

## HAZRAT UMAR FAROOQ ( R.Z )

### The second caliph of holy prophet( s.a.w )

#### Early life

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Umar was born in [Mecca](#) to the [Banu Adi](#) clan, which was responsible for arbitrations among the tribes. His father was [Khattab ibn Nufayl](#) and his mother was Fatima bint Hasham, from the tribe of [Banu Makhzum](#). He is said to have belonged to a middle class family. In his youth he used to tend to his father's camels in the plains near [Mecca](#). His father was famed for his intelligence among his tribe. He was a middle class merchant and is believed to be a ruthless man and emotional [polytheist](#) who often treated Umar badly. As obvious from Umar's own statement regarding his father during his later political rule, Umar said, "My father Al-Khattab was a ruthless man. He used to make me work hard; if I didn't work he used to beat me and he used to work me to exhaustion."<sup>[4]</sup>

Despite literacy being uncommon in pre-Islamic Arabia, Umar learned to read and write in his youth. Though not a poet himself, he developed a love for poetry and literature.<sup>[5]</sup> According to the tradition of [Quraish](#), while still in his teenage years, Umar learned [martial arts](#), horse riding and wrestling. He was tall and physically powerful and was soon to become a renowned wrestler.<sup>[5][6]</sup> Umar was also a gifted [orator](#), and due to his intelligence and overwhelming personality, he succeeded his father as an [arbitrator](#) of conflicts among the tribes.<sup>[7]</sup>

In addition, Umar followed the traditional profession of Quraish. He became a merchant and had several journeys to [Rome](#) and [Persia](#), where he is said to have met the various scholars and analyzed the Roman and Persian societies closely. However, as a merchant he is believed to have never been successful.<sup>[8][9]</sup> Drinking [alcohol](#) was very common among the Quraish, and Umar was also fond of drinking in his pre-Islamic days.<sup>[10]</sup>

#### During Muhammad's era

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##### Umar's hostility to Islam

In 610 Muhammad started delivering the message of Islam. Umar, alongside others in Mecca, opposed Islam and threatened to kill Muhammad. He resolved to defend the traditional, polytheistic religion of [Arabia](#). He was most adamant and cruel in opposing Muhammad and very prominent in persecuting the Muslims.<sup>[11]</sup> Umar was the first man who resolved that Muhammad had to be murdered in order to finish Islam.<sup>[12]</sup> Umar firmly believed in the unity of the Quraish and saw the new faith of Islam as a cause of division and discord among the Quraish.<sup>[11]</sup>

Due to the persecution at the hands of the Quraish, Muhammad ordered his followers to [migrate to Abyssinia](#). As a small group of Muslims migrated Umar felt worried about the future unity of the Quraish and decided to have Muhammad assassinated.<sup>[13]</sup>

##### Converting to Islam

Umar converted to Islam in 616, one year after the [Migration to Abyssinia](#). The story was recounted in [Ibn Ishaq's Sirah](#); On the way to murder Muhammad, Umar met his best friend Nuaim who had secretly been converted to a Muslim but he did not tell Umar anything about it. When Umar told him that he was going to kill Muhammad he was afraid. He knew Umar will attempt what he said. So just to divert his attention he told him to set his own house in order first, as his sister and her husband had converted to Islam. Upon

arriving at her house, Umar found his sister and brother-in-law [Saeed bin Zaid](#) (Umar's cousin), reciting the verses of the [Qur'an](#)(Surah Taha).<sup>[14]</sup> He started quarreling with his brother-in-law . When his sister came to rescue her husband, he also started quarreling with her. Yet still they kept on saying "you may kill us but we will not give up Islam". Upon hearing these words, Umar slapped his sister so hard that she fell to the ground bleeding from her mouth. When he saw what he did to his sister now, out of guilt he calmed down and asked his sister to give him what she was reciting. She gave him the paper on which was written the verses of the chapter *Ta-Ha*. He was so struck by the beauty of the verses that he accepted Islam that day. He then went to Muhammad with the same sword he intended to kill him with and accepted Islam in front of him and his companions. Umar was 27 when he accepted Islam<sup>[15]</sup>. Following his conversion, Umar went to inform the chief of Quraish, [Amr ibn Hishām](#), about his acceptance of Islam. According to one account, Umar thereafter openly prayed at the Kaaba as the Quraish chiefs, Amr ibn Hishām and [Abu Sufyan ibn Harb](#), reportedly watched in anger.<sup>[16]</sup> This further helped the Muslims to gain confidence in practicing Islam openly. At this stage Umar even challenged anyone who dared to stop the Muslims from praying, although no one dared to interfere with Umar when he was openly praying.

Umar's conversion to Islam gave power to the Muslims and the faith in Mecca. It was after this that Muslims offered prayers openly in [Masjid al-Haram](#) for the first time. Abdullah bin Masoud said,

Umar's embracing Islam was our victory, his migration to Medina was our success and his reign a blessing from Allah, we didn't offer prayers in Al-Haram Mosque until Umar accepted Islam, when he accepted Islam Quraish were compelled to let us pray in the Mosque.<sup>[17]</sup>

## Migration to Medina

In 622 due to the growing popularity of Islam in the city of Yathrib (*later renamed Medīnat an-Nabī, or simply Medina*) Muhammad ordered his followers to migrate to Medina. Muslims usually migrated at night due to fear of Quraish's resistance to that migration, but Umar is reported to have migrated openly during the day time saying; *Any one who wants to make his wife a widow and his children orphan*<sup>[18]</sup> <sup>[19]</sup> *should come and meet me there behind that cliff."* Umar migrated to Medina accompanied by his cousin and brother-in-law [Saeed ibn Zaid](#).<sup>[15]</sup>

## Life in Medina

Medina became the new center of Islam and the religion spread rapidly across Arabia. When Muhammad arrived in Medina, he paired off each immigrant ([Muhajir](#)) with one of the residents of the city ([Ansari](#)), joining [Muhammad ibn Maslamah](#) with Umar making them brothers in faith. Later in Umar's reign as caliph Muhammad ibn Maslamah would be assigned the office of chief inspector of Accountability. Muslims remained in peace in Medina for approximately a year before the Quraish raised an army to attack them. In 624 Umar participated in the first Battle between Muslims and Quraish of [Mecca](#) i.e. [Battle of Badr](#). In 625 he participated in the [Battle of Uhud](#). In the second phase of Battle when [Khalid ibn Walid](#)'s Cavalry attacked Muslims at the rear changing the victory of Muslims to defeat, rumors of Muhammad's death were spread many Muslim were warriors routed from the battle field, Umar too was initially routed but hearing that Muhammad was still alive he went to Muhammad at the mountain of Uhud and prepared for the defenses of the hill to keep the Quraishi army down the hill.<sup>[20]</sup> Later in the year Umar was a part of campaign against the [Jewish](#) tribe of [Banu Nadir](#). In 625 Umar's daughter [Hafsah](#) was married to Muhammad<sup>[21]</sup>. Later in 627 he participated in the [Battle of the Trench](#) and also in the [Battle of Banu Qurayza](#).<sup>[22]</sup> In 628 Umar participated in the [Treaty of Hudaibiyyah](#) and was made one of the witness over the pact.<sup>[22]</sup> In 628 he was a part of Muslims' [campaign to Khaybar](#). In 629 Muhammad sent Amr ibn al-A'as to Zaat-ul-Sallasal from where he

called for reinforcement and Muhammad sent [Abu Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrah](#) with reinforcement, serving under him were [Abu Bakr](#) and Umar, they attacked and defeated the enemy <sup>[23]</sup>. In 630 when Muslim armies rushed for the [Conquest of Mecca](#) he was part of that army. Later in 630 he was part of [Battle of Hunayn](#) and [Siege of Ta'if](#). He was part of Muslim's army that went for the [campaign of Tabuk](#) under Muhammad's command and he was reported to have given half of his wealth for the preparation of this expedition. He also participated in a farewell [Hajj](#) of Muhammad in 631. <sup>[24]</sup>.

## Death of holy prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

Muhammad died on 8 June 632. Umar was full of grief upon hearing the news, Umar, the devoted disciple, could not accept the reality that the "Messenger of God" has died. <sup>[25]</sup> According to the Qur'an, "Muhammad is but a messenger; messengers have passed away before", i.e. died or killed. It is said that Umar promised to strike the head of any man who would say that Muhammad died. At this point [Abu Bakr](#) is reported to have come out to the Muslim community and gave his famous speech which included:

"Whoever worshipped Muhammad, let them know that Muhammad is dead, and whoever worshipped God, let them know that Allah is alive and never dies."

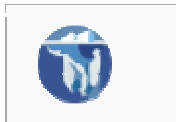
Abū Bakr then recited these verses from the Qur'an:

"Muhammad is but a messenger; messengers (the like of whom) have passed away before him. If, then, he dies or is killed, will you turn back on your heel?"

Hearing this from Abu Bakr, the most senior disciple of Muhammad, Umar then fell down on his knees in great sense of sorrow and acceptance of the reality. Sunni Muslims say that this denial of Muhammad's death was occasioned by his deep love for him. <sup>[25]</sup>

## Foundation of the Caliphate

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Umar's political genius first manifested as the architect of the caliphate after Muhammad died in 8 June 632. <sup>[26]</sup> While the funeral of Muhammad was being arranged a group of Muhammad's followers who were natives of Medina, the [Ansar](#) (helpers), organised a meeting on the outskirts of the city, effectively locking out those companions known as [Muhajirs](#) (The Emigrants) including Umar. <sup>[26]</sup> Umar found out about this meeting at [Saqifah Bani Saadah](#), and taking with him two other Muhajirs, [Abu Bakr](#) and [Abu Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrah](#), proceeded to the meeting, presumably to head off the Ansar's plans for political domination. Arriving at the meeting Umar was faced with a unified community of tribes from the Ansar who refused to accept the leadership of the Muhajirs. <sup>[26]</sup> However Umar was undeterred in his belief the caliphate should be under the control of the Muhajirs. <sup>[27]</sup> Though they [Khazraj](#) were in disagreement, Umar after strained negotiations lasting up to one or two days, brilliantly divided the Ansar into their old warring factions of [Aws](#) and [Khazraj](#) tribes, Umar resolved the divisions by placing his hand on that of Abu Bakr as a unity candidate for those gathered in the Saqifah, most others gathered at the Saqifah followed suit with the exception of the Khazraj tribe and their leader, [Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah](#), whose tribe was ostracized. The Khazraj tribe is said to have posed no significant threat as there were sufficient men of war from the Median tribes such as the Banu Aws to immediately organize them into a military bodyguard for Abu Bakr. <sup>[26]</sup>

The creation of the Islamic caliphate would be one of Umar's most enduring legacies, and its significance to world history is hard to overestimate. However Umar himself was characteristically guarded about his own creation, Dr. Wilferd Madelung in his book *The Succession to Muhammad* summarising Umar's contribution:<sup>[28]</sup>

Umar judged the outcome of the Saqifa assembly to be a *falta* [translated by Madelung as 'a precipitate and ill-considered deal'<sup>[29]</sup> because of the absence of most of the prominent Muhajirun, including the Prophet's own family and clan, whose participation he considered vital for any legitimate consultation (*shura*, *mashwara*). It was, he warned the community, to be no precedent for the future. Yet he also defended the outcome, claiming that the Muslims were longing for Abu Bakr as for no one else. He apologized, moreover, that the Muhajirun present were forced to press for an immediate oath of allegiance since the Ansar could not have been trusted to wait for a legitimate consultation and might have proceeded to elect one of their own after the departure of the Mekkans. Another reason for Umar to censure the Saqifa meeting as a *falta* was no doubt its turbulent and undignified end, as he and his followers jumped upon the sick Khazraji leader Sa'd bin Ubada in order to teach him a lesson, if not to kill him, for daring to challenge the sole right of Quraysh to rule. This violent break-up of the meeting indicates, moreover, that the Ansar cannot all have been swayed by the wisdom and eloquence of Abu Bakr's speech and have accepted him as the best choice for the succession, as suggested by Caetani. There would have been no sense in beating up the Khazraji chief if everybody had come around to swearing allegiance to Umar's candidate. A substantial number of the Ansar, presumably of Khazraj in particular, must have refused to follow the lead of the Muhajirun.<sup>[28]</sup>

According to various Shia sources and some western scholars, Umar and Abu Bakr had in effect mounted a political coup against Ali at the Saqifah<sup>[26]</sup> According to one version of narrations in [primary sources](#), Umar and Abu Bakr are also said to have used force to secure the allegiance from Ali and his party. It has been reported that after Ali's refusal to pay homage, Abu Bakr sent Umar with an armed contingent to Fatimah's house where Ali and his supporters are said to have gathered. Umar is reported to have warned those in the House that unless Ali succumbed to Abu Bakr, he would set the House on fire, with its inhabitants ablaze,<sup>[27]</sup> and under these circumstances Ali was forced to capitulate. This belligerent version of events, fully accepted by Shia scholars, is generally rejected by Sunni scholars who in view of other reports in their literature believe that Ali gave oath of alliance to Abu Bakr without any grievance, while others believe that Ali was reluctant to swear allegiance to Abu Bakr and gave his allegiance six months later after the death of his wife Fatimah.

Western scholars tend to agree that Ali believed he had a clear mandate to politically succeed Muhammad, but offer differing views as to the extent of use of force by Umar in an attempt to intimidate Ali and his supporters, for instance, Dr. Wilferd Madelung in his book *The Succession to Muhammad*, discounts the possibility of use of force and argues that:

Isolated reports of use of force against Ali and Banu Hashim who unanimously refuse to swear allegiance for six months are probably to be discounted. Abu Bakr no doubt was wise enough to restrain Umar from any violence against them, well realizing that this would inevitably provoked the sense of solidarity of majority of Abdul Mannaf who's acquiescence he needed.<sup>[30]</sup> His policy was rather not isolating Banu Hashim as far as possible.

## Caliph Abu Bakr's era

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During [Abu Bakr](#)'s short reign as caliph Umar served as a chief secretary and advisor, and during the [Ridda Wars](#) Umar, along with Khalid ibn Walid, served the caliph as a military strategist and advisor. Due to the delicate political situation in Arabia Umar initially opposed military operations against the rebel tribes in Arabia, hoping to gain their support in the event of invasion by Romans or Persians. Later, however, he came to agree with Abu Bakr's strategy to crush the rebellion by force. By late 632 [Khalid ibn Walid](#) had successfully united Arabia after consecutive victories against the rebels. During his own reign, Umar would mostly adopt the policy of avoiding wars and consolidating his power in the conquered land rather than expanding his empire through continuous warfare.<sup>[31]</sup> Prior to the [Battle of Yamamah](#), Umar pressured Abu Bakr to recall Khalid, who had killed [Malik ibn Nuwayrah](#), a rebel chief and state criminal. Umar was reportedly misguided by Malik's brother that Malik was a Muslim and Khalid killed him because he wanted to marry his wife [Layla bint al-Minhal](#), a renowned beauty in Arabia. Abu Bakr refused to accept Umar's opinion, and Umar continued to insist on Khalid's removal even after Khalid's conquest of [Iraq](#). This became a major issue between Abu Bakr and Umar and a spacious chapter in Islamic history.<sup>[citation needed]</sup> Umar advised Abu Bakr to compile the [Quran](#) in the form of a book, after 300 memorizers of the Quran died in the Battle of Yamamah. Abu Bakr appointed Umar as his successor prior to the caliph's death in 634.

## Appointment as a Caliph

Due to his strict and autocratic nature, Umar was not a very popular figure among the notables of Madinah and members of [Majlis al Shura](#), accordingly succession of Umar was initially discouraged by high ranking companions of [Abu Bakr](#).<sup>[32][33]</sup> Nevertheless, Abu Bakr decided to make Umar, his successor. Umar, still was well known for his extraordinary will power, intelligence, political astuteness, impartiality, justice and care for poor and underprivileged people.<sup>[34]</sup> Abu Bakr is reported to have said to the high-ranking advisers:

*His (Umar's) strictness was there because of my softness when the weight of Caliphate will be over his shoulders he will remain no longer strict. If I will be asked by the God to whom I have appointed my successor, I will tell him that I have appointed the best man among your men.*<sup>[35]</sup>

Abu Bakr was fully aware of Umar's power and ability to succeed him. Succession of Umar was thus not as troublesome as any of the others. His was perhaps one of the smoothest transitions to power from one authority to another in the Muslim lands.<sup>[36]</sup> Abu Bakr before his death called [Uthman](#) to write his will in which he declared Umar his successor. In his will he instructed Umar to continue the conquests on [Iraq](#) and [Syrian](#) fronts. Abu Bakr's decision would prove to be crucial in the strengthening of the nascent Islamic empire.

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