

Aswad b Harith al Saadi contradicted the stand of those who had advocated war. He said that Islam was the religion of peace and all disputes between the Muslims should be resolved through peaceful means. He held out that the confederates had not come to Basra to wage war. They had come to seek the aid of the citizens of Basra in their campaign against the murderers of Othman, and in that behalf it behooved the citizens of Basra to treat them as honored guests, particularly when they were led by the Mother of the Faithful. Some other speeches were made in favor of Ayesha. That led to an uproar among the people assembled in the mosque. Some people were loud in their support for Ali, and some were loud in their support for Ayesha. The meeting in the mosque ended in a state of confusion. Those who favored Ayesha joined the camp of Ayesha. Those who favored Ali responded to the call of Othman b Hanif, and took up arms to fight against the confederates.

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Source : Alim.org-Ali bin Abu Talib History