

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - Months of Suspense

The Armies

The armies that lay in camp at Siffin facing each other were the largest armies so far assembled in the history of Islam. The irony was that such large armies had not been assembled to fight against the non-Muslims in the name of God. The misfortune was that the Muslims were arrayed to fight against the Muslims and each side claimed that it had taken the field for cause. Nevertheless both the sides wished to gain the end they had in view without an armed conflict. Ali instructed his men that they should not fire the first shot. Muawiyah likewise hesitated to take the initiative in beginning the war. With such large concentration of troops at one place, absolute peace was out of question. Isolated skirmishes took place every now and then leading to loss of life on both the sides. There was however no direct clash between the armies as a whole. For over two months the armies as whole remained quiet and in a state of suspense being officially neither at war, nor at peace. Then came the month of Moharrum and during this month the hostilities were officially suspended.

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