

Why Hurub al-Riddah (Apostasy Wars) Were Fought

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During the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), Islam was established. The year before his death, Islam spread all over the Arabian Peninsula and tribe after tribe converted to Islam. When in the year 11 A.H./ 632 A.D., the Prophet died, the majority of tribes, under the leadership of their chieftains and false prophets, apostatized. They refused to pay *zakat* and challenged the authority of the newly elected Caliph, the successor of the Prophet, Abu Bakr. This is generally known as the Riddah Movement. In these circumstances, Abu Bakr took strict and bold steps, defeated the apostates and rebels, and re-established the sovereignty of Islam.

Meaning and Concept of the Riddah:

According to Lane, the word "*raddun*" signifies anything returned after it has been taken; *irtadda*, quasi-pass. of 1 form would mean "he, or it, returned, went back, came back, or reverted." Thus "*irtadda 'an dinihi* means 'he went back from his religion. [Hence, He apostatized; or revolted from his religion: and particularly] he returned from El-Islam to disbelief." "Riddah a substantive from *irtadda*, signifying [As apostasy: and particularly] a returning from El-Islam."¹ According to al-Zabidi: "*al-riddah (bi kasr al-ismi min al-irtidad) wa qad irtadda wa irtadda 'anhu tahawwala, wa minhu al-riddah 'an al-islam.*" Riddah is noun from *irtidad*. *Irtadda* and *irtadda 'anhu* means 'to change, to deviate from. From this is *al-riddah 'an al-islam*', means reverting from Islam. '*Irtadda fulanun 'an dinihi*' means so and so turned away from his religion."² Islam, from its very inception, embraced both religious and political aspects - a fact that the Riddah Wars clearly demonstrate. It is clear from the Quran that in Islam no distinction could be made between accepting the piritual message of redemption and submitting to the political authority of the Prophet. "Those who deny Allah and His Messengers, and wish to separate between Allah and His Messenger, saying: 'We believe in some but reject others', and wish to take a course midway, they are in truth unbelievers; and We prepared for unbelievers a umiliating punishment" (Quran, 3: 19).³ This was further explained by Muh