

# When Ghazali is hijacked for an Islamic State



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[This article will debunk any attempt to align Imam Ghazali with a dangerous voice today calling to a Global Islamic State, to do this it will present a historical backdrop and a context for the Imam's views]

Suffice it to say that to Allah alone belongs all praise.

Imam Ghazali's views are being misrepresented and his popularity is being exploited in an attempt to influence impressionable muslims so they may become part of a hate-preaching extremist ideology. So what's the dangerous ideology you ask? Well, that **God requires all Muslims male, female, young and old to setup an obligatory Global Islamic State with one Caliph who will then declare Jihad on the Kuffar worldwide. Any Muslims who are not working towards this Islamic State are incredibly sinful in the eyes of God and are indirectly responsible for the suffering around the World.** This hate ideology is not at all uncommon online where it is being used to guilt-trip and infect the minds of naive vulnerable young Muslims who simply do not know what their meant to believe.

The repetitively misused quotes of Imam Ghazali include: "*It cannot be denied that appointing an imam is obligatory and an obligation upon all muslims.*" which is in a few of his book, namely 'AlMustazhari' (المستظرية) **Imam Ghazali** begins one chapter: "*the aim of this chapter is to prove his [Caliph Mustazhir's] Imamate in accordance with the law [of Islam] and to show that all the ulema of the time must give the legal decision that men are definitely and positively bound to obey him...and that he is the Caliph of God over men, and that obedience to him is a duty incumbent on all men*". [so far...compelling].

Now context is a wonderful thing folks, as is actually having studied Islam, its of no wonder that most of these preachers/inciters of this hate-speech have never read a single classical book in Islam, not Ghazali nor anybody else, what does disappoint however is to see the occasional Scholar who is trained take to their defence in promoting an Islamic State, either

due to their poisonous views or simply because they may not like for personal reasons those who are condemning the hateful and extremist preaching. That said, I will clarify for the common muslim that Imam Ghazali is as free from their modernly political and militant ideologies of Islam as anyone could possibly be and **their misrepresentation of the Imam is due to them not having studied the life and times of Imam Ghazali as a collective.**

**Imam Ghazali** clearly writes in his book *Naseeha tul Muluk* (التبـر المـسـبـوك فـي نـصـيـحة الـمـلـوـك): *The Prophet's Teaching “a Kingdom/Rule can remain with Kufr[disbelief] but it cannot remain with Zhulm [tyranny].* “الـمـلـك يـبـقـى مـعـ الـكـفـر وـلـا يـبـقـى مـعـ الـظـلـم” Such an ethic clearly shows that the most important thing is justice and its not about ruling over kuffar.

However, before I get ahead of myself, incase any reading this article are new to this and perhaps impressionable , therefore, lets clarify; **there is categorically NO obligation in Islam to setup or work towards setting up an Islamic State/Caliphate.** There is not a single clear mention in the Quran of this or for that matter in The Sunnah of the Prophet, **any such quotations of Hadith being presented are always misrepresentations of the words of the Prophet.** Countless scholars including Imam Qalsadi, ibn Arafa, Juwayni, Shawkani, Sana'ani etc clearly highlight that any **hadith regarding Caliphs/Imams was simply referring to a community, region or province and not speaking about one Caliph for the whole world**, they highlight that such would be inconceivable since within the first century after the Prophets lifetime, Muslims have never had one leader and always had different kingdoms led by dynasts and kings, with countless people all calling themselves Caliph.

What Islam seeks for humanity is to develop, prosper and live in harmony with one another and nature on this earth. This cannot be done without trust, peace, laws and order in society. So yes leadership is necessary but not because its a ritual like wudu or a worship per se but because its instrumental in allowing humanity to prosper. With that in mind lets zoom out to the past...**The medieval world**, this era knew only Dynasts, kings and Tyrants. There were no such things as governments, public representation, democratic voices, not even a police system. It was a time when '**Might is Right**' ruled the show.

**Imam Ghazali himself explains this** at lengths in his book that ruler-ship (Imama/Khilafa) is instrumental, it has objectives (Maqasid) he highlights how order in society can only come from a king who has a powerful army and presence, he writes "*The Leader is in need as a must of Armoury; overwhelming army, abundant weaponry by*

*which he can uproot transgressors and insurgents".* Any time one kingdom was attacked by another... plunder, pillage and genocide is what almost always followed. Hence Imam Taftazani writes in his commentary on the Aqa'id, that the greater the reach of a King/Dynast is, the greater the prosperity because it is less likely for him to be a soft target for rival kings/opportunists.

So what is Imam Ghazali talking about when he's saying we must setup an Imam etc ? In order to appreciate this lets take a look through **a lens into Ghazali's World:** [History cap on folks!]

**AlGhazali lived during the 5th Islamic Century [H], he was born in 450H [1058CE].** This was still before the battle of Hastings! (1066CE) and it was an incredibly turbulent time right throughout the world. There were countless rival kings and dynasties all too easily killing each other for a throne and in the process decimating the entire region. The Buyids a Shia dynasty was in control of the middle East and the Abbasids were simply there as monuments who lacked any true control. The Buyids maintain control for over 100 years and were officially removed in 447H by the Seljuk 3 years before Imam Ghazali was born, yet remnants of their impact not only remain for several years but also play a role in leading up to the next Great Royal Rumble for the Abbasids in the Middle East! but before we get into that lets see what else is going on in the Muslim World? [smile..its always good to add perspective].

Looking as far to the Muslim West; Al-Andalus [Muslim Spain] has 22 Muslim kingdoms, in the words of the Maliki Legend alBaaji, a senior contemporary of Ghazali he describes how if a person went for a walk during a single day, he could cross up to 3 different kingdoms **each claiming to be the Caliph.** During this century Egypt is under Fatimid (Shia) rule, North West & Central Africa has seen decades of lawlessness, which finally result in a new Dynasty known as the Murabitun [AlMoravids], Omayyad rule (Which begins in essence after 4 rightly guided Caliphs) still exists amongst some regions of Muslim Spain, some scant regions of North West Africa, traces within the Balearic Islands, Sicily which was conquered almost two centuries prior to Ghazali by the al-Aghaliba (who were a separate ruling power in North Central Africa) however Sicily in Ghazali's century is under faction kings; Ibn Mankut, ibn al-Hawaas etc and is then lost to the French armies.

We wonder why when there were all the these different kingdoms/Caliphates why wasn't there a Global Caliphate Movement? **Why weren't the scholars preaching about this in all their works?** well besides it being a **fantasy...** because no such instructions exist in

Islam, they key objective was to seek upstanding righteous leadership wherever you are. **Now its important to clarify that Islam unquestionably promotes Unity and working together as a collective** and if possible as a hypothetical; lets imagine all Muslim states were to have a Union (a bit like the EU) and share free markets, trade, currency etc this would all be an excellent idea and **is encouraged by Islam** as cooperating effectively and being united in purpose and prosperity. This however is nothing like preaching that all these modern states are illegitimate and invalid, have zero authority and encourage armies to conduct Military coups so we could take over atleast one country, declare **one Caliph who is then authorised to declare a holy war on the rest of the Kuffar** worldwide..that view is nothing but preposterous and highly dangerous.[now lets get back to Ghazali's era]

No sooner had the Buyid remnants began to disappear than the Fatimid (Shia) Dynasty began to make their move, this dynasty was in Egypt and believed themselves to be the rightly deserving leaders, they were supported by the Ismaeeli Shia sect in the Middle East (Baatiniyya) who were also making a claim for Rulership over the Middle East. The Abbasid had already been like sitting ducks for the Shia Buyid Dynasty for over a hundred years, so the opportunity for the Fatimids was just right. The War was on two fronts: military and ideological. Fear was rife and several people were being targeted by the Isma'ili sect who had a militant wing; the deadly and feared 'Assassins' [Hashhashin...yep that's where the word comes from!] they were inspired by their cleric Hasan Sabah, they wreaked havoc throughout the middle east and killed countless people from the nobility including Nizam ul Mulk, a key governor and patron of Imam Ghazali, in addition to this several of Imam ghazali's own teachers were assassinated by this 'Assassins' Isma'ili Sect. [some feel these tragic events led to Imam Ghazali turning to a life of seclusion in later years]

People knew all too well that a full scale war could break out what the common people feared the most. **The Fatimids and the Isma'ilis produced several books during this time to explain** how the Abbasid ruler al-Mustazhir was inferior to their Fatimid ruler who not only was closer to the lineage of the Prophet than the Abbasid al-Mustazhir but that he unlike the Abbasid's was chosen through revelation, **this was important for a few reasons** including; it was known the Abbasid dynasty was setup by unforgiving bloodshed at the hands of its first ruler 'al-Saffah' and others and also **the Abbasids weren't a strong force and were heavily relying on the 'Oghuz Turk Seljuk' (who later become the de facto rulers of the Middle East)**. The Batiniyyah were arguing that these Seljuks were not even Arabs let alone from the Prophet's tribe of Quraysh, **hence could not be fit for**

**rule and due to such a betrayal to leadership the public ought to remove their Caliph/Imam Mustazhir.**

**To combat this propaganda Imam Ghazali wrote his book ‘Mustazhiri’** or its complete title “Fada’ih alBatiniyyah wa alFada’il alMustazhiriyya” ‘an exposé of the disgraceful Batiniyyah and the virtues of al-Mustazhir’. In this work that Imam Ghazali is arguing the necessities of having an imam. **He begins his argument by highlighting not that its a religious ritual rather it offers stability** “if one asks why must we have an Imam?....this calls to the collapse of order, termination of governance, termination of judges, loss of rights, inability to perform marriages.” etc. He then continues in the same book to tackle some more problematic conditions [The Abbasid king didn't meet] for an Imam: immense Knowledge of Islam [ijtihad] Imam Ghazali quotes “these conditions can be overlooked” he further argues **“a true leader carrying all the requirements of lineage, probity and knowledge does not exist in our age.”** He then justifies that is still fine and not a reason for the people to be worried since the Caliph can rely on other scholars but more importantly he has stability through his armoury. Imam Ghazali concludes that **therefore Al-Mustazhir is the true Caliph which all people must give an allegiance to.** It would be absurd to assume by all people he was calling all the people in the World at the time in Muslim Europe, Africa and Asia etc since that would be only a fantasy! He however was simply addressing the people who were the Abbasid Kings subjects.

**The irony** is that shortly after there was relative stability in the region, Imam Ghazali becomes incredibly detached from supporting these rulers and is well known for this, his own Fatawa in his renowned ‘Ihya-Uloom Deen’ are:

**Commercial interactions with the rulers is haram** since their money is Haram

السلطين، المعاملة معهم حرام لأن أكثر مالهم حرام

The Markets they have built is with **Haram** money it is impermissible to trade in them or take up residence in them

الأسواق التي بناها بمال الحرام تحرم التجارة فيها و لا يجوز سكناها

To have financial interactions with their judges, or workers or servants is **severely haram**.

معاملة قضائهم و عمالهم و خدمتهم مثل معاملتهم حرام بل هو أشد

**Imam Ghazali justifies these views by saying that these rulers have only taken power by usurping rights, property and wealth, which was never theirs.**

More interestingly, any trying to hijack alGhazali as the voice for a global Islamic State should know that not only did the Imam never rally mankind to a Caliphate, he never rallied people to ever take up arms. in fact one of the criticisms put to Imam Ghazali by academic critics in the last few centuries has been that **even when Jerusalem collapsed to the crusaders in the year 492H, Imam Ghazali did not get involved** nor rally people to take up arms. the Imam lived till 505H for another 12 years in the same regional deserts not too far from alQuds (Jerusalem) yet he was never known to call to a jihad, he neither participated in Jerusalem's defence nor rallied any ruler or the public to fight at alQuds nor ever wrote to encourage the people to do so. Whereas many other scholars eg. Ibn Aqeel etc were involved in that effort. Ibn Kathir highlights how even the kings urged scholars to get involved, yet Imam Ghazali chose not to. Many later scholars have explained **Imam Ghazali's reasons for doing so because of his latter life of seclusion** and turning to purify the inner self which he saw as being more important, coupled with his lack of love for this Dunya and its politics altogether.

One thing becomes evidently clear, to present Imam Ghazali in our day and age as man of political calling, as a voice for a global Islamic State is **not only a disservice to the legend and genius of the great man he was, rather it is an outright slander**. May Allah shower abundant mercy upon Imam Ghazali and grant him an elevated maqam in Jannah tul Firdous, Ameen. And May grant us the ability to reclaim this Deen of Mercy and Compassion from any who attempt to hijack it and may He grant relief to any who have had their lives and homes torn apart by this virus of extremism

و إن كنت لا تدرى فال المصيبة أعظم

إن كنت لا تدرى فتلك مصيبة

“If you did not know then that is a calamity,

and if you knew ... then the calamity is far greater.”

**Yours Truly**

**Mufti Abu Layth al-Maliki**