

Freedom of conscience – Arabic known as Hurriyyat Al-Ra'y

On numerous occasions the Quran invites people to investigate and explore the world around them and to draw rational conclusions, not in the manner of blind imitators who follow and accept what others have said, but through intelligent analysis and judgement. Thus the Quran says:

*“Thus doth God expound for you the signs that you may think” (2:266)*

Elsewhere in the text we are challenged with the question *“Do they not examine the realm of the heavens and the earth and whatever God has created?” (7:185)*

While commenting on these and other passages in the Quran, we observe that the Quran encourages rational inquiry in the world around us and that this would not be possible without freedom to express ones opinion and thought.

The idea of freely choosing religious beliefs is not alien to the Islamic tradition. In the Qur'an and the canonical sources, freedom to opt for belief in God and religious truths is to rest on voluntary, conscious action far removed from coercion and forced conversion.

Take the following passages in the Qur'an:

*“There is no compulsion where the religion is concerned.” (2:256)*

*“You cannot guide those you would like to but God guides those He wills. He has best knowledge of the guided.” (28: 56)*

*“God does not forbid you from being good to those who have not fought you in the religion or driven you from your homes, or from being just towards them. God loves those who are just.” (60:8)*

*“We have appointed a law and a practice for every one of you. Had God willed, He would have made you a single community, but He wanted to test you regarding what has come to you. So compete with each other in doing good. Every one of you will return to God and He will inform you regarding the things about which you differed.” (5:48)*