

*The Egyptian Response to the Abolition of the Caliphate: A Press Survey**

Hilal LİVAOĞLU MENGÜÇ

Dr., Department of Islamic History, Istanbul University

E-Mail: hilal.menkuc@istanbul.edu.tr

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ABSTRACT

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The abolition of the Caliphate, which remained as one of the most important institutions of Islamic history for about 1300 years, had a great reaction in Egypt as well as in the whole Muslim World. Many articles penned in the newspapers of the time on the Caliphate issue. The Egyptian arm of the debates, from the opinions of both the classic and Azhari scholars, which represented the theological aspect of the issue, or from a political sense, the Egyptian palace, British rule in Egypt, and approach of various political parties in the country, have all been topics of academic research. However it is yet difficult to find an independent study that looks at the Caliphate debate in Egypt, even with its flurry of publications from the second half of the 19th Century continuing until the present time. This article tries to investigate both the short-term and long-term reactions against the abolition and to handle four essential questions: 1. What was the general reaction of the three major periodicals of the Egyptian press; al-Ahrām, al-Muqattam and al-Manār and which reasons according to them were behind the decision of abolition?, 2. How did they evaluate the question on Abdülmecid Efendi's legitimacy after the abolition, both in the religious and the juristical point of view?, 3. How did they evaluate Sharif Hussein's

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attempt to declare himself as caliph?, 4. How did they response to the idea of a Cairo-based caliphate with Fouad I as the caliph?

Keywords: Caliphate, Ottoman Caliphate, Egypt, Press, Abolition.

ÖZ

LİVAOĞLU MENGÜÇ, Hilal, **Halifeliğin Kaldırılmasına Mısır'ın Cevabı: Bir Basın Anketi**, CTAD, Yıl 15, Sayı 30 (Güz 2019), s. 109-133.

Yaklaşık 1300 yıl boyunca İslam tarihinin en önemli kurumlarından biri olan Hilafet kurumunun kaldırılması, tüm Müslüman Dünyasında olduğu gibi Mısır'da da büyük bir tepkiyle karşılanmıştır. Dönemin Mısır basınında konu etrafında pek çok makale kaleme alınmıştır. Meselenin teolojik yönünü temsil eden gerek klasik gerek Ezherli alimlerin görüşlerinden gelen veya siyasi bir anlamda Mısır sarayından, Mısır'daki İngiliz egemenliğinden gelen tartışmaların Mısır'daki kolu ile ülkedeki çeşitli siyasi partilerin yaklaşımı, akademik araştırmaların konusu olmuştur. Bununla birlikte, Mısır'daki Hilafet tartışmalarını, 19. Yüzyılın ikinci yarısında başlayan ve canlı bir tartışma ortamı oluşturan Mısır basınına merkeze alarak değerlendiren bir müstakil bir çalışma bulmak zordur. Bu makale, Hilafet'in ilgasına Mısır'da verilen kısa ve uzun vadede tepkileri değerlendirmeye ve 4 temel soruya cevap aramaya çalışır: 1. Mısır basınına üç ana süreli yayını olan el-Ahrâm, el-Mukattam ve el-Menâr'ın genel tepkileri ne olmuştur ve ilga kararını hangi nedenlere bağlamışlardır? 2. Hilafet makamının ilgasından sonra Abdülmecid Efendi'nin meşruiyeti sorununu, hukuki ve yargısal bağlamda nasıl değerlendirmişlerdir? 3. Şerif Hüseyin'in kendisini halife ilan etme girişimini nasıl değerlendirmişlerdir? 4. Kral I. Fuad'ın hilafet makamında olduğu Kahire merkezli bir hilafet fikrine nasıl yaklaşmışlardır?

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hilafet, Osmanlı Hilafeti, Mısır, Basın, İlga.

Introduction

The long story of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which was continued about one and a half century, has witnessed intense efforts for transforming of almost all institutions of the state. The question about the nature of the Caliphate notion with its religious, political and legal aspects was also on the table to be argued.¹ Beginning from Abdulhamid II era to its abolition by the Turkish National Assembly in 3rd March 1924, many ideas from different angles were set forth. Many of the essential issues like the limits of the Caliph's authority, necessity of absolute obedience to him and the remanufactured discourse of a "Qurayshi imam" arose during the misty

¹ İsmail Kara's voluminous work *Hilafet Risaleleri* (The Books and Pamphlets on Caliphate) is a work of great importance in terms of introducing the actors and ideas that came to the forefront in the Caliphate discussions that actually started in the 19th century. See İsmail Kara, *Hilafet Risaleleri: Cumhuriyet Devri vol. 5*, Klasik Yayınları, İstanbul, 2005; Kara, *Hilafet Risaleleri: Cumhuriyet Devri vol. 6*, Klasik Yayınları, İstanbul, 2006.

atmosphere of Tanzimat era and modernization process.² In addition to this attrition process which was actually caused by the weakening of the state, British and French politics regarding the Ottoman Land during the 19th century and finally the First World War greatly affected the fate of the Caliphate institution. After the separation of Sultanate from Caliphate and the abolition of the first in November 1922, Abdülmecid II (1868-1944), son of Sultan Abdülaziz (1830-1876), was elected as the new –and the last- caliph by the Turkish National Assembly. A traditional ceremony for *bi'at* was held in Topkapı Palace and many Muslim representations around the World conveyed the new Caliph greeting messages which caused misinterpretations like the opinion claims that by sending these messages they confessed the above mentioned separation and that they accepted a caliph without political authority.³ It was certain that a caliph with political authority was totally unwelcome for the newly established republic and the new caliph had been already warned against engaging in any kind of political activity. However, the deep interest shown to Abdülmecid Efendi in the Muslim World seems to have made it difficult for these warnings to be effective enough.

Mustafa Kemal's thoughts on the last caliph Abdülmecid Efendi's "*political activities*" and his will to establish connection with the representatives of the Muslim communities from all over the world set the process of abolition of the Caliphate, which is apparently designed long time ago- going. As a result of Mustafa Kemal and İsmet İnönü's meetings with a number of general staff officers in İzmir the decision of abolition and its details have been clarified.⁴ After a 3-hours session, the law which annihilates the *maqām-ı hilafet* has been passed in the evening of 3rd March, 1924. A few hours later the news was delivered to Abdülmecid Efendi by the governor of Istanbul and other senior officers who asked him and members of the Ottoman House to leave the land.⁵

² Namık Sinan Turan, "Osmanlı Hilafetinin 19. Yüzyılda Zorunlu Sınarı: II. Meşrutiyet'e Giden Süreçte ve Sonrasında Makam-ı Hilafet", *İstanbul Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, No 38, March 2008, pp. 290-294.

³ For an Egyptian commentary on this debate see "al-'Ulamā wa al-mas'alat al-khilāfa", *al-Abrām*, November 1922, 1. According to some French sources, the acceptance of Abdülmecid's caliphate was a natural result of sympathy for Mustafa Kemal as well as the fear of a possible separation among the Muslim communities of the World. See İdris Yücel, "Fransız Belgelerinde Son Halife Abdülmecid ve Türkiye'de Hilafetin Kaldırılması", *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi*, vol 61, Güz 2017, p. 480.

⁴ For a detailed description of the abolition process, see Ali Satan, "Halifeliğin Kaldırılışı (1919-1924)", *Ph.D. dissertation*, Marmara Üniversitesi, İstanbul, 2000, pp. 172-192. Mustafa Kemal conveyed his views about the process leading to the abolition decision in his famous work Nutuk. See Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *Nutuk*, Kaynak Yayınları, Ankara, 2015, pp. 630-634.

⁵ Satan, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

The Caliphate Question in the Aftermath of the Abolition

The repercussions of the abolition of the Caliphate in the Arab World resulted in an atmosphere of great debate whether in a political sense they be the causes of the destruction of the Ottoman Empire or theoretically the new suggestions for a reordering of the Caliphate. When the reason for the abolition of the Caliphate was brought into question, the first response was the reordering of a state and nation that had been on Turkish soil for a long period of time and the efforts at Westernisation. The main instigators of this process were shown to be the Young Turk Movement and Mustafa Kemal and his friends who were frequently mentioned in the Egyptian press as “*Kamaliyyün*”.⁶ There was the oft-repeated theme of Mustafa Kemal cooperating with the British after the National Struggle and how he abandoned the Caliphate at the insistence of the British for the benefit of Turkey in the Treaty of Laussane.⁷ The religious sensitivities of the Muslims can be seen in some of the writings of certain writers and poets. Ahmad Shawqī, the Egyptian poet friend of the Turks, wrote an elegy about the Caliphate and another Egyptian poet Abdumuttalib, wrote a poem praising the success of the Turks in their battle with the Greeks. While in the process of writing this poem, the news of the abolition of the Caliphate reached him and he abandoned the poem which was a reflection of his reaction towards this event.⁸ With contributions from the Azhar community of scholars at the head, and other politicians, bureaucrats, educators, writers, poets and intellectuals, this vibrant intellectual atmosphere

⁶ i.e. Kemalists. For various references to the details of Mustafa Kemal’s so called initiatives to destroy the Ottoman Caliphate see. ‘Abdulqādim Zallūm, *Kayfa budimat al-khilāfa*, Dar al-umma, Beirut, 1997; Fahmī al-Shennāwī, *Maṣra’ al-khilāfat al-‘uṣmaniyya*, Cairo, n.d.; Maḥmūd Sābiṭ al-Shāḍilī, *al-Mas’alat al-sharqiya: Dirāsa waṭa’iqiyya an al-khilāfat al-‘uṣmaniyya*, Cairo, 1979.

⁷ A proponent of this thesis was ‘Abdulqādim Zallūm, who claimed that the exile of the Greeks from Anatolia was a ‘theatrical play’, and that despite the victory of the Greeks over the Turks, the Greeks were forced to withdraw from Turkish soil by the Entente Powers. According to Zallūm, with the withdrawal of the Greek army, Mustafa Kemal would abrogate the Caliphate, and on the other hand he would be portrayed as hero having gained victory over the Greek, which would give him legitimacy in his anti-Islamic revolutions. As proof of his belief that Mustafa Kemal was in cooperation with the British, Zallūm refers to an article published in Times on the 24th March, 1940, that gives news that the command to form close ties with Mustafa Kemal was given to Charles Harrington, the Supreme Military Commander of the Occupying Army of Istanbul during the years 1920-1923. See Zallūm, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-173. It should be noted that Zallūm’s claim was one the most extreme ones that were put forward in Egypt. Furthermore, he didn’t provide any evidence for his thesis. For further discussion on the so called external links of the issue of abolition see Fahir Armaoğlu, “Hilafetin Dış Cephesi”, *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, vol. 14, no. 41, 1998, pp. 347-358.

⁸ Mona F. Hassan, *Loss of Caliphate: The Trauma and Aftermath of 1258 and 1924*, Ph. D. Dissertation, Princeton University, 2009, p. 83. For the poem by Ahmad Shawqī see Ahmad Husayn, *İmanī*, Cairo, 1936, vol. 2, p. 28.

shows the suitability of the role adopted by Egypt as the leaders of the Islamic world. After the decision by the Turkish Grand National Assembly to abrogate the Caliphate, a group of scholars from Azhar made an address to all Muslims in the 10 March 1924 issue of *al-Abrām*, stating that the decision by Turkey was illegal and called for the Muslims to voice their objection.⁹ The group drew attention to two elements that made the institution of the Caliphate important in the eyes of the Muslims. According to the Azharite scholars the Caliphate was an institution which was believed to politically and socially united the Muslims under one roof and so from this respect abolishing it would mean leaving the entire Muslim world without a leader. Also Azhar defined the Caliphate as an institution that came about as a result of consensus and that it could only be abolished through the consensus of the Muslim scholars.¹⁰ The idea that the Turkish politicians could make a decision about the future of the Caliphate on their own provoked a great response from the Azharite scholars as well as from a great number of other Egyptian intellectuals. The conservative intellectuals in particular, identified this situation as the final step in a revolution of secularisation which had been making strides for years. According to them the Ottoman empire first began to dissolve after the Young Turks brought forth their ideas they gained from the West, and degenerated completely with the irreligious ideas of Mustafa Kemal and his team. In such narratives, Mustafa Kemal and the Turkish politicians with him were portrayed as having always been against the Caliphate and any other Islamic institution but because it was not possible to make this known to the public they had been waiting for the right time and opportunity. One of these opinions which we touched on, namely that of Amīn al-Rāfi'ī¹¹ (1882-1927) can be given as an example of these feelings on this issue. In the May 1924 issue of *al-Manār*, he wrote about how Western ideas had contaminated the minds of the young Ottomans, and how they tied the reason for the failure of the Turks and other eastern societies to develop and advance to the Caliphate and other Islamic institutions and beliefs. According to Rāfi'ī their Western teachers had the aim of destroying the

⁹ "We surely know that if a group of Muslims publicize removing the Caliph this removing is not valid and not legitimate." "Mişr wa al-khilāfa", *al-Abrām*, 10 March 1924, p. 1.

¹⁰ In the verdict it was also stated that the bay'a made for Abdülmecid Efendi were still valid and that it was not permissible to pledge allegiance to another caliph: "It should also be pointed out that the Caliph is the only Muslim arbitrator. The Koran did not decide for the Muslims two caliphs [to exist at the same time]. Since the allegiance of Caliph Abdul Majeed Khan was legally correct and still remains so far, it is not permissible for Muslims to declare another caliph." See *op. cit.*, p. 1.

¹¹ Amīn ibn 'Abdullaṭif al-Rāfi'ī, known for his nationalistic views, was a member of al-Hizb al-Ṭaḥrī along with being a prominent columnist of his time. He had previously published al-*Aḥbār*, the mouthpiece of al-Hizb al-Ṭaḥrī. See 'Omar Riḍā, *Kaḥḥāla, Mu'ḡam al-Muallifin*, Maktaba al Muṭannā, Beirut, 1993, vol. 3, p. 9.

religious feeling of their Turkish students. This was to such a degree that even madrasah students were affected by this and began to behave like the Western representatives of old Istanbul.¹²

According to Rāfi‘ī the educated class influenced by western ideas, attributed the disappointments and failures of the Westernisation process, to the oppressive regime of the padishahs supported by the Caliphate which was considered to be sacred. The idea of the duress of Islam on the people was spread. This is why the people in power wished to be free of the influence of Islam as soon as possible. Together with the abolition of the most visible factor this influence, namely the Caliphate, the young, new Turkey would be free of the burden on its shoulders.¹³

One of the people Amin Rāfi‘ī mentioned above was Seyyid Bey (1873-1925), a prominent member of Ottoman Ulamâ who supported and promoted the abolition of the Caliphate. Rāfi‘ī thought that Seyyid Bey, whom he had met in 1923 during his journey from Izmir to Istanbul and then met several times in Istanbul, was used by the Young Turks even though he was a wise and clever legist:

“...Then I was informed that the Unionists [Rāfi‘ī points to Seyyid Bey’s former ties with CUP and probably considers the CUP and the People’s Party as similiar structures and that they shared similiar modernist views due to the fact that they both were of Young Turks origin] used him to put the formulas, instructions and interpretations they want considering the matters of Islamic law. And it is he who has set them a [new] civil code as he is the one who revised it [the old one] for the Kemalists.”¹⁴

In articles by Rashīd Riḍā in *al-Manār*, similar to Amin Rāfi‘ī, he views the pro Western Turks as being the main cause for the attempts to destroy the social structure of Islam in general and in fact to do away with Islam itself, and in particular the Caliphate which was the political authority of Islam. Both the

¹² In referring to the Western views found amongst madrasah students in particular, Rāfi‘ī makes the complaint that “as certain Europeans have expressed, madrasah students have been more effective than all of the foreigner ambassadors in old Istanbul in the solution to the issue of the East.” Amin al-Rāfi‘ī, “al-İnqilāb al-siyāsī wa al-dīnī fī ğumhūriyyat al-turkiyya”, *al-Manār*, 4 May 1924, vol. 25, pp. 273-274.

¹³ *op. cit.*, pp. 273-274.

¹⁴ *op. cit.*, pp. 287. In a paper written by Michelangelo Guida, Seyyid Bey’s views on the Caliphate have been evaluated from a different perspective which shed light on the possible intentions in Seyyid Bey’s opposition to the Caliphate. See M. Guida, “Seyyid Bey and the Abolition of the Caliphate”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 44, no. 2, March 2008, pp. 275-289.

Kemalists and the Young Turks are accused of trying to bring back pre-Islamic Turkish customs.¹⁵

In another article published immediately after the abolition of the Caliphate, the decision to abrogate the Caliphate which would take the country along a new path was interpreted as an indication that it was trying to rid itself of any Islamic trappings. The idea that it was believed to be an aim that had been going on for hundreds of years and was a long term plan that had finally found its opportunity in recent times was an oft repeated item of news and commentary in *al-Abrām*.¹⁶ According to news sent by a journalist from *Tevhûd-i Efkâr* from Ankara to Istanbul on the 25th February that appeared in *al-Abrām*, Izmir politician Şükrü Bey made the declaration that the new aim of the government was to completely separate religion from politics.¹⁷

An article in *al-Muqattam* by the former representative of al-Azhar, Muhammad Shâkir (1866-1939), is another example of how the once felt sympathy for Mustafa Kemal and the Anatolian movement turned into hatred after the decision to abolish the Caliphate. In a citation taken from a newspaper

¹⁵ Rashîd Riḍâ , “Fâtihat al-muğallad al-sâbi’ wa al-‘ishrûn”, *al-Manâr*, 13 April 1926, vol. 27, p. 10. The efforts by some Turkish nationalists at symbolizing the figure of the Bozkurt, which the Turks considered sacred before Islam, was mentioned with great bewilderment and regret by Rashîd Riḍâ. The respect shown to Ghengiz Khan and Hulagu Khan because they were the forefathers of the Turks, even though they were enemies to all of humanity, was in no way compatible with Islam according to Riḍâ. This is why on many occasions Riḍâ accused such secular-oriented Turks of being apostates. See; *op. cit.*, p. 10.

¹⁶ The newspaper gives three important names of the Republican Party as the executors of this plan: Mustafa Kemal, İsmet İnönü and Rıza Nur. “Turkiyâ wa maẓharuhâ al-islâmî: Kayfa unfiḍat al-ḥuṭṭa al-ġadîda”, *al-Abrām*, 4 March 1924, p. 1.

¹⁷ *op. cit.* , p. 1. In his famous speech titled “Hilâfetin Mâhiyet-i Şer’iyyesi” (The Legal Nature of the Caliphate) given in parliament during the debates on the Caliphate in the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Seyyid Bey was able to convince a large portion of the opposition but was not taken seriously in the eyes of the Egyptian public. In fact, Seyyid Bey is portrayed as being a figure used to legitimize the abrogation of the Caliphate in the eyes of the public. In his harsh criticisms of Seyyid Bey, Rashîd Riḍâ accuses him of being a poor excuse for a scholar who interprets the shariah according to his own desires. It was Seyyid Bey, along with other individuals like him, trying to pass for scholars, who tried to convince the religious members of parliament that decisions such as the abolition of the Caliphate, the annulment of sharia courts, the banning of religious education, and the transfer of endowments to the state, would not bring any harm to the principles of Islam and this was how the Turkish assembly was able to accept such decisions. It is obvious that care was taken to ensure that no scholar of any expertise in matters of the shariah, or strength of faith, with an eloquent tongue was allowed to enter parliament during the elections. We have no information that there was any scholar who defended the Caliphate in the Assembly on that day. Riḍâ also expressed his concerns that the interpretations put forth by Seyyid Bey would lead ignorant Muslims into misguidance. “Mawqif al-‘âlam al-islâmî ma’a al-ġumhûriyyat al-turkiyya”, *al-Manâr*, 4 May 1924, vol. 25, p. 319.

published in Paris, Shākir defines the revolution of Mustafa Kemal as a “whirlwind of madness that has shaken the world from east to West”, thus expressing the loss of trust in Mustafa Kemal and his team.¹⁸ These type of articles depicted Mustafa Kemal and his followers as cheering for Islam only until they became victorious, after which they entered into a fight against Islam and the Caliphate through terrifying means.¹⁹

In the face of this urgent situation, Amīn al-Rāfi‘ī sent out an invitation to those scholars who had previously pledged allegiance to Abdülmecid Efendi to bring about their religious duties and suggested the organisation of a large meeting to pledge allegiance to him once more in spite of the decision by the Kemalists. He also stated that Ankara should be informed by telegraph of the decision to hold such a meeting. Other points that were stressed were that the last caliph should be invited to live in a Muslim country such as Egypt rather than Switzerland, and that he should be allowed to be in constant contact with the Muslims. According to Amīn al-Rāfi‘ī, those who sent him to Switzerland wished to weaken his ties with the Muslims.²⁰ In news of the Muslim world presented in the October, 1927 issue of *al-Manār*, while evaluating the new situation of Turkey, it is stated that Mustafa Kemal and those with him hid their anti-Islamic intentions from the Turkish public fearing their reaction, and the acceptance in the constitution of Islam as the religion of the new republic was merely a nominal step taken again in order to avoid any negative reactions from the public.²¹

¹⁸ “... because at that time they were struggling to cleanse Anatolia of its enemies, and to chase out the Allied Powers from the land of the caliph. Allah is witness that the reasons for our feeling close ties to these rebels was our fear that the Caliphate would be belittled and disgraced. For the Caliphate was the sole legacy left to us from the Age of Bliss and the honour of Islam. It was our only source of solace in an age of disasters” Muhammad Shākir, “Mā hādā al-‘āṣifatun sharḡā”, *al-Manār*, 4 May 1924, vol. 25, p. 297.

¹⁹ “The perpetrators of such acts will have to account for themselves in front of the Turkish people and the Muslims” see; Muhammad Shākir, *op. cit.*, pp. 297-298.

²⁰ Amīn al-Rāfi‘ī, “Kalimat Amīn al-Rāfi‘ī Bey”, *al-Manār*, 4 May 1924, vol. 25, p. 299.

²¹ “... By putting the Islamic state in the Constitution these Turkish apostates have become hypocrites”, “Anbā’ al-ālam al-islāmī”, *al-Manār*, 26 October 1927, vol. 28, p. 635. Also see “Mas’alat nafaqāt mu’tamar al-khilāfa”, *al-Manār*, 31 May 1927, p. 315. Based on rumours he attributed to certain Turkish intellectuals in Europe, Rashīd Riḍā claimed that the intention of Mustafa Kemal Pasha was to christianise the Turks, in response for which the Turkish people would be accepted by Britain as being equal and allied to Western nations. This was the reason for his hostile stance to the Caliphate and why he wanted to abolish it. See “Anbā’ al-ālam al-islāmī”, p. 636. From his criticisms of the “Turkish apostates” who abolished the Caliphate, Rashīd Riḍā went on to direct his criticisms towards Omer Rıza Doğrul, who was in charge of the Istanbul offices of the *as-Sıyasa* newspaper. Riḍā asserted that having worked for *al-Akhhār*, which was known in Cairo for its conservative tendencies, Ömer Rıza went to Istanbul to work as a representative of this newspaper, but was later influenced by the secular ideas of Mustafa Kemal and his friends,

Sulaymān al-Bārūnī (1870-1940)²², a prominent political figure from Libyan origin, has shared similar opinions with those mentioned above. According to him the Turks had an obsessive approach to getting along well with Europe and condemned religion and religious institutions by finding fault with them.²³ The Turkish revolutionaries were also accused by Maḥmūd Rashād (1854-1925), a highly placed jurist, of waging war on religion, rejecting national values and customs, and attempting to westernise the Turkish public, thereby drawing the attention of the Egyptian public on the notion of a people whose religious identity was being destroyed.²⁴

In a news statement regarding the abrogation of the Caliphate in the March 4 issue of *al-Abrām* by a journalist from Istanbul that appeared on the 27th February, the abrogation of the Caliphate was identified as the most radical and fundamental revolution ever seen so far. It was also stated that the aim of the new government was to completely erase all traces of the old regime through a complete restructuring of the ministries.²⁵

In this regard an article sent by Vahdettin Han to Azhar Scholars Solidarity Committee published by its leader Muhammad Farrāj al-Minyāwī in *al-Abrām*, openly expressed his hopes in the policies to be followed in Egypt following the overturn of the Ottoman sultan-caliph.²⁶ In a commentary in addition to

thereby changing his stance and transferring to *as-Siyasa*, which was a secular-liberal newspaper. See *op. cit.*, p. 637.

²² Sulaymān ibn Abdallah al-Bārūnī was put under surveillance in the reign of Abdulhamid II, after he tried to establish an Ibazi imamate in Tripoli. He was involved in publishing in Cairo for a period, but later entered the Ottoman Parliament after the Second Constitution. After the invasion of Tripoli by the Italians, he returned to his hometown and pioneered a defence movement. He returned to Istanbul in 1913, was given the title Pasha, and was selected for the Senate. Having a good command of Turkish, Bārūnī later passed away in Bombay in 1940. See “Bārūnī, Süleyman Paşa”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 5, 1992, p. 92.

²³ Sulaymān al-Bārūnī, “Lā yu ‘adḍiru al-kamāliyyīn”, *al-Muqattam*, 17 April 1924, p. 1.

²⁴ Maḥmūd Rashād, “al-Khilāfa ayḍan”, *al-Muqattam*, 5 March 1924, p. 1.

²⁵ Mention is made of a group within the Republican Party who were more moderate in regards to the revolutions which had the intention of separating. This possible split was a cause of concern for the Turkish rulers. Information indicates that those who wished to separate were a small number of conservatives. “al-İnqilāb al-‘azīm fī turkiyā”, *al-Abrām*, 4 March 1924, p. 1. The Progressive Republican Party was formed several months later on the 17th November, 1924.

²⁶ Announcing that he wrote the text of the speech with tears in his eyes, Vahdettin addressed the Head of the Committee and its members, stating that Allah had given success to ‘Mustafa Kemal and his helpers’ against the Greeks, that the entire Muslim world should be joyful about this success with joy, and support this group. He also expressed that some activities of this group posed a threat to the Muslim lands and virtually complained about them to the Muslims of the world, before the Egyptian scholars. Muhammad Farrāj al-Minyāwī, “Mas’alat al-khilāfa”, *al-Abrām*, 25 March 1924, p. 5.

the letter, Farraj writes that a conference on the matter of the solution to the problem of the Caliphate was being planned. Following the message of Vahdettin, a group of Azhari scholars marched to the Abdeen Palace and conveyed their demands for a Congress on the Caliphate to the King.²⁷

In essence in the Egyptian newspapers, a noticeable increase in opponents to Mustafa Kemal and the Turkish Grand National Assembly could be seen after the abrogation of the Caliphate, although there were still some people who excused the Kemalists. One of them was A. Sabrî (who is possibly a reader of the newspaper, since his name was not mentioned and no other article with this name was found in the newspapers), the writer of the article titled 'The Turks and the Caliphate' in the April 18, 1924 issue of *al-Muqattam*. A. Sabrî writes that the Muslims who abandoned Turkey and the Caliphate at their most difficult time were now competing with each other in order to criticise them. In contrast to many Egyptians, Sabrî, expressed his view that there was no problem with Mustafa Kemal representing the Republic of Turkey²⁸.

The Evaluation of Abdülmecid Efendi's Circumstances

The sad mood from the time between the decision to settle Abdülmecid Efendi²⁹ and the Ottoman family in Europe after the abolition of the Caliphate and their settling there, was reflected in the writings of Indian and Egyptian writers, both of whom were closely concerned with the fate of the Caliphate in the Muslim world. When the Egyptian press of that time is analysed from this aspect, the frequent news and articles in *al-Abram*, regarding the exile to Europe of the Ottoman dynasty is noteworthy. A lot of the news relates details of where the caliph would be settled, when and how he was informed of this decision, the shock and sadness the caliph felt on hearing this news, the fact that despite leaving Istanbul in a hurry, the family took a large amount of belongings with them, the fact that despite the caliph wishing to go to either France or Italy, this request was denied³⁰. The activity this forced migration created in Switzerland, the actions taken by the officials there, the security measures taken in the hotel in which he would stay, the intervention of the caliph, and other details such as the unnecessary security measures since the caliph was not going to Switzerland with a political mission were all given space in the newspaper. Space was also given to the words of the caliph in regards to

²⁷ *op. cit.*, p. 5.

²⁸ A. Sabrî, "al-Khilāfa wa al-turk", *al-Muqattam*, 18 April 1924, p. 2. To those who accused Turkey of destroying Islamic Unity, Ahmad Sabrî gave the reminder that such unity never existed. See *op. cit.*, p. 2.

²⁹ For detailed information about the last Ottoman Caliph Abdülmecid Efendi see Cevdet Küçük, "Abdülmecid Efendi", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 1, pp. 263-264.

³⁰ "al-Khalifa Abdulmağid fi sawisra", *al-Abram*, 10 March 1924, p. 3.

the decision by the Ankara assembly being against the will of millions of Muslims, and thus opposed to the will of the Turkish public, and how the ensuing process would be closely followed.³¹ In a telegraph sent by Abdülmecid Efendi's secretary Karamat Nigar, at 23:00 on the evening of the 9th of March, 1924, published in *al-Abrām*, he conveys his gratitude to the Egyptian scholars who sprang into action regarding the issue of the last caliph.³²

The possibility of the caliph and his family going to Egypt was also talked about in the Egyptian press. According to records at the British Foreign Affairs Bureau, the caliph and his family could not be sure about the stance taken by the British rulers in Egypt and so had concerns about being moved to Egypt. The same report also mentions how family members for whom exile had been ordered, were sent to different places in Europe and Syria, how there was no application to any Egyptian authorities during their passport application process, only that on the 4th March, the husband of a princess and her harem applied for permission to board a boat to Egypt however the British ambassador Ronald Lindsay, did not grant this request³³. In a telegram sent by the British High Commissioner Lord Allenby in Cairo to the British ambassador in Istanbul on the 6th March, the decision was conveyed by the Egyptian government that no member of the family of the caliph would be accepted in Egypt.³⁴

³¹ *op. cit.*, p. 3. This sorrowful narration of how the Caliph and his family were removed from Turkey, also appears in *The Khilafet* by the Indian Muhammad Barakatullah. "... Thus it was that an institution that was blessed for three centuries with this tradition, a symbol of power and majesty in the eyes of the European nations, and the defence armour of Islam for the last four centuries, was now gone in the blink of an eye..." Muhammad Barakatullah, *The Khilafat*, Dakka, 1970, p. 9.

³² Salih Keramet Nigar, "Shukru ğalālat al-khālifa fi 'ulamā' misr", *al-Abrām*, 10 March 1924, p. 3. The Caliph is probably talking here about those scholars who were still defending him as caliph.

³³ Bilal N. Şimşir, *İngiliz Belgelerinde Atatürk 1919-1938 [Ataturk in the British official documents 1919-1938]*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara, 1975, vol. 5, pp. 418-419.

³⁴ In the newspapers of Egypt, the Egyptian government created a debate around this decision and wrote according to a British report that one newspaper wrote that this decision was made under the influence of the British authorities. Şimşir, *ibid*, p. 419. After the abrogation of the Caliphate and the removal off the caliph and his family from Turkey, the newspapers in Egypt did not merely stop at checking the pulse of Egypt, but also closely followed old Ottoman provinces in particular, such as Damascus and Beirut. In *al-Muqattam*, reports were presented from the newspapers of Beirut that gave space to the ottoman sultans being invited to Syria. In such publications, the Ottoman family was shown great respect and seriousness in Lebanon and the necessity of showing them all manner of civility. In describing the welcoming of the Ottoman family, one newspaper used highly enthusiastic language but also mentioned the fact that this encouragement should not take on a political edge. It was also carefully emphasized that the presence of the Ottoman sultan in Lebanon must not pose any new problems for the Lebanese. See "al-'Umarā' al-'uṭmāniyyin wa ṣaḥīfa bayrūtiyya", *al-Muqattam*, 30 March 1924, p. 1.

After the abolition of the Caliphate, the matter of whether Abdülmecid Efendi would be able to preserve the title of caliph became one of the most talked about topics in the Egyptian press. The different opinions on this matter raised by the scholars in particular, and the contradictory statements made by members of Azhar were generally debated in long articles on the first pages of the newspapers. Maḥmūd Rashād, the former Governor of the Egyptian High Court, had this matter on his agenda. In an article by Rashād that appeared in *al-Muqattam*, he expressed his concerns about the differing opinions by Egyptian scholars on the matter of the last caliph.³⁵ The management at Azhar gathered together on the 25th March with the same agenda to discuss whether Abdülmecid Efendi would lose his title of caliph if he departed Istanbul, whether the required conditions for the imamate would be lifted, and whether a spiritual caliph would be accepted or not. Such matters and the decision made at the end of the gathering plus a call for an immediate conference on the Caliphate were published in *al-Manār* and many other newspapers. In the statement the following points were stressed: The Caliphate was a form of leadership that was based on the management of the religious and worldly affairs on the Islamic community, the fact that it was not necessary to obey the caliph if he were unable to apply the religious sanctions due to fear or apprehension, the permission to ‘take care’ of the leader if he were incapable of ruling the ummah or protecting the rights of the Muslims. It was argued that in order to alleviate the confusion in the minds of the Muslims, a conference on the Caliphate needed to be organised, and that Cairo, the capital of Egypt, due to its elite position within the Muslim lands, would be the most suitable site for this conference. The planned date for the conference was the 25th March 1925 and Muslim countries were all invited.³⁶

In commenting on this decision in *al-Muqattam*, Maḥmūd Rashād criticised it by indicating that the Muslim world would be without a caliph until the Conference on the Caliphate. According to Rashād it was possible that at the future conference it would be decided that Abdülmecid Efendi had preserved the validity of the allegiance. If this were to take place, the decision that would be taken on the 25th March, 1924 would be invalid and the Caliphate of Abdülmecid Efendi would be accepted. Rashād stated that if this or an opposite decision was made, the Muslim world being without a caliph for one year was unfounded.³⁷

³⁵ Maḥmūd Rashād, “al-Khilāfa aydan”, *al-Muqattam*, 29 March 1924, p. 1.

³⁶ Amīn al-Rāfi‘ī, “al-Khilāfa wa al-mu‘tamar al-islāmī”, *al-Manār*, 2 July 1924, vol. 25, pp. 367-370.

³⁷ Maḥmūd Rashād, *op. cit.*, p. 1. A similar view can be found in an article by Muhammad Qandīl al-Raḥmānī in *al-Abrām*, written on the 31st March. Raḥmānī also criticized the delay of the

The reaction against the decision by the Grand Assembly of Scholars of Azhar to invalidate the Caliphate of Abdülmecid Efendi came from the community of Alexandria who also defended the notion that the Caliphate should remain with the Turks by whatever means. At a meeting on the 4th April, 1924 hosted by one of the leading scholars of Alexandria, Dr. Abdul‘azîz ‘Umrân, and which was attended by many of the Alexandrian Muslims, the matters on the agenda were that Alexandria would work in coordination with Cairo and that Abdülmecid Efendi should continue to be accepted as the caliph. The first and most important decision to come from the meeting was that the mentioned decision by the Grand Assembly of Scholars would be protested and a call was made to discuss the issue of the Caliphate in a Muslim land far from the influence of foreigners, rather than in Cairo, and which would represent all of the Muslims. Another decision that came out of the meeting was the call for the neutrality of Italy on the issue of the Caliphate, after sermons began to be given in the mosques of Tripoli that spoke against the Ottoman Caliphate which met with protests from the public. A third decision concerned the Indian Khilafat Movement³⁸ giving its support to the efforts in Ankara, and that support should thus be given to the pressure placed on the government in Ankara to withdraw its decision on the Caliphate, and a delegation in Egypt giving its support to the Indian delegation and sending them to Ankara for support. It was decided to inform the High Council on the Caliphate Conference in Cairo and the newspapers of these decisions.³⁹

selection of a new caliph by Azhar until the planned conference in May, 1925. He proposed that a year without a caliph for the Muslims could open up irreparable wounds. Raḥmānī asks a scholar from Azhar a question. The scholar stated that since a conference was being planned to select a new caliph, the Caliphate of Abdülmecid Efendi would be null and void. He then asked him that if he believed this Caliphate was invalid, then why did he not protest against the Caliphate of Abdülmecid Efendi when it was announced. If the Caliphate of Abdülmecid Efendi was valid at one point in time, then he did not step down from the duty of his own accord, nor due to the demands of the Muslims, but was thus forcefully removed. Muhammad Qandil al-Raḥmānī, “al-Khilāfat al-islāmiyya wa al-mashīḥat al-azhar”, *al-Abram*, 31 March 1924, p. 1.

³⁸ Indian Khilafat Movement was founded in 1919 by leading Indian Muslim intellectuals such as Muhtar Ahmad Ansari, Ajmal Khan, Mavlana Abdulbari, Abul Kalam Azad and Shavkat and Muhammad Ali brothers. With the Turkish Nationalist Struggle they turned their emotional commitment into Mustafa Kemal and in 1922 did not display any serious criticism when Caliphate has been separated from the Sultanate. Even the first Caliphate Conference of India, which was held in Delhi on 21-27 December 1922, accepted and approved Abdülmecid Efendi as the new caliph. But when the Turkish Republic abolished Caliphate on March 3, 1924 and expelled the last caliph and his family, disputes arose between the leaders of the movement. After this date, the movement began to lose its power and disintegrate. See, M. Naeem Qureshi, “Hindistan Hilafet Hareketi”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 18, 1998, pp. 190-110.

³⁹ After Khalid al Hasanī al-Jazāirī, Abdul‘azîz Bey gave a speech at the meeting and underlined the fact that the issue of the Caliphate needed to be based on a sound foundation and the

Support for the Ottoman Caliphate was not only limited to the Alexandria Institute in Azhar or the Caliphate Law Committee, and a similar opinion came from such senior members of Azhar such as Muhammad Shākir. In an article written for *al-Muqattam*, Shākir gives the reminder that the capital cities of the Islamic civilisations, Damascus, Baghdad, Jerusalem, Mecca, Madina and Cairo were all defeated one by one, and only Istanbul was left, the sole heir to the period of the great Caliphate, founded on the Dardanelles Strait.⁴⁰ Another article which defended the yet current Caliphate of Abdülmecid Efendi and the unlawfulness of his dismissal, began with a call to the Muslims to ‘Support the Caliph’. The call put forth the view that the dismissal of Abdülmecid Efendi from the position of caliph was illegal and thus he still had the right to the position.⁴¹

necessity of elevating the position of Islam. In addition, he asked that the conference take place in a land far from foreign influence. The secretary of the Board then took the stand and made mention of the necessity of establishing sub-committees in order to give support to the High Commission of Egypt. A 15 member committee was then selected from those present, under the leadership of Amīr Khālid, and then decisions of the meeting were announced. See ‘Ismāil Hilmī al-Bārūdī, “Lağnat al-khilāfat al-islāmiyya fī al-iskandariyya”, *al-Muqattam*, 8 April 1924, p. 8. Another committee, the Caliphate Law Committee, was set up for the organization of the Caliphate Conference under the fabric of Azhar and was a response to the call by the scholars of Alexandria. Maḥmūd Muhammad Sadiq, the general secretary of this committee wrote an article on behalf of the committee in *al-Muqattam*, in which he pointed to the criticisms aimed at the resolutions of the Scholars Committee, stating that these criticisms did not have good intentions but that they should be given attention anyhow. Under the influence also of the resolutions that came from the meeting in Alexandria that took place after an invitation from Khalid al-Hasanī al-Jazāiri, it was understood that the one year that was determined to wait for a new gathering, was too long and that this period could be halved and that in this period as was suggested, a delegation could be sent from Egypt to support the Indian delegation in Ankara and that other Muslim lands should be encouraged similarly, and a financial fund be established that would take care of the finances of this delegation and of the Islamic conference to take place, and finally the establishment of an independent financial committee under the leadership of Omar Tosun, which would be used to gather financial donations for the caliph, considering his situation in a foreign land. In addition the committee resolved to protest the Representative of the Department of Endowments who gave the order that Abdülmecid Efendi’s name was not to be read at the Friday sermons, thereby deeply wounding the Muslims. Thus it was resolved that the conference should take place in an independent and free Muslim country with there being three options from which to choose from: Turkey, Afghanistan and Yemen. See Maḥmūd Muhammad Sadiq, “Lağnat al-khilāfat bi al-ḥuqūq: Bayān 2”, *al-Muqattam*, 20 April 1924, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Muhammad Shākir, “al-Khilāfa fī naẓar al-ālam al-islāmī ba‘da al-tağārub al-qāsiya”, *al-Muqattam*, 15 April 1924, p. 1.

⁴¹ Under the text can be found signatures from a group of scholars –only one of which was from Azhar. “Mişr wa al-khilāfa”, *al-Abrām*, 10 March 1924, p. 1. After the protests became louder in the face of this decision by the Grand Assembly of Scholars, Husayn Muhammad al-Haffājī, from Azhar, was forced to write an article which defended the assembly. In the article, the view was put forth that the decisions of both the Grand Assembly of Scholars and the Scholars

Correspondence with the Indian Muslims

Due to its large Muslim population and also their powers of civil sanctions in the eyes of the British government, the Indian Muslims, even though they were unable to prevent the abolition of the Caliphate, were successful in particular, in preventing certain done deals that could have come about after the institution was abolished.⁴² Civil movements that represented the Indian Muslims such as the Central Committee on the Caliphate and the Society of Scholars, advised Cairo of not rushing to fill the void that would occur after the 3rd of March and stated their view that the Caliphate should remain with the Turks⁴³ both of which was an indication of the reluctance of the Indian Muslims on the matter of the Caliphate being transferred to Egypt. The Indian Caliphate Committee drawing closer to the Saudi government after Abdul‘azîz ibn Saud conquered the Hijaz and their failure to attend the Conference of the Caliphate in Cairo, in 1926, struck great blows to Egyptian hopes on the Caliphate.⁴⁴ Though the persistent calls to Ankara by the Indian Committee on the Caliphate to reexamine the matter of the Caliphate did not have any great impact, some scholars and leading men from Alexandria did give their support to the efforts of the Indian Muslims. And so it was that the Alexandrian Committee on the Caliphate sent a telegram to the Turkish Grand National Assembly after a meeting lead by Khalid al-Hasanî on the 19th April in 1924 in order to support the opinion of the Indian Committee on the Caliphate which

Solidarity Committee were taken in the light of the rules of the sharia, and that Muslims could act according to either of these fatwas, which were both legal according to the sharia. In essence, the Grand Assembly of Scholars consisted of members who were more senior than those in the Scholars Solidarity Committee and the first one was the group that represented Azhar on an official level. This was anyhow the reason why the Muslims took the decisions of a authoritative group of scholars more seriously and which Al-Haffājî mentioned. See Husayn Muhammad al-Al-Haffājî, “Asās al-mu‘tamar al-islāmî al-qādim”, *al-Muqattam*, 4 April 1924, p. 2.

⁴² For more information on the history of Indian support for the Ottoman caliphate, see Azmi Özcan, *Panislamizm: Osmanlı Devleti, Hindistan Müslümanları ve İngiltere (1877-1914)*, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, İstanbul, 1992.

⁴³ A telegraph sent by the Central Caliphate committee to Sa‘d Zağlül, with a common text, was published in the British press: “The Caliphate question”, *The Scotsman*, 28 March 1924, p. 3.

⁴⁴ The positive relations formed by the Indian Caliphate Movement and the Saudi rulers was emphasized in commentaries of the movement by another Saudi sympathizer, Rashîd Riḍā. The Indian Caliphate Committee was shown to be one of the most powerful groups amongst the Indian Muslims as reported in *al-Manār*. Comparing this group with the Huddam al Haramayn committee formed at the same time and which were supporters of Britain, Riḍā praised the first for its support of Abdul‘azîz ibn Su‘ud. Also Riḍā accused the second group of having Shiite tendencies and ‘supporting Sharîf Huseyin and his sons, who were British pawns against the Saudis who represented the Arabs and who were devoted to the Sunnah’. See: “Anbā’ al-ālam al-islāmî”, *al-Manār*, 5 November 1926, vol. 27, pp. 634-635.

stated that the Turks should protect their Caliphate.⁴⁵ The suggestion by the Alexandrian Committee on the Caliphate that Egypt should work in harmony with India on the issue of the Caliphate, was accepted by the Indian Committee on the Caliphate, and a telegram sent to the Egyptian Solidarity Delegation of Scholars on the 6th of May, called for an alliance between Egypt and India. In response the Egyptian delegation invited the Indian Committee on the Caliphate to the planned conference on the Caliphate to be held in Cairo. Going against the decision by Azhar that the pledge of allegiance made to Abdülmecid Efendi had become invalid after the abolition of the Caliphate, the delegation proclaimed that the responsibility for the Caliphate still resided within the Ottoman family. Consequently in the future options put forth in Egypt regarding the Caliphate, both the Scholars Solidarity Delegation and the Alexandrian Committee on the Caliphate continued their support for the Ottoman caliph, despite strong opposition by Azhar, and it was found that they wished to bring this topic up in the conference to be held.⁴⁶

Reaction against Sharif Hussein

The idea that the project to make Sharif Hussein the caliph, went back to before 1916, the year in which he rebelled against the Ottomans, in fact to the years when Hussein was residing in Istanbul, is an idea that has been expressed recently by various historians.⁴⁷ It is also a fact that this claim was not taken seriously by the Muslim world for several reasons. At the head of these reasons was undoubtedly, the accusation that Sharif allowed the British rule over the sacred lands. Even Arab nationalists such as Rashīd Riḍā who, having previously supported him in the period when the rebellion began in the Hijaz,

⁴⁵ "To the Speaker of the Ankara Grand National Assembly; the Alexandrian Caliphate Committee, which is working to organize a Caliphate Conference, supports the efforts of the Indian Caliphate Committee in persuading our Turkish brothers and the Turkish Government to support the position of the Caliphate, as the only independent state that can save Islam from being torn to pieces and that the Muslims of the world trust. It is the hope of the Committee that the Caliphate remains with the Turks, and that the universal rights of the Turks are not interfered with and allowed to run via the method of inheritance or that it is not based on the absolute authority of one individual, and that lastly that the Muslims act upon the principles of consultation in order to adopt the financial responsibility of the affairs of the Caliphate. Spokesman Khālid." See; Hamīd Muhammad al-Mulaiḥī, "Cam'iyat al-khilāfat al-islāmiyya bi al-iskandariyya", *al-Muqattam*, 22 April 1924, p. 2.

⁴⁶ The urgency of the planned conference was conveyed as follows: "[Muslims] should renew the construction of the Caliphate and to consolidate (the rope) of their faith. Otherwise, leaving the matter unsolved and abstaining the dispute would allow their religious and political government to withdraw from the demand for life and to consent the moral death that a living nation would never accept." Muhammad Farrāj al-Minyāwī, "Mas'alat al-khilāfa bayna misr wa al-hind", *al-Muqattam*, 11 May 1924, p. 7.

⁴⁷ For debates on this issue see: Joshua Teitelbaum, "Sharif Husayn ibn Ali and the Hashimite vision of the Post-Ottoman Order: From chieftaincy to suzerainty", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 34:1, 1998, pp. 103-122.

later came to ridicule him for his claims to the Caliphate and King. He thought that Husayn's claims for the Caliphate was completely invalid:

“As for the bay'a to him [Husayn] as a caliph in 1335 [AH], the text of that bay'a, which was published in Al-Qibla newspaper, has referred to Husayn as the king of the Arabs not the caliph. And speaking of the claim of Hijazi People's eligibility for bay'a, it is also false in that they are helpless and enslaved to him and his slaves. These people have no authorization (wa lā ḥallun lahum wa lā 'aqd) in their country, nor in other Arab countries and the whole Islamic World.”⁴⁸

It was several days after the abolition of the Caliphate in Ankara in March, 1924, that Hussein announced his Caliphate in Jordan, and managed to obtain a relative amount of support from Palestine and Jordan. However he failed to do so in Egypt and India, two great centres of the Muslims and was forced to end his claims to the Caliphate.⁴⁹

In an article written in January, 1923, in which he evaluated whether Sharif Hussein would be a suitable leader for the Arabic-Islamic cause or a suitable caliph, Rashīd Riḍā put forth that Hussein was not a statesman. According to Riḍā, Hussein's claim to the Caliphate was a weak one which would only receive support from his own sons and certain groups.⁵⁰ Rashīd Riḍā believed that what lay behind Hussein's claim to the Caliphate was the treaty he had made with the British, and not the ideal of realising an awakening among the Arabs and Islam.⁵¹

Even though *al-Abrām* adopted a rather more moderate stance than *al-Manār* towards Sharif Hussein, the newspaper continued to bring up the reminder in news and articles regarding his claims to the Caliphate, that he was in close to the British. In an issue of *al-Abrām* published in October, 1924 Hussein was described as “a pair of tongs” who cooperated with the British against the Muslims.⁵²

⁴⁸ Rashīd Riḍā , “al-Mas'alat al-'arabiyya fi ṭawr ḡadīd”, *al-Manār*, 29 September 1924, vol. 25, pp. 464, 466; “al-Aḥkām al-shar'iyya al-muta'alliqa bi al-khilāfat al-islāmiyya-2”, *al-Manār*, 17 January 1923, vol. 24, p. 54.

⁴⁹ The fact that the Egyptian people, in particular, did not accept the Caliphate of Hussein and that the sermons at Azhar continued to be read under the name of Abdülmeceid Efendi drew the attention of the rulers in Ankara. See Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Hariciye Nezareti İstanbul Murahhaslığı (HR.İM), 23-78.

⁵⁰ Rashīd Riḍā , “al-Aḥkām al-shar'iyya al-muta'alliqa bi al-khilāfat al-islāmiyya-2”, p. 54.

⁵¹ Rashīd Riḍā , “al-Haqāiq al-ḡadīda fi mas'alat al-sharqiyya”, *al-Manār*, 6 July 1921, vol. 22, p. 449.

⁵² “Mā yanbaḡi li al-muslimīn 'ilmuhū wa 'amaluhū”, *al-Abrām*, 19 October 1924, p. 1.

Both *al-Abrām* and *al-Muqattam* reported daily on the claims of Sharif Hussein for the Caliphate. In news from Jerusalem published on the 10th March, members of the High Council of Islam from all over Palestine, had decided to pledge their allegiance to Hussein on behalf of all the Muslims.⁵³ As an example of the negative approach to the claims of Hussein, leading religious men and men of law from Asyut called for the Muslims to avoid rushing to accept this pledge and to wait for a meeting in which they would evaluate the reactions and demands of the Muslims.⁵⁴ Yet again in a article of *al-Abrām*, news from a newspaper published in London regarding Hussein's claim to the Caliphate was conveyed with the Egyptian government also stating that they did not want Hussein as their caliph.⁵⁵

1926 Cairo Conference of Caliphate and the Idea of Bringing King Fu'ād to the Position of Caliph

As indicated previously in a call by Azhar on the 11th March, 1924 for a conference on the Caliphate, the date decided on was the Spring of 1925. However it was two years before such a conference actually took place due to the existence of multiple leaders in the Muslim world and the reluctance of India, in particular to attend such a conference. In a meeting dated January, 1925, of the general ruling assembly in preparation for the conference, the reasons given for the postponement of the conference were as follows: the continuation of the war in the Hijaz, the general elections held in Egypt, and the incompleteness of the necessary preparation for the conference.⁵⁶

Another concern in the Muslim world regarding the attendance of the conference was that it would be negatively influenced by the British in Egypt. The conference authorities strived to convince the Muslim world on these matters and even felt the need to thank foreign authorities at the opening speech of the conference for not interfering in their organisation of the

⁵³ "Talğirāfāt al-'umūmiyya", *al-Abrām*, 10 March 1924, p. 3.

⁵⁴ "Mişr al-khilāfa", *al-Abrām*, 10 March 1924, p. 1.

⁵⁵ The same news touches on the existence of those who gave support to the Egyptian King in the matter of the Caliphate. However, according to the newspaper, the Indian Muslims would not give support to the Caliphate of King Fu'ād See: "Mişr al-khilāfa", p. 1.

⁵⁶ In his comments of the delay of the organization of the conference Muhammad al Ahmadi az Al-Zawāhirī states the reason for the delay being that the real intentions of religious and political leaders of certain Muslim societies were to transfer the centre of the Caliphate to Cairo. Al-Zawāhirī shows the Indian Muslims as being the greatest obstacle to this transfer taking place. Sevket Ali, the leader of Indian Caliphate Movement also interprets the allegiance of the Muslims to Abdülmecid Efendi as still being valid as proof that the Indians were not favourable to the idea of an Egyptian-centred Caliphate. Fahrüddin al-Ahmadi al-Zawāhirī, *al-Siyasa wa al-Azhar min muḍakkirāt shaykh al-islām al-Zawāhirī*, Mişr: Maḥba'at al-'I'timād, Mısır, 1945, p. 213.

conference.⁵⁷ However it can be seen that these attempts at persuasion did not change the opinion of the Muslim World.⁵⁸

Another reason that the conference in Egypt did not receive sufficient attention was the planned Hijaz Conference on Islam by the Saudi government in the Hijaz. Just like the Cairo Conference on the Caliphate, this conference first came up on the agenda after the abolition of the Caliphate, however preparations took a great amount of time. From the start the Hijaz Conference on Islam was viewed by scholars in Egypt who wanted any decision about the future of the Caliphate to be made in Egypt, to be a rival to their own conference. In an article in the 11th April issue of *al-Abrām*, the matter was interpreted as indicative of the two leaders emerging in the Islamic world⁵⁹. This issue of two potential rulers in both Egypt and the Hijaz was seen to be nourished by the fact that the Muslims were suspicious of the hidden agenda behind the Cairo Conference which they believed was to declare Fu'ād I caliph. Fahrūddīn al-Ahmadī Zawāhirī believed that the conference was successful in that the Azhari scholars were able to defend their sincere intentions on the matter of the conference to a limited number of delegates who attended which is an indication that the above-mentioned opinion was to a large degree the dominant one.⁶⁰ Rumours that Fu'ād would be selected to be caliph were so widespread that responses regarding these claims could be found frequently in the press both before and after the conference. In an article published in *al-Abrām*, six days after the Caliphate Conference it was argued that Egypt was anyway a centre in which Muslim scholars frequently met and therefore there was nothing strange about debating the future of the Caliphate here⁶¹. The result was that the Caliphate Conference in Cairo was forced to take place on the 26th May, 1926 without any official delegations from the leading actors in the Muslim world, namely Turkey, India and Iran. Thus the true agenda of the conference was not addressed and other secondary issues were discussed instead. In fact, on the 11th March 1924 when the conference first came on the

⁵⁷Rashīd Riḍā, “Muḍakkirāt al-mu'tamar al-islāmī”,

<http://www.islamport.com/w/amm/Web/1306/3646.htm> (Accessed in September 19, 2019)

⁵⁸ Despite being invited to the conference, Musa Carullah, was not given permission to enter Egypt which was proof of the British influence over the organization of the conference.

⁵⁹ “Munassiq dā'in li al-waḥda”, “Ta'addud al-Mu'tamarāt al-islāmiyya”, *al-Abrām*, 11 April 1924, p. 1.

⁶⁰ al-Zawāhirī, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

⁶¹ When it was seen that the attendance at the conference was so low, the management decided to publish a new call in which the intention of the conference was not to determine the caliph but rather to ‘announce the true nature of the Caliphate and the need to appoint a caliph’. “Mu'tamar al-khilāfa”, *al-Abrām*, 17 May 1926, p. 1.

agenda, the management at Azhar identified its purpose as being the selection of a new caliph. Even the writings of Rashīd Riḍā point to the expectation that a caliph would be chosen or at least the method for choosing a caliph would be determined. However, whether it was because of the rumours that the aim of the conference was to select King Fu‘ād as caliph or the problems concerning the organisation of the conference and the low number of participants to represent the Muslim world, the agenda of the conference did in fact change.

Even though in such an atmosphere it was obvious that the project was hopeless from the start, the scholars at Azhar insisted that the conference take place in Cairo, despite many objections raised in Egypt itself and elsewhere⁶² as any cancellation would have caused harm to the prestige of Azhar. In evaluating these views of the management of Azhar, Elie Kedourie claimed that the seeds for the argument to transfer the Caliphate to Egypt were first sown during a debate between the Qadi of Sudan, Muhammad Muṣṭafā al-Marāḡī (1881-1945) and the British at the end of the 19th century.

Kedourie drew attention to the close relationship between King Fu‘ād I and Shaykh al-Marāḡī, who was the Shaykh of Azhar twice and also the head of the Egypt’s High Court of Shariah between the years 1909-1928, and took this as evidence of a common effort between Azhar and the Abedeen Palace to bring the Caliphate to Egypt.⁶³ A more important piece of evidence derived by Mona Hassan from the Egyptian governmental archives of the cooperation between King Fu‘ād I and the management at Azhar was the correspondence between ‘Azīz ‘Izzat Pasha, the British diplomatic representative of Fu‘ād I and the Palace. Pasha encouraged daily intelligence going to Britain regarding the politics of the Caliphate and gave much encouragement to the Egyptian King to take over the Caliphate. In this official correspondence which began at so early a date as the 7th March, 1924, ‘Azīz ‘Izzat expressed his belief that the taking of the Caliphate by Egypt would be to the benefit of his nation and would reduce the influence of Britain over Egypt. He tried to convince people that King Fu‘ād I was highly suitable to the position of caliph and that he was a person who the Muslims would accept.⁶⁴ It is significant that the Cairo Caliphate Conference was announced several days after this correspondence.

⁶² Some scholars from Azhar insisted on the conference taking place in Egypt, a country which was under occupation while being fully aware of the harms to come. For such scholars, Khālid al-Hasanī left their affairs to God. Khālid al-Hasanī, “Mas’alat al-khilāfa wa al-‘ulamā’”, *al-Muqattam*, 19 April 1924, p. 2.

⁶³ Elie Kedourie, *op. cit.*, pp. 209-210.

⁶⁴ Mona Hassan, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-194.

It is also interesting that despite the many rumours of his claims for the Caliphate, King Fu'ād I almost never gave any explanations regarding this issue. In one of the rare statements he made regarding the future of the Caliphate he felt the need to explain due to the reaction coming from the Muslim world and the questioning of the intentions of Egypt. Together with admitting that the scholars of Azhar were encouraging him regarding the issue of the Caliphate conference to be held in Cairo, he also stated that the purpose was the protection of the Caliphate, the debate of the issue from all aspects and its clarification, and the continuation of the unity of the Muslims, aside from which he had no other personal ambitions of becoming caliph himself.⁶⁵

In a news item published in *al-Muqattam* on the 2nd April, 1924 regarding the plans to make King Fu'ād caliph, it was reported that a group of scholars from Azhar had met and proclaimed him caliph. Penned under a pseudonym, and understood to be against this decision, the author stated that it was not compatible with the decision on the Caliphate taken by the Grand Scholars Assembly affiliated with Azhar. In the 14th article of this decision, after the abolition of the Caliphate, it was proposed that a new Conference on Islam would take place in May 1925 which would have representatives from all Muslim societies and which would debate the issue of a solution to the Caliphate.⁶⁶

Egyptian public opinion seems to have evaluated only two prominent options regarding the Caliphate: Abdülmecid Efendi's returning to the Caliphate and King Fuad's accession to it while neglecting the other possibilities outside Egypt and the attempts of accessing to the Caliphate in other Islamic territories like North Africa. According to a comment in *al-Abram*, North African states are already counted historically outside the sphere of influence of the Ottoman caliphate, and from here the claim may not be widely accepted throughout the Islamic world.⁶⁷ The claims that the Moroccan Sultans could be a candidate for the caliphate position did not appear to be effective in Egypt. Although Moroccan Sultans, in the period of French patronage, have been given the title *Amir al-Mu'minin*, this title obviously did not have a universal context like the Ottoman Caliphate.⁶⁸ Egyptians seem to neglect the idea of a Moroccan caliph also because of the concern that the

⁶⁵ al-Zawāhirī, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

⁶⁶ "Hawla al-khilāfa: 'A ḥurūḡ am imtişāl?", *al-Muqattam*, 6 April 1924, 8.

⁶⁷ "Mawqif Faransā bi al-ḥilāfa wa al-ḥalifa", *al-Abram*, 10 March 1924, p. 3.

⁶⁸ For detailed information on French intentions of installing a Moroccan Caliphate, see Nurullah Ardiç, "The Maghreb Caliphate Between Colonialism and Panislamism", *Proceedings of the International Congress on The Maghreb and the Western Mediterranean in the Ottoman Era Rabat*, 12-14 November 2009, İstanbul, 2013, pp. 28-30.

caliph who emerged in Maghreb could not act independently because the region was politically under the auspices of the French. The resolutions of the Caliphate Conference which was held in Cairo in May, 1926 support this inference as no serious attempt has been made to bring the idea of an Maghrebian caliph into the agenda of the conference.

Conclusion

Although ongoing debates on the Caliphate's function in the history of Islam, the abolition of it in 1924 has left a mark in minds of many Muslim societies of the time as a tragic event. Egypt was undoubtedly at the forefront of these societies. During the intense debates around the Caliphate in Egypt, which, though existent from the second half of the twentieth century, intensified after the Caliphate was separated from the sultanate in November 1922, and reached a peak after the decision to abolish the Caliphate, the deep rooted institution has been discussed in detail in terms of its history, validity and functions. These discussions could be followed day by day specially between 1922-1925 in leading newspapers of the Egyptian press as the aforementioned newspapers gave the opportunity to present their views to the authors from various views. In this context, many commentaries from intellectuals to clergymen, politicians, journalists and opinion leaders reflected on newspaper pages. At the end of study it was seen that each of three periodicals-newspapers gave a wide space to the issue of Caliphate. While the comments in *al-Manâr* focused more on the theoretical dimension of the issue, *al-Abrâm* and *al-Muqattam* displayed rather political debates. It was also seen that *al-Abrâm* makes room for more moderate views about the Caliphate and the more controversial views were published in *al-Muqattam*, which is known for its close ties to the British administration.

Another finding of the study is the existence of a spiritual commitment of Alexandrian scholars and politicians to the Ottoman Caliphate. From the abolition till the Caliphate Conference they rised their voice to support Ottoman House's rights for remaining the sole representer of the Islamic World. The support went so far that Alexandrian branch of al-Azhar kept recognizing Abdülmecid Efendi as caliph even though desicions which university's central comittee made were implying to designate a new caliphate and choosing a new caliph.

During the debates on the Caliphate in Egypt, King Fûâd I's accession to the Caliphate was also considered a weak possibility and an unwise option. The failure of the Egyptian Caliphate Conference in terms of achieving the desired success partly as a conclusion of Cairo-Hejaz rivalry and Şa'd Zağlûl and the constitutionalists' reluctance to equip Fûâd I with greater powers and spiritual influence seem to be effective on this result. Fûâd I himself also kept his silence

on an Egyptian-based Caliphate and constantly refrained from making official statements on the issue. On the other hand the other claims for the Caliphate like that of Sharif Hussein's were not taken into consideration too, due to the exposed links of Sharif's to the British.

Despite being considered one of the most respected cultural regions in the Islamic World, the debates on Caliphate in Egypt failed at resolving the issue. The main reason for this failure seems to be the actual situation that the country was under British rule. As a matter of fact, the common opinion of both Egyptian public and non-Egyptian Muslims was that the Caliphate center should not be located in a region which is under foreign occupation.

During the debates in general, many of the views had intensified over the necessity to revise the functional nature of the Caliphate which was as of much concern as its abrogation, other opinions were put forth, after its abrogation, that asserted that it needed to be reconsidered as an international institution which would ensure the social and cultural solidarity of the Muslims. These views, which bore the patent effects of the Pan-Islamism of the 19th century, show that the political agenda of the Pan-Islamists in the first quarter of the 20th century, was ever in the background. When we examine the picture portrayed in the works of Muslim intellectuals of the 1920s we find that an understanding of a universal Caliphate which would gather together the Muslims under one political agenda in order to organise them was long gone and replaced with an understanding that it would gather them under one spiritual roof in order to strengthen solidarity amongst them and support them in the diverse paths they had chosen for themselves.

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