Human Rights in Islam - Addressing Misconceptions

A common assumption made by critics of Islam is that the entire concept of human rights originated in western societies where Christianity is prevalent. If, indeed, Christianity is the source of modern-day human rights, why then did it take nearly 2000 years for Christians to achieve this system of rights and why did it require a secular government? In the Muslim world we see that the opposite scenario has developed. Human rights were established immediately when Islam became a state religion, but then faded as people drifted away from Islam. This means that the religion was capable of providing these rights but the people failed to maintain their faith and, subsequently, their principals and their values.

Many of the rights enjoyed by people in the west have their origins in Islam. Islam was the first system of government to develop a true system of justice that caters to the needs of the people. It abolished the class system and removed the ethnic barriers that prevent equality. It gave rights to women at a time when Europeans regarded them as the property of their husbands. If one studies and compares the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the rights of the people in Islam, one clearly sees the level of morality that Islam was first to achieve. In fact, “There is no religion or moral code on earth that has given more generous attention than Islam to faithfully affirming these rights, detailing them, clarifying them, and expressing them.”

The laws set forth in the Qur’an (Koran) and prophetic tradition of Muhammad (SAW), if properly implemented, protect the rights of every human being, regardless of their religion, race, nationality, sex, age, level of education, or wealth. Many of these laws are consistent with those found in previous scripture. They have been sent down to us from the One who created us and knows best what’s good for us. No one is more Just, Knowledgeable, or Merciful than God. Divine law should be regarded as a Mercy from Allah (God), because without it we are left with our own human desires. When human desire interferes with divine law corruption is inevitable. Man-made laws almost invariably protect the rights of sinners and promote injustice.

Quite often people reject Islam based on their disapproval of its laws without ever learning the wisdom or the truth behind these laws. Unlike the Mosaic Law, which Paul refers to as a burden in his epistles, every aspect of the Shari'ah (Islamic jurisprudence) is beneficial to both the individual and the society at large. Shari'ah is derived from the Qur'an and prophetic tradition of Muhammad (SAW), which do not change; but the Shari'ah itself is designed to adapt as circumstances warrant. The purpose of Shari'ah is to maintain justice and equality; it is not to punish.

In the following pages I have presented a number of arguments taken from a book aimed at demonizing Islam and provided a response to each argument based on the Qur’an and Sunnah (prophetic tradition of Prophet Muhammad). These authentic sources, if examined with an open mind and clean heart, demonstrate clearly the attention that was given to human rights in Islam. In this day and age of mass media and misinformation it is often difficult to determine truth from falsehood, but Alhamdulillah (Thanks to God) the truth is ever available in the Qur’an and Sunnah as long as we are willing to search for it. Nothing can be gained by hiding the truth and nothing can be learned unless the truth is revealed.

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1 Human Rights: The Teachings of Islam vs. the Declaration of the United Nations, Al-Ghazali M.  
Also see: Human Rights: Islamic vs. Secular Law, Uthman MF  
2 Liberties and Rights in Islam, Abdul Mutajalli, R.J.H., pp. 22-23  
3 SAW: an acronym used in place of Salallahu Alayi Wasalam, meaning, May the blessings and the peace of Allah be upon him
"Islam’s view of justice and human rights may explain why many Muslim countries are noticeably underdeveloped in comparison with the West"

Christianity is the dominant religion throughout Central and South America, where some of the world’s most underdeveloped nations exist with little or no civil rights to speak of.

The ‘underdevelopment’ of Muslim majority nations is due primarily to a departure from Islam, which is enforced by secular governments that deprive their citizens. Many of these governments were established by the west through colonization and continue to be sustained though western foreign policies. Countries dominated by Western imperialism have become backward, weak and poor. This is clear in the case of Africa, which faces famine while its soil is full of riches that are benefiting the West.

Throughout history, whenever Islam was widely practiced and the Islamic state in tact, Muslim communities flourished. While the west groped in the dark during the middle ages, the Islamic world was the center of civilization. Islam was responsible for numerous advances in science, mathematics, medicine, and liberal arts. Arabic was the language of Jewish, Christian and Muslim scholars in Europe until the fall of Muslim Spain in 1492.

One of the great blessings of Islam is that science actually enhances the Muslim’s belief in God, whereas the Christian is forced to choose between science and faith. Prior to the European Renaissance Christian authorities were adamantly opposed to scientific development.

"The western notion that all men are created equal does not find much place in traditional Islamic thought and practice"

The Qur’an establishes equality plainly in a single verse, making Taqwa (piety, God consciousness) the only thing that distinguishes human beings from one another in the sight of Allah:

[Surah 4:49:13] O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily, the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you.

As a result Muslim societies have been integrated since the time of Muhammad (SAW)

Compare the equality of Islam’s penal system to that of the U.S., where minorities and poor people consistently receive harsher penalties than the upper class. In Islam a punishment cannot be waived or lessened based on the status of the offender. In fact, the Qur’an calls for universal justice, even against family:

[Surah 4:135] O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do

[Surah 5:8] …Stand out firmly for Allah as just witnesses; and let not the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety…

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4 The Koran is divided into 114 sections, or chapters called Surahs. The Surahs can be likened to the books in the Bible. Each Surah has a unique name.
Women's Rights
"The Koran teaches male superiority forthrightly. It's not hard to see why women are treated as second-class citizens in traditional Muslim countries."

Women are treated as second-class citizens all over the world.

Islam addresses the differences between men & women while maintaining their equality. If Muhammad (SAW) wanted to oppress women all he would have had to do is leave things the way they were because women were already being oppressed. Instead he gave them rights -- through the Qur'an -- that were unheard of at the time, such as the right to inherit and own property, rights to education, and the right to a political voice.

Since 1988 at least nine women have served as head of state in Muslim majority nations. The first person to accept the message of Muhammad (SAW) was a woman, as was the first Muslim martyr. And, the majority of the prophetic tradition is reported to us through a woman.

Western societies have long been plagued by the Genesis account of Adam & Eve:

[1 Timothy 2:14]
And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.

[1 Corinthians 11:3] Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

[1 Corinthians 11:8-10] For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.

[1 Timothy 2:11-12] A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.

[1 Corinthians 14:35] If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

In 1586, a conference was held in France to decide whether women were to be considered human or not. After lengthy discussions, the people who attended the conference came to the conclusion that: “Woman is a human being, but she is created to serve man.” It was not until 1938 that the woman was given the right to conduct her own financial affairs directly and open a bank account in her name. In England, women remained without citizenship until 1964 when a decree from Oxford University was issued. (Women in the Shade of Islam, Abdul Rahman Al-Sheha, Pg 27)

In recent years secularism has forced western societies to abandon the biblical view of women and, as a result, come closer to the equality of men and women establish by God through Islam. Unfortunately, their insistence on rejecting divine law has led to the exploitation of women.
Throughout history men have taken care of the women in their household by looking after their needs and protecting them from harm. In Islam, men are held responsible for the welfare of their families. Allah (SWT) describes them as protectors, supporters, and maintainers of women:

[Surah 4:34] Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their means.

[Surah 2:228] ...And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, to what is reasonable, but men have a degree (of responsibility) over them.

In Islam, a husband cannot make unreasonable demands on his wife that would violate her rights on him. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said, “Fear Allah regarding your women...you have the right on them that they do not allow anyone you dislike to sit on your mat...they have the right to be spent on and to be bought clothes in what is reasonable” (Sahih Muslim 2:886)

"The same verse in the Koran that begins by stating that men have authority over women goes on to give divine-sanction to wife beating"

It actually discourages wife beating by promoting other alternatives for the husband to communicate his disapproval in a calm unthreatening manner:

[Surah 4:34] ... As to those women on whose part you see ill-conduct, admonish them, refuse to share their beds, beat them, but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means...

Needless to say, there is no question of any of these measures being resorted to in the case of a healthy relationship; they are preventive measures taken in an unhealthy situation in order to protect the family against collapse. Gradual treatment must be administered in order to achieve reconciliation and preserve the family in the very early stages of dispute. It must also be understood that this is a provision and not a commandment. The Qur’an allows a man to divorce his wife, even though Prophet Muhammad (SAW) strongly discouraged divorce. Islam is a complete way of life with laws to accommodate any circumstance that may arise in it. Elsewhere in the Qur’an Allah (SWT) describes the objective of a healthy marital relationship:

[Surah 30:21] Among His signs is that He creates for you mates from among yourselves, so that you might incline towards them, and He engenders love and compassion between you

It is quite possible that a verbal reprimand will correct the situation and end the dispute. If, however, the wife persists in her rebellion (against Allah), the next step is to deprive her of her matrimonial rights, which should be confined to the room where the couple is alone, and not presented in front of the children or strangers. As a last resort, physical reprimand is prescribed, but is assumed to be gentle. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said, “The best of you are those best to their wives” (Tirmithee) and that the husband should refrain from striking his wife on the face (Abu Dawood 2:606). When we remember the aim behind all these measures, we realize that this “beating” is not a form of torture motivated by seeking revenge or humiliating an opponent, nor is it aimed at forcing the wife to accept life under unsatisfactory conditions; it is intended to sustain the family unit, which is the very fabric and foundation of a successful society.

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5 SWT: an acronym used in place of Subhanahu Wa Ta’ala, meaning, Glorious Most High
6 The English term ‘beat’ is misleading. The Arabic term covers a broad range of actions from a light tap to a heavy strike. It is perhaps like giving your child a ‘beating’. You don’t want to hurt them, just send a message.
As a general rule, if something is not forbidden in the Qur’an or Sunnah, it is considered to be lawful. While the Muslim man is only permitted to strike his wife as a last resort, after verbal reprimand and sexual deprivation have failed, the Muslim woman is free to strike her husband whenever she feels like it.

"The treatment of women in Islamic countries is consistently shocking to modern westerners"

There is currently no system of government in any modern nation that adheres to the Shari'ah. If the Shari'ah were to be enforced in these “Islamic” countries, and the people who call themselves Muslim were to practice their religion properly and sincerely, the women there would have their rights and not be mistreated. The problem is not Islam; it is a lack of Islam.

All over the world women are mistreated but the focus is always on the Muslim women because of her modest dress, even though it is usually the woman's choice to cover herself in accordance with her level of piety. And of course there's Saudi Arabia's ban on woman drivers, which is an isolated case that stems from the kingdom's adoption of the hard-line teachings of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab. The fact of the matter is that most women in most Muslim majority nations are treated the same or better than women in the west.

"Islam promotes inequality in receiving inheritance"

The verse in question is as follows…

[Surah 4:11] Allah commands you as regards your children's (inheritance): to the male, a portion equal to that of two females…

Indeed it is clearly stated in the Qur’an that women receive half the inheritance as their male siblings, but it also says that men are the protectors and maintainers of women (Surah 4:34). In Islam -- and frankly throughout the world -- women do not have the financial obligations that men do. Before they get married their fathers are responsible for all of their financial needs, and when they get married their husbands take over. And if they become widowed their son(s) assume responsibility.

This does not mean, however, that a Muslim woman cannot hold a job and earn a wage. She can acquire as much wealth as she pleases with no obligation to contribute to the household in which she resides, unless she so desires.

Before Islam women were themselves inherited. Today in the U.S. when a father becomes old and unable to run his business he almost invariably turns it over to his son, not the daughter. Nowhere is it acceptable for a man to marry and start a family without a stable source of income, but a woman can accept the role of a housewife in the most modern and "developed" society with no stigma or sense of shame.

"Islam treats women unfairly in divorce - the father is given custody of the children"

Women have more right to custody of children than men; in principal custody belongs to them because they are more compassionate and know better how to raise small children. When the child reaches the age of independence (around seven) the period of custody ends and the period of kafaalah (sponsorship) begins. The period of kafaalah lasts until adolescence, at which point the child is free to make his or her own choice. Scholars differed as to who has more right to sponsorship. The Malikis and Zaahiris believe that the woman has more right to sponsorship, whether the child is a boy or a girl. The Hanbalis believe that boys should be given a choice, but the father has more right in the case of a girl. The Hanafis believe that the father has more right in the case of boy, but the mother has more right in the case of a girl.
In Islam, the mother is cherished and honored for the sacrifices she makes to her family. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said: “Paradise is under the mother’s feet” (An-Nasa’ee). In another hadith, a man asked the Prophet (SAW): “Who among mankind deserves my company and kindness the most?” The Prophet (SAW) answered: “your mother.” The man then asked: “Who is next after my mother?” The Prophet (SAW) again answered: “your mother.” Again the man asked: “But, who is next after my mother?” Again the Prophet (SAW) answered: “your mother.” Finally after the question was raised a 4th time, the Prophet (SAW) said: “your father.”

Regarding prisoners of war Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said: "If anyone separates a mother from her child, God will separate him from his friends on the Day of Resurrection." (Al-Tirmidhi, Hadith 979)

"Men obtain divorce easily; they often divorce capriciously"

If there’s one thing Muslims are known for it’s their strong family values, which could only be sustained through a low divorce rate. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said: “The most hated and disliked act in the Sight of Allah, although it is lawful, is divorce” (narrated by Abu Dawood). In At-Tabaranee, the Prophet (SAW) is reported to have said: “Allah dislikes those who marry women just to taste how they feel.”

According to Shari'ah a wife is permitted to divorce her husband if he abuses her, if he cannot perform his marital duties or if he chooses not to. (Women in the Shade of Islam, Abdul Rahman Al-Sheha, Pg 102)

It is also available for the wife to stipulate in her marriage contract conditions according to which she can invoke divorce in the same way as a man. (Islam and Universal Peace, Sayyid Qutb, Pg 38)

"In Islam, after a husband has divorced his wife, a temporary husband can marry the divorcee for one night in order to allow her to return to her husband and family"

This argument stems from a misunderstanding of the following passage:

[Surah 2:229-230] A divorce is only permissible twice… if he has divorced her (a third time), then she is not lawful unto him thereafter until she has married another man….

If a man divorces his wife in haste, he is given two chances to reconcile differences with her, since it is preferable in Islam for married couples to stay together. In order to protect the woman from being repeatedly discarded, the third divorce becomes irrevocable. If, however, for some reason the woman becomes available again (perhaps her next husband is killed in battle) she can be married a fourth time to her previous husband. The reason for the woman (who was divorced thrice) to marry another man must be that the man desires her and has the intention of having an extended marriage with her. A marriage that is intended to be temporary is not valid in Islam. Bear in mind that these guidelines are the exception and not the rule. In most Muslim nations divorce is rare; reconciliation is always the objective. Islam is a complete way of life with laws to accommodate any circumstance that may arise.

"A Muslim women's charge of rape becomes an admission of adultery if the required male witnesses cannot be found"

The hadith of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) make it clear that a woman’s accusation of rape must be taken seriously. They do not require "four male witnesses"

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7 A hadith is a statement or action attributed to Prophet Muhammad (SAW). There are several collections of hadith. They are named after the person who compiled them.
It was narrated from Abdul Jabbar bin Wa'il that his father said: “A Woman was coerced (i.e., raped) during the time of the Messenger of Allah. He waived the legal punishment for her and carried it out on the one who had attacked her”

Wa'il ibn Hujr said: "When a woman went out in the time of the Prophet (SAW) for prayer, a man attacked her and overpowered (raped) her. She shouted and he went off, and when a company of the emigrants came by, she said: That man did such and such to me. They went and seized the man whom they thought had had intercourse with her and brought him to her. She said: Yes, this is he. Then they brought him to the Messenger of Allah (SAW). When he (the Prophet) was about to pass sentence, the man who (actually) had assaulted her stood up and said: Messenger of Allah, I am the man who did it to her. He (the Prophet) said to her: Go away, for Allah has forgiven you… and of the man who had had intercourse with her, he said: Stone him to death." He also said: He has repented to such an extent that if the people of Medina had repented similarly, it would have been accepted from them." (Sunan Abi Dawud 4379)

According to the Bible a woman raped in the city should be put to death for adultery:

[Deuteronomy 22:23-27] If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death—the girl because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man's wife. You must purge the evil from among you. But if out in the country a man happens to meet a girl pledged to be married and rapes her, only the man who has done this shall die. Do nothing to the girl; she has committed no sin deserving death. This case is like that of someone who attacks and murders his neighbor, for the man found the girl out in the country, and though the betrothed girl screamed, there was no one to rescue her.

The Qur'an contains a stern warning to anyone who would wrongfully accuse a woman of adultery:

[Surah 24:4] Those who accuse chaste women (of adultery) and produce not 4 witnesses flog them with 80 stripes and reject their testimony forever

[Surah 24:23] Surely those who accuse chaste believing women, unaware (of the evil), are cursed in this world and the hereafter, and they shall have a grievous chastisement.

It should be noted that the four witnesses (male or female) must confirm a true observation of the actual intercourse directly (This means the witnesses have seen the man's penis in the woman's vagina). Such a situation is only observed when the two parties are openly committing such an illegal act of indulgence. Similarly, in case of suspicion only, the stoning punishment would not be inflicted, based on the hadith: "Stop the application of capital punishment in case of suspicion" (Misconceptions on Human Rights in Islam, Abdul Rahman al-Sheha, Pg 134)

In Surah 2:282, which deals with the recording of debt, Allah commands us to “get two witnesses out of your own men” or “one man and two women.” However, in matters of divorce, the prescribed witnesses are “two just persons from among you” (Surah 65:2). Similarly, in matters of adultery, the testimony of the woman is equal to that of the man:

[Surah 24:6] And for those who launch a charge against their spouses, and have (in support) no evidence but their own, - their solitary evidence (can be received) if they bear witness four times (with an oath) by Allah that they are solemnly telling the truth;

[Surah 24:8] But it would avert the punishment from the wife, if she bears witness four times (with an oath) By Allah, that (her husband) is telling a lie;

8 Stoning is the punishment for an adulterer who is married. If the adulterer is unmarried the punishment is flogging.
"Jesus did not punish the adulteress. Muhammad did punish an adulteress"

The eighth chapter of John's gospel begins with a story about a woman "caught in adultery," which according to Christian scholars is not authentic.9

[John 8:3-11] Then the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. They said to him (Jesus), "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of committing adultery. In the law Moses commanded us to stone such woman, so what do you say?" Jesus stooped down and started writing on the ground with his finger. When they persisted in questioning him, he stood up and said to them, "The one without sin among you should be the first to throw a stone at her." Then he stooped down again and continued writing on the ground. When they heard this, they left one by one, starting with the older men. Only he was left, with the woman in the center. When Jesus stood up, he said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, Lord," she answered. "Neither do I condemn you," said Jesus. "Go, and from now on do not sin anymore."

If this passage were authentic it would have made Jesus (AS) a liar when he reportedly said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law" (Matt 5:17), because the law clearly states that the adulteress, and her partner in crime, should be "put to death":

[Leviticus 20:10] If a man commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death

Jesus (AS) was not asked to make a ruling. He had no authority to do so. If the woman were guilty she would have been stoned regardless of what Jesus thought or said. Jesus was in no position to uphold the law, but he did expect his nation to adhere to it:

[Matthew 5:19] Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least on the kingdom of heaven...

Christians have completely misunderstood the significance of these words attributed to Jesus (AS): “Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.” The point of the passage is not forgiveness; it is the fact that none of the accusers were righteous. Jesus (AS) even called them an adulterous generation:

[Matthew 16:4] A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." Jesus then left them and went away.

An unrighteous society has no right to pass judgment on one of its members.

The punishment for adultery is mandated in the Qur'an. It was not up to Muhammad (SAW). If the Prophet (SAW) had waived the sentence for this woman, the law would have become ineffective. And he would have had to disobey his Lord.

“Thou shalt not steal” and “Thou shalt not commit adultery” are COMMANDMENTS; they are not suggestions. The Church acknowledges these commandments, while rejecting the laws that accompany them. If we accept these commandments as binding, we must also accept the punishments that they carry.

9 See footnotes in the NIV and New American Bible corresponding to John 7:53—8:11
10 AS: an acronym used in place of Alayi Salaam, meaning, Peace be with him
The purpose of divine law is not to punish people; it is to mold the society. In Shari’ah it is very difficult to get a conviction for adultery. The woman in this hadith had confessed because she knew that the punishment she was facing on Judgment Day would be far greater than the penalty of death, and that through this worldly punishment, and her repentance, she would be cleansed. If the punishment seems severe it should make us reflect on how much this sin is hated by Allah, and the damage that this sort of activity does to society.

Sexual crimes are so common in Western society that their prevalence and partial acceptance make the Islamic penalty seem out of proportion to the crime. However, legislators ought to remember that adultery and its consequences, and illegitimacy and its consequences are defects in civilization. No stable society was ever constructed on a broken family unit. (Islam and Universal Peace, Sayyid Qutb, Pg 35)

"Muhammad married a nine-year old (Aisha)"

It is commonly assumed that Aisha (RA) had reached puberty before marrying because the Prophet (SAW) waited three years to marry her. Abu Bakr (RA), the father of Aisha, was Muhammad’s closest friend and most faithful follower, so it’s not likely that he would have given his daughter away unless she was ready to be married. It is also reported (through Aisha) that she was escorted to the Prophet's home by her mother.

When a girl reaches puberty her body is ready to bear children. Allah (SWT) created her this way. Of course, she may not be psychologically mature enough to get married, but if she is ready, and willing, there’s nothing to prevent her from being married in either the Qur’an or the Bible. Even in the U.S. there are several states that do not have a minimum age requirement for marriage.

Whatever her age was the marriage of Aisha (RA) to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was not considered inappropriate by anyone at that time; if it were the Prophet’s enemies would have taken issue with it, because they were constantly looking for ways to ruin his credibility. In fact, it was not until the twentieth century that anyone really took issue with the age of Aisha at the time of her marriage.

It's also important to realize that Aisha is one of the most honored women in the world, both inside and outside the Muslim community. Through her numerous narrations of hadith she provided a wealth of information on the teachings of Muhammad (SAW) and, as a teacher, was respected by men and women alike. Thus, it is apparent that her "child marriage" did not have any negative effect on her.

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11 RA: an acronym used in place of RadhiAllahu An, meaning, May Allah be pleased with him
Slavery
"Islam teaches that dark skin is some sort of a curse or penalty"

This is an absurd lie! The Qur'an addresses ALL of mankind in countless verses. In fact, Bilal, one of the Prophet’s greatest companions, was black. The hadith that this comes from is not authentic, and the Surah used to support it has nothing to do with race. The 'black' face mentioned in the verse is symbolic of a sinner, while the 'white' face symbolizes purity. Only a complete ignoramus would interpret this as a curse for dark-skinned people:

[Surah 3:106-107] On the Day (of Resurrection) when some faces will become white and some faces will become black; as for those whose faces will become black (to them will be said): “Did you reject faith after accepting it? Then taste the torment…and for those whose faces will become white, they will be in Allah’s Mercy…”

"The practice of slavery is tolerated in Islam"

While it’s true that Islam does not forbid slavery outright, it does forbid the mistreatment of slaves. By giving slaves rights and encouraging Muslims to free them, Islam was able to eliminate slavery long before the West. Our slave relationship with Allah is a fundamental part of this, because if we are all slaves of Allah, how can we be slaves of one another? Being a slave of Allah is not only an honor; it is a unique relationship wherein the slave benefits from his master. The Christian prefers to think of himself as one of God’s children, but we are not children of God; we are children of Adam, and Adam was a created by God

The Qur’an encourages the Muslim to free slaves and establishes the equality of mankind before Allah:

[Surah 2:177] It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces Towards east or West; but it is righteousness to believe in Allah and the Last Day, the Angels, the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your sustenance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves…

[Surah 49:13] O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily, the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you.

The Bible, on the other hand, makes a sharp distinction between a slave woman and a free woman:

[Galatians 4:30-31] But what does the Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son" (Gen. 21:10). Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

Rather than abolishing slavery with a manifesto, which would have left the existing slaves out in the wild, unable to start new lives, Islam started with asserting the humanity of slaves and equality of everyone in the eyes of Allah, so that people would start dealing with slaves as a trust in their hands and as brethren and children to be taken care of:

[Surah 4:36] And serve Allah and do not associate any thing with Him and be good to the parents and to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the neighbor of (your) kin and the alien neighbor, and the companion in a journey and the wayfarer and those whom your right hands possess
The entire society depended heavily on the slavery system in taking care of the economic and social needs. In fact, this system of slavery was not restricted to the society of the Arabian Peninsula; it was worldwide. Islam did not command to stop all dealings with slavery, but rather wisely drained the sources of slavery. Islam aimed at reaching a stage where all activities would vanish completely. (Misconceptions on Human Rights in Islam, Abdul Rahman al-Sheha, p. 145)

Islam opened many channels for the freeing of slaves and prohibited enslaving any human that was born free, with the exception of those captured in battle. This was inevitable because the enslavement of war captives was an international institution that could not be unilaterally abolished by Islam.

The type of slavery that took place in the United States prior to the Civil War is not tolerated in Islam. The slightest mistreatment of a slave can result in a court order mandating their release. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said: "Your slaves are your brethren. Whosoever has one of his brethren under his control (working for him) must feed him of what he eats, clothe him of what he clothes himself, and do not overburden them with what they cannot bear." (Bukhari)

"A Muslim man is allowed to amass slave girls in addition to his wives"

It is permissible for a Muslim to have a marital relationship with a "slave" outside of marriage, as long as he publicizes the relationship and respects her rights. She would essentially be his wife, but would not receive a contract or dowry. And, it is assumed that she has given her consent to the relationship.

This would not necessarily be an additional wife. The verse says: "if you fear you cannot be equitable (between multiple wives) then (marry) only one, OR what your right hand possesses" (Surah 4:3). The point of the verse is fairness between wives.

During the time of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), after a battle with the tribe of Awtas, the Muslims had taken as prisoners of war several women who were married, but not accompanied by their husbands. They were assumed to be unlawful for re-marriage until Allah (SWT) made them lawful on the grounds that their previous husbands had abandoned them and thus broken the bond of marriage between them:

[Surah 4:24]
Also (forbidden are) woman already married, except those (captives) whom your right hands possess…

When examining these verses we must remember that these are provisions for extreme cases only. The idea is to avoid situations that lead to adultery and provide women with the protection of a husband. These scenarios were relevant at the time of the Prophet (SAW) and at times through the classical period, but in recent years one would be hard pressed to find a case where similar rulings would be needed. Muslim men by and large have remained monogamous from the time these verses were revealed. The Qur’an is a book for all times, people, and places.

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12 Prisoners of war could also be set free, or ransomed at the discretion of the commanding officer (See Surah 47:4)
"The Bible’s teachings about the dignity of all human beings before God ultimately allowed anti-slavery forces to work for abolition."

The fact that a predominantly Christian nation (i.e., the U.S.) condoned some of the most brutal slavery in history is a clear indication that the Bible’s teachings were ineffective against slavery. In fact, the Bible actually promotes slavery:

[Leviticus 25:44]
Your male and female slaves are to come from the nations around you; from them you may buy slaves.

[Eph 6:5] Slaves be obedient to your human masters

[1 Tim 6:1] Those who are under the yoke of slavery must regard their masters as worthy of full respect

[Titus 2:9] Slaves are to be under the control of their masters in all respects, giving them satisfaction, not talking back to them…

[1 Peter 2:18] Slaves, be subject to your masters with all reverence

According to Matthew Jesus regarded the Canaanites as dogs:

[Matthew 15:21-28] 21 Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. 22 A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.” 23 Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.” 24 He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” 25 The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said. 26 He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.” 27 “Yes Lord,” she said. “But even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.” 28 Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.

"The Koran nowhere teaches that all human beings have dignity before Allah"

Wrong again…

[Surah 49:13] O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily, the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you.

[Surah 17:70] We have honored the sons of Adam…

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) once rebuked Omar and Abu Bakr, his two closest companions, for just commenting on how their servant was sleeping in late one morning.

"The only place where slavery exists today is in Muslim countries"
"In Sudan, some Muslims kidnap Christians and sell them into slavery"

On an annual basis, as many as 50,000 people are brought to the U.S. and enslaved. Most are forced to work as prostitutes (sex slaves) in private homes or public clubs, laborers in sweatshops and on farms, or as servants in the homes of the affluent and influential. (“Slavery in America” - www.pbs.org)

The Sudanese government claims that the “slavery” is in fact hostage taking among rival tribes in the largely non-Muslim south. “South Sudan is,” reports Eric Margolis in the January 27, 1997 issue of the Toronto Sun, “inhabited by animist or Christian Nilotic tribesmen who still live in the Iron Age.”
According to the McNair report on these allegations, investigators could find no evidence of Muslims enslaving Africans (or anyone else) in Sudan. There is evidence, however, of the People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), which is led by the self-professed Christian, Colonel John Garang, abducting and enslaving African youngsters for military duty and forced labor. The dismal and often fatal plight of these children has been verified and documented by such organizations as Human Rights Watch/Africa and the Children’s Rights Project.

A December 6, 1999, editorial in the New York Times said of the SPLA: "Though its members claim to be Christians resisting Islamization, they have behaved like an occupying army, killing, raping, and pillaging." (Source: Target Sudan, Mauri Saalakhan, page 132)

The mainstream media seems anxious to play Christian Solidarity International’s film footage and photographs depicting, what appears to be, Muslims selling Africans to benevolent Americans and Europeans, who have taken it upon themselves to facilitate the release of these “enslaved” people. However, a closer look reveals that this is not the case at all. Evidence shows that these individuals were hostages taken in battles and local skirmishes fought over disputed land and water rights. Furthermore, these abductions invariably took place in areas that were not controlled by Muslims, but (at that time) by the SPLA. Alex de Waul, co-director for African Rights, has reported: “It is most probable that they were in fact paying ransom to a go-between in a scheme whereby families, through a middleman, pay for their hostage children to be redeemed.” Anti-Slavery International, which has reported on allegations of Sudanese government involvement in slavery, reveals that: “The charge that (Muslim) government troops engage in raids for the purpose of seizing slaves is not backed by the evidence.”

In the February 26, 2002, edition of the Washington Post, the "slavery redemption" scheme was exposed as a fraud. This monumental fraud was also exposed on the CBS news magazine program, 60 Minutes on May 14, 2002 (Source: Target Sudan, Mauri Saalakhan, page 85, 134)
**Religious tolerance**

"The Dome of the Rock was purposely constructed in the site of the old Jewish Temple."

The Israelis have long claimed that the Dome was constructed over their temple but have never been able to prove it, despite massive excavating projects. If the Dome was built on the site of the temple it was certainly not done intentionally:

When Jerusalem submitted (peacefully) to the leadership of Omar Ibn Khattab (RA), the second successor to Prophet Muhammad (SAW), they were granted security “to all, whether sick or sound, security for their lives, their possessions, their churches and their crosses, and for all that concerns their religion.”

“In company with the Patriarch, Omar (RA) visited the holy places, and it is said (in authentic sources) while they were in the Church of the Resurrection, as it was the appointed hour of prayer, the Patriarch bade the caliph (leader) offer his prayers there, but he thoughtfully refused, saying that if he were to do so, his followers might afterwards claim it as a place of Muslim worship.”

(Prof. Thomas Arnold, *The Spread of Islam in the World*, pp. 56-57)

“Historians know that the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, considered by Jews to be one of the holiest places of worship, was completely buried under heaps of debris. When the Ottoman Khalifah Sultan Sulayman found out about it, he sent an order to his governor in Jerusalem for him to remove all the rubble and debris, clean the area, and make it accessible for Jews to visit”

(Tolerance: *The West and Muslims*, p. 67)

"Islam promotes disrespect of religious icons for other faiths"

Not true according to these verses:

[Surah 6:108] Revile ye not those whom they call upon besides Allah

[Surah 22:40] …For had it not been that Allah checks one set of people by means of another, monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is mentioned much would surely have been pulled down…

"Christians face persecution today in many Muslim countries because the Koran says they are under Allah’s curse"

If Christians face persecution in these countries it’s not because of Islam. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) once housed a Christian delegation in the mosque and allowed them to conduct their prayer service there.

Many small Christian sects that were regarded as heretical by larger sects have been protected and preserved until today by Islam. (*Non-Muslims under Shi'ah*, A. Rahman I. Doi, p. 79)

Patriarch Ghaytho spoke favorably of Muslim authority: “The Arabs, to whom the Lord has given control over the world, treat us as you know; they are not enemies of Christianity. Indeed, they praise our community, and treat our priests and saints with dignity, and offer aid to our churches and monasteries”


“At the time of the Muslim Arab rulers, the conquered inhabitants of the Island (Sicily) were comfortable and contented when compared to their Italian brothers, who were collapsing from the yoke of the Langiornanis and the Franks” (*Islam: The Perennial Religion*, p. 290).
"Muhammad referred to the Jews as apes and swine"

Allah (SWT) revealed in His Book (the Qur'an) a punishment, which He issued to a specific group of Jews, long before the time of Muhammad (SAW), for using deceitful means to avoid observing the Sabbath. They would set up nets just before the Sabbath in order to catch fish in abundance during the Sabbath:

[Surah 7:163] And ask them about the town that was by the sea; when they transgressed the matter of the Sabbath: when their fish came to them openly on the Sabbath day, and did not come to them on the day they had no Sabbath. Thus we made a trial for them, for they used to rebel

[Surah 2:65] And indeed you knew those amongst you who transgressed in the matter of the Sabbath. We said to them: "Be you monkeys, despised and rejected.

[Surah 5:59-60] Say: “O People of the Scripture! Do you criticize us for no other reason than that we believe in Allah, and what has been sent down to us and in that which has been sent down before (us)...Say: “Shall I inform you of something worse than that, regarding the recompense from Allah: those (Jews) who incurred the Curse of Allah and His Wrath, and those of whom (some) He transformed into monkeys and swine...

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) explained these ayat (verses) in the following hadith:

[Ibn Abi Hatim 1:210] The young people turned into monkeys while the old people turned into swine.

[Muslim 4:2051] Allah’s messenger (SAW) was asked if the current monkeys and swine were those whom Allah transformed. He said, “Allah never destroyed a people by transforming them and making offspring or descendants for them. The monkeys and swine existed before that”

[At-Tabari 2:167] Allah turned them into monkeys because of their sins. They only lived for three days. They did not eat, drink or have offspring

The Qur’an honors many Israelite prophets, including Jesus, Moses and David. An entire chapter is dedicated to Prophet Joseph (AS), the son of Jacob (AS), and another chapter is named after Mary, the mother of Jesus. The children of Israel are addressed in the Qur’an as the People of the Book out of respect for their knowledge.

In the Bible Jesus (AS) reportedly called the Jews “vipers” and a “wicked generation”:

[Matthew 12:34] You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.

[Matthew 16:4] A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.” Jesus then left them and went away.

"The animosity between the Muslims and the Jews is caused by Islamic religious concepts"

It was the ‘religious concept’ of Zionism that initiated the conflict in the Middle East and has been the driving force behind all Israeli aggression ever since. Muslims and Jews had enjoyed centuries of relatively good relations prior to the establishment of Israel. Orthodox Jews generally do not agree with the political policies of Zionism. They are still waiting for their Messiah to deliver them to the Promised Land. Even some secular Jews have spoken out against Israel.

Christian Fundamentalists believe that they can facilitate the return of Jesus (AS) by invoking Armageddon in Palestine.
"Jews and Christians are called infidels because Islam teaches Muslims to hate them"

A Muslim should not hate anyone, especially Christians:

[Surah 5:82] Verily…you will find the nearest in love to the believers (Muslims) those who say: "We are Christians." That is because amongst them are priests and monks, and they are not proud.

The meaning of the English term infidel is: ‘one who does not believe in religion.’ Jews and Christians are respectfully referred to as ‘People of the Book’ in the Qur’an because of their belief in God:

[Surah 29:46] And dispute not with the People of the Book, unless it be in a way that is better…and say, "We believe in that which has been revealed to us and that which has been revealed to you; our God and your God is One…"

Many people like to translate the Arabic word kafir as infidel, but a kafir is one who rejects Islam after clear evidence has been presented to him. Most Christians have never received the message of Islam, and this makes them jahiloon (ignorant of Islam), not kafiroon (plural).

It is also important to understand that the word infidel was first used by the Church of Rome to dehumanize Muslims and Jews at the time of the crusades.

"Saudi Arabia forbids all religions except Islam to be practiced on its soil."

The kingdom of Saudi Arabia has no non-Muslim citizens, but admits millions of transients, who belong to various religions. The laws of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia do not prevent freedom of belief and personal religion for its foreign residents. Nobody can interfere in their private worship, or compel them to abandon their beliefs. There has never been any incident where a Christian or anyone else was exposed to pressure or punishment because of his belief.

(Saleh Hussein Al-Aayed, The Rights of Non-Muslims in the Islamic World, appendix)

Religious minorities have been present for centuries in the Muslim world and continue to flourish there. Mosques, synagogues and churches can be found in such countries as Egypt, Jordan and Syria. Saudi Arabia is the exception, not the rule, in the Muslim world. The restriction on churches and synagogues is similar to that of the Vatican, which does not allow houses of worship of other religions within its bounds because it is considered holy to its followers. [Hussam Ayloush, CAIR-LA]

"The testimony of a non-Muslim is not valued as highly as that of a Muslim"

Ali ibn Abu Talib (RA), the 4th Caliph, once found his missing shield with a Christian and immediately took him to the judge. When Ali (RA) claimed, “This is my shield which I never sold or gave to anybody,” the judge asked the Christian: “What do you say about the Caliph’s claim?” The man answered: “This is my shield and the Caliph is lying.” The judge then addressed Ali (RA): “O Caliph, have you proof of ownership?” Ali smiled and said: “The judge is right, I have no proof.” The judge then gave his verdict in favor of the Christian who walked away with the shield.

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) rejected the testimony of certain people based on their character or behavior, but not their religious convictions. According to Sulayman ibn Musa the Prophet (SAW) said: "The testimony of a deceitful man or woman, of an adulterer or adulteress, and of one who harbors rancor against his brother is not allowable" (Sunan Abi Dawud)
"Christian missionaries are not allowed any form of visible evangelization in an Islamic state"

Non-Muslims have every right under Shari'ah to open their own schools and to be visited by missionaries of their own faith. They are free to do missionary activities and to propagate their faith. (Non-Muslims under Shari'ah, A. Rahman I. Doi)

Non-Muslims have full freedom to run their missionary organizations and evangelist activities. They are free to propagate their creed openly. (Maududi, A.A., Rights of non-Muslims in an Islamic state)

“Some of the major evangelical denominations who have established long and effective ministries among the Arab people are now finding it difficult to continue their efforts due to the distrust generated by the well advertised support of Israel by many fundamentalist denominations.” (William Baker – Theft of a Nation)

"Islam mandates death for apostates"

The space-time impact of the issue of apostasy relates to a conspiracy on the part of some Jewish groups to create chaos and confusion in the young Muslim community by using the tactic of apostasy. That is, confessing Islam and then renouncing it as a group (See Surah 3:72-73). The question of apostasy is also related to the very serious question of hypocrisy. The hypocrites of Medina presented a dual problem for the young Muslim community. They helped the enemy, hindered war preparations and action, waged psychological war against the Muslims and helped to destroy their morale (See Surah 9:47-52). The conceptual confusion occurs in the early period of Islam, when political conspiracy took the form of apostasy while the real goal was to destroy the Muslim community. The confusion lies in taking the act for what it appeared to be and not for what it was meant to be. (The Islamic Theory of International Relations, Abdul Hamid A. AbuSulayman, pp. 103-104)

Dr. Ahmad Ar-Raysouni, a professor of Islamic jurisprudence at Moroccan Universities, explains the issue of apostasy as follows:

The Qur’an mentions those who renounce Islam in a number of places without prescribing any worldly punishment:

“And if any of you Turn back from their faith and die in unbelief, their works will bear no fruit in this life and in the Hereafter; they will be companions of the Fire and will abide therein” (Qur’an, 2:217)

“Those who turn back as apostates after Guidance was clearly shown to them, - the Evil One has instigated them and busied them up with false hopes” (Qur’an, 47:25)

The Prophetic traditions related to this issue reveal another angle to the strategy of apostasy that took place during Islam’s first generation. Apostasy during that time was not merely switching beliefs, nor a simple change in creed or thinking. It was an act of sedition or renouncing one army for another, which by default meant declaring war on the former. This is alluded to in a few authentic prophetic traditions the most famous being the statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him) “The blood of a Muslim is sacred save in three cases…”

In the narration of the scholar al-Tirmidhi’s text on behalf of the Prophet’s companion, ‘Abdullah bin Mas’oud, we find the Prophet’s statement, “The blood of a Muslim is sacred save in three cases: murder, illegal fornication and the one who renounced Islam and fought against the community [of Muslims].” This statement of the Prophet did not restrict itself to “one who renounced Islam” but added: “fought against the community,” “abandoned the Muslims,” or, in another narration, “rebelled against the Muslims.” This addition must then impact the ruling and bring about benefit.
The statement “fought against the Muslims” implies an act of war and insubordination against the Muslim community, and joining ranks with its enemies. This is clarified by the narration of Imām Abū Dawūd and Imām al-Nasāʾī on behalf of ʿĀisha who narrated that the Prophet said, “The blood of the Muslim who testifies that there is nothing worthy of worship save Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, is not permissible to be spilt save in three cases: A man who commits adultery, he should be stoned and a man who sets out declaring war upon Allah and His messenger. He should be killed, crucified or expelled and if he murdered, he should be killed.”

In the narration of al-Nasāʾī and Imām al-Tahāwī in his text on problematic hadiths we find, “A man who renounced Islam declaring war upon Allah and His messenger...He should be killed, crucified or expelled from the land.”

These narrations serve to restrict and clarify the texts which allude to the general punishment of killing anyone who apostates. The general nature of the statement illustrates that the apostasy of a person who should be killed, was the kind related to insubordination and fighting against the Islamic community, linked to making mockery of the religion, while joining the ranks of the enemies of the Muslim community.

If this is the case, then the punishments for compound apostasy [coupled with insubordination] are not from the class of punishments that are fixed for certain crimes, rather they are from the class of discretionary punishments related to Shariʿah, politics and executive orders. The orders were ultimately determined by the realities facing the Islamic state regarding stability, turmoil, strength and weakness; in consideration of the overall societal harms caused by the apostate guilty of sedition.

As for plain apostasy, public or secret, this is not the apostasy mentioned in the Qurʾan and the Prophet’s statements. Therefore, I understand that this type of apostasy is not related to the apostasy linked to the punishments mentioned above. Rather there is another group of texts that address this type of apostasy namely,

“There is no compulsion in religion” (Qurʾan, 2:256).

This verse confirms, definitively, that there is absolutely no place in Islam for coercion; there is absolutely no room for it in areas of faith and that it could never serve as the platform for belief to flourish nor bring about any benefit. This is a certain fact which none can deny. Religion is based on faith; and faith is based on recognition and acceptance. It comes through affirmation, satisfaction and a tranquility, which settles in the mind and heart.

Allah says,

“Allah has endeared the Faith to you, and has made it beautiful in your hearts, and He has made hateful to you Unbelief, wickedness, and rebellion: such indeed are those who walk in righteousness” (Qurʾan, 49:7).

If there were a place in Islam for coercion and forcing others to embrace it, then it would be for Allah [the Glorified] to do so. For He is the Unique, the Dominator, guiding whom He wills from disbelief to faith. And if He willed, he could guide all of humanity [to Islam]. However, from His majestic wisdom He refused to do so:

“And if your Lord had pleased, surely all those who are in the earth would have believed, all of them; will you then force men till they become believers?” (Qurʾan, 10:99)

“So say: Then Allah’s is the conclusive argument; so if He please, He would certainly guide you all” (Qurʾan, 6:149).

“And if Allah had pleased, they would not have set up others (with Him) and We have not appointed you a keeper over them, and you are not placed in charge of them” (Qurʾan, 6:107).
Therefore, if Allah [the Most High] did not coerce His creation towards belief in Him, nor did He permit His Prophet (peace be upon him) to do so instructing him, then how could He allow, or order, the leaders of the Muslims to force one to remain as a Muslim or return to it under the threat of death?

“Remind them, for thou art but a reminder. You art not to manage (men’s) affairs” (Qur’an, 88:21-22).

"Islam uses fear to restrain its adherents and to influence the conversion of unbelievers"

It is the fear of Allah that keeps the sincere Muslim steadfast in his practice of Islam.

Aside from a few isolated incidents, Muslims have always honored the Words of Allah: “There is no compulsion in religion” (Surah 2:256). Muslims ruled India as a minority for centuries, leaving their temples in tact.

“In contrast to the Christian Empire, which attempted to impose Christianity on its subjects, the Arabs extended recognition to religious minorities, and accepted their presence” (Islam and the Arabs, Ron Landau, Pg 119)

With the establishment of Christianity as the state religion by the Roman emperors in the 4th century, heretics came to be considered enemies of the state. St. Augustine gave a somewhat reluctant approval to action by the state against heretics, but the church generally disapproved of coercion and physical penalties. During the 12th century opinion began to change, in reaction to resurgence of heresy in an organized form, especially the Albigensianism of southern France. After less vigorous efforts by his predecessors, Pope Innocent III organized a Crusade against the group. He issued punitive legislation against them and sent preachers to the area. The Inquisition properly so called did not come into existence until 1231, with the constitution Excommunicamus of Pope Gregory IX. By his action the pope lessened the bishops' responsibility for orthodoxy, placed inquisitors under the special jurisdiction of the papacy, and established severe penalties. The inquisitors usually had a kind of jury, composed of both clergy and laity, to assist them in arriving at a verdict. They were permitted to imprison suspects who were thought to be lying. In 1252 Pope Innocent IV, under the influence of the revival of Roman law, officially sanctioned the use of torture to extract the truth from suspects. The most severe penalty the inquisitors could themselves impose was life imprisonment. Thus, when the inquisitors handed a guilty person over to civil authorities, it was tantamount to a demand for that person's execution. Alarmed by the spread of Protestantism, Pope Paul III in 1542 heeded reformers such as Gian Pietro Cardinal Carafa and established in Rome the Congregation of the Inquisition, also known as the Roman Inquisition and the Holy Office. Although later popes tempered the zeal of the Roman Inquisition, they began to see it as the customary instrument of papal government for regulating church order and doctrinal orthodoxy; for example, it tried and condemned Galileo in 1633. (Encyclopedia Encarta)

"Shariah (Islamic law) views non-Muslims as second-class citizens"

The Arabic term dhimmi, used to refer to non-Muslim citizens, is not a pejorative as some would claim. It means: ‘the people of testament and trust’. The Shari’ah protects non-Muslims from oppression and injustice by granting them rights that guarantee fair treatment:

[Surah 60:8] Allah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of your religion nor drove you out of your homes. Verily, Allah loves those who deal with equity.

“The Shari’ah, which is the legal and moral code of Islam, did not confine itself to endowing its own adherents with rights; one of the distinguishing features of the Shari’ah is that it includes non-Muslims along with Muslims in many of these rights.” (Saleh Hussein Al-Aayed, Ph.D., The Rights of Non-Muslims in the Islamic World, p. 13)
The pledge of security and guarantee given to the non-Muslims is like the political ‘nationality’ given in modern times on the basis of which people acquire all their rights. The distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim is merely one of political administration and not of human rights. Apart from the rights and obligations involving worship, they are equal to Muslims with respect to all other rights and obligations related to social life and citizenship.

(Non-Muslims under Shai’ah, A. Rahman I. Doi, pp. 22, 23, 29)

The non-Muslim citizens of an Islamic state are entitled to enjoy the same rights and privileges as Muslims in expressing their views and opinions in any public affair. They have freedom of conscience, of opinion and of expression through speeches, questioning and protests. They enjoy the same rights as Muslims in respect to sending in written petitions on any national or communal matter...they are even entitled to criticize the government and its officials, including the head of state.

(Maududi, A.A., Rights of non-Muslims in an Islamic state)

The Islamic state must protect any non-Muslim living in its territory, since they have the general rights of any Muslim. After the conquest of Syria, when the People of the Covenant realized how loyal the Muslims were to them, they became fierce in their resistance to the enemies of the Muslims.

(Saleh Hussein Al-Aayed, Ph.D., The Rights of Non-Muslims in the Islamic World, p.46)

When the Tartars overran Syria, Ibn Taymiyah went to their leader Qultusha to plead for the release of prisoners. The Tartar leader agreed to release the Muslim prisoners, but Ibn Taymiyah protested: “We will only be satisfied with the release of all the Jewish and Christian prisoners; we do not abandon a prisoner, whether of our own people or those of the covenant” (Non-Muslims in Islamic Society, p.10)

Ali ibn Abu Talib (RA), the 4th Khalifah (leader of the Muslims) once said of the non-Muslims living under his jurisdiction, “They have paid the Jizya (tax) so their lives and property are of the same values as ours”

Etienne Denier wrote: “The Muslims are the opposite of what many people believe: they never used force outside of Hijaz (the area of western Arabia surrounding Mecca and Madina). The presence of Christians was evidence of this fact: they retained their religion in complete security during the eight centuries that Muslims ruled their lands. Some of them held high posts in the palace in Cordoba, but when these same Christians obtained power over the country, suddenly their first concern was to exterminate the Muslims” (Muhammad the Messenger of Allah, p. 332)

Non-Muslim citizens in an Islamic state also enjoy the right to vote in the election of the head of state, and thus contribute in the political life of the country. In all matters relating to general problems of the country or to the interest of the non-Muslim minorities, the non-Muslims would have full political representation. Various sects of Christians were represented in the council of the Muslim Turkish Empire by their patriarchs, on the provincial and district councils by their bishops, and in the village council by their priests. Famous scholars like Al-Mawardi and Abu Ya’la Al-Farra supported the view that the Caliph may lawfully appoint non-Muslim citizens of the state as ministers and members of the executive council.

(Non-Muslims under Shari’ah, A. Rahman I. Doi)

What does the Bible say?

[Galatians 6:10] while we have the opportunity let us do good to all, especially to those who belong to the family of the faith.

[Matt 18:15-17] 'If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault … If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

13 In the reign of Al-Mu’ta’idid (892-902 CE), the governor of Anbar, Umar Bin Yusef, was a Christian.

(The Spread of Islam in the World, p. 64)
"Islamic governments do not finance the construction of churches"

“After the conquest of Egypt, when the Jacobites took advantage of the removal of the Byzantine authorities to dispossess the Orthodox Christians of their churches, the Muslims returned them to their rightful owners when the Orthodox Christians presented them with proof of ownership”  
(*Invitation of Islam*, pp. 87-88)

In a letter to Simeon, the Archbishop of Rifardashir and leader of all bishops in Persia, the Nestorian Patriarch Geoff III wrote, “The Arabs, to whom Allah has given power over all of the world, know how wealthy you are, for they live among you. In spite of this, they do not assail the Christian Creed. To the Contrary, they have sympathy with our religion, they venerate our priests and the saints of our Lord, and they graciously donate to our churches and monasteries” (Thomas Arnold, *Invitation to Islam*, p. 102)

"Islamic law requires Christians to pay a special tax, known as *Jizya*"

_Jizyah_ is a tax that non-Muslims pay for the military services of the state. Like the U.S. military, which is funded through tax money, the military forces of the Islamic state require(d) funding. Muslims are subject to an obligatory payment of *Zakat* (similar to tithing), which is also collected by the state.

_Jizyah_ is not incumbent on all non-Muslim subjects. Poor and young people, women, monks, blind and disabled people are all exempt from the tax. In fact, the state is responsible for taking care of these people and providing them with expenses from the state treasury. (*The Message of Islam*)

Sir Thomas Arnold wrote: “This _Jizyah_ was so light that it did not constitute a burden on them, especially when we observe that it exempted them from compulsory military service.” The _Jizyah_ was waived for those who participated militarily. Khalid Al-Waleed, a Muslim leader, once said: “I have covenanted with you for both tribute and protection. If we protect you we will receive the tribute; otherwise we will take nothing until we protect you”

In modern times the institution of _Jizyah_ has been replaced by conventional tax laws, yet the critics of Islam continue to promote it as an attack against non-Muslims.

"Most Muslim majority states have laws that greatly discriminate against non-Muslims"

Their laws discriminate against everyone, because they are not based on the Qur’an and Sunnah (teachings of Prophet Muhammad). They may attempt to enforce the criminal law of Islam, but this is only a small part of the _Shari’ah_ (Islamic jurisprudence).

“In issues of criminal justice, the scholars of Islamic Law declared that sentences could only be passed upon non-Muslims in matters that they also considered a sin”  
(*The Rights of the People of the Covenant in the Islamic State*, pp. 20-21)

“The people of the covenant⁴ had their own courts in which they used to settle matters if they wished; if not, they could resort to the Islamic justice system” (See Surah 5:42)  
(Saleh Hussein Al-Aayed, Ph.D., *The Rights of Non-Muslims in the Islamic World*, p. 29)

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⁴ _People of the Covenant_: non-Muslims living in an Islamic state are guaranteed protection and rights through the payment of _Jizyah_ (tax).
“Since the Islamic law was specifically for Muslims, the Islamic state allowed the people of other religious assertions to go to their own courts”
(Adam Metz, Islamic Civilization in the Fourth Century of the Hijrah, vol. 1, p.85)

“They left their laws, regulations, and beliefs intact, and only imposed on them the Jizyah, which was paltry when compared to what they had been paying in taxes previously”
(LeBon G., The Civilization of the Arabs, p. 605)

Under the Shari'ah, Jews and Christians are permitted to follow their own laws regarding marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance. Jews and Muslims living in the U.S. have no such rights. Usury is forbidden in Shari'ah, but non-Muslims are not debarred from lending money on interest in Islam. Jews and Christians were even given their holy days off. The Prophet (SAW) said: “And you are a Jew. It is incumbent that you should not transgress the regulations of the Sabbath Day”

"If a Muslim and a Christian wish to marry, the Christian must publicly accept Islam"

A Christian woman can marry a Muslim man and continue to practice her religion openly, however, a Christian man cannot marry a Muslim woman unless he first accepts Islam. This law protects the woman’s right to religious freedom, whether Christian or Muslim. The Muslim husband is obligated to accept the religion of his Christian wife; he accepts her prophet (Jesus) and her book (the Bible). The Christian husband, on the other hand, who rejects Muhammad (SAW) and the Qur’an, could not be expected to respect the religion of a Muslim wife.

"Non-Muslims are not to be given the Muslim greeting (‘Peace be with you’)"

Not so according to Hadith:

[Muslim 26:5380] It was reported by Anas bin Malik that Allah’s Messenger (SAW) said, “When the People of the Book offer you salutations, you should say: The same to you”

Not so according to Qur’an:

[Surah 4: 86] When you are greeted with a greeting, greet in return with what is better than it, or (at least) return it equally…

"Non-Muslims living in a Islamic state are forbidden to practice their religion openly"

One day a funeral procession passed by and the Prophet (SAW) stood up. The people objected, “But it is the funeral of a Jew.” The Prophet (SAW) then responded, “Is he not a human being?” (Bukhari vol. 2)

Thomas Arnold mentions in Invitation to Islam that there were many people in Italy who longed for Ottoman rule: they wished that they could be granted the same freedom and tolerance that the Ottomans gave their Christian subjects, for they had despaired of achieving it under any Christian government. He also mentions that great numbers of Jews fled persecution in Spain at the end of the 15th century and took refuge in Turkey.
Richard Stebbins spoke of the Christian experience under the rule of the Turks: “They (the Turks) allowed all of them, Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox, to preserve their religion… they allowed them their churches to perform their sacred rituals in Constantinople and many other places. This is in contrast to what I can testify to from living in Spain for twelve years: not only were we forced to attend their Papist celebrations, but also our lives and the lives of our grandchildren were in danger.”

*(Religious Minorities: The Islamic Solution, pp. 56-57)*

Khalid ibn Al-Walid, a companion of the Prophet (SAW), had granted religious freedom to the people of Anat: “They (Christians) may blow their *Naqus* at any time they please either during the day or night, except at the time of the five daily (Muslim) prayers. They may, if they like, take out the processions of their crosses during their religious festivals.”

Recently in Michigan (circa 2003), Muslims were met with angry protest when they tried to broadcast the *Adhan* (call to prayer) in their neighborhood.

All of the old and famous churches of Cairo were built during the Islamic period. The famous church of Mar Marcus in Alexandria was built between 39-56 AH,¹ and the first church of Fustat, old Cairo, was built between 48-68 AH (near the end of the 7th century CE).

In the time of Omar ibn Al-Khitab (RA), the second *Caliph*, certain Muslims had usurped a piece of land belonging to a Jew and then constructed a mosque on its site. Such a mosque cannot be accepted as a place of worship, and such religious zeal is actually condemned in *Shari'ah*. Omar (RA), therefore, ordered the demolition of the mosque and the restoration of the land to the Jew. Professor Cardahi, a Lebanese Christian scholar, wrote in 1933 about this land: “The house, Bait Al-Yahudi, still exists and is well known.”

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¹ AH: After *Hijrah* (Migration) - The Islamic calendar begins with the year Muhammad (SAW) migrated from Mecca to Medina to establish the first Islamic state.