

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - In Quest of Peace with Muawiyah

Muawiyah's envoy

When Muawiyah incited the people of Syria to war against Ali there were some people who were averse to the Muslims fighting among themselves. A group of such persons led by Abu Muslim waited on Muawiyah, and advised him to abstain from war. Muawiyah said that all that he wanted was "Qasas" for the murder of Othman which was a religious obligation for him. He added that if Ali took the Qasas from those who were involved in the murder of Othman, or handed over such persons to him he would be prepared to offer allegiance to Ali. Abu Muslim volunteered to go to Kufa as an envoy of Muawiyah. Muawiyah agreed and sent him to Ali as his envoy. Ali took the envoy to the mosque and there explained to the people the purpose of his mission. Thereupon all the people assembled in the mosque cried with one voice "We all are the murderers of Othman." Turning to the envoy Ali said "You may tell Muawiyah what you have seen and heard". Abu Muslim returned disappointed to Syria. Things had come to be tied in such knots that there appeared to be no possibility of resolving that dispute through peaceful means. On one side, the people of Syria clamored for war to avenge the murder of Othman, and on the other side, the people of Iraq held that they all were the murderers of Othman. In the circumstances, war appeared to be inevitable. Muawiyah maintained that just as the confederates under Ayesha invaded Basra to take action against such Basrites who were involved in the murder of Othman, thus he would have to invade Iraq to punish those who were guilty of the murder of Othman. The stand of Ali was that the cry for the vengeance for the blood of Othman was merely a pretext for capturing power, for in case Muawiyah was really interested in claiming "Qasas." The proper course for him was to take the oath of allegiance to him, and then lodge a claim for "Qasas" in the usual way enjoined by law. Ali maintained that if Muawiyah persisted in his stand and refused to listen to reason there would be no option with him (Ali), but to fight against Muawiyah as he had fought against the confederates at Basra.

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