

Islamic Government (The Book)

Probably the best known of Imām Khomeini’s works, the book *Islamic Government* originated in a series of lectures given at Najaf between January 21 and February 8, 1970. The lectures were recorded and transcribed by a student, and then published in book form.

“Islamic Government” is an exact translation of the original Persian title, *Hukūmat-i Islāmi*. However, the reader should bear in mind that the book does not purport either a complete scheme of Islamic political philosophy or a detailed plan for the establishment and functioning of an Islamic state. Its purpose is narrower and more specific and geared to the audience to whom the lectures were delivered: students of the religious sciences, who might be expected later to assume positions of influence in Muslim society.

Three major points emerge from the lectures. The first is the necessity for the establishment and maintenance of Islamic political power for Islamic goals, precepts, and criteria. The second is the duty of the religious scholars (the fuqahā) to bring about an Islamic state, and to assume legislative, executive, and judicial positions within it—in short, the doctrine of “the governance of the faqāh” (*vilāyat-i faqāh*). The various texts that support this second point are subjected to lengthy review and examination. Finally, Imām Khomeini sets out a program of action for the establishment of an Islamic state, including various measures for self-reform by the religious establishment. All three themes are expounded against a backdrop of particular concern with Iran; hence the occurrence of numerous references to Iran in the course of the general and theoretical discussion.

Accurate translations of *Hukūmat-i Islāmi* exist in French, Arabic, Turkish, and Urdu. In the fall of 1978, the Joint Publications and Research Service, the translation branch of the US Central Intelligence Service, commissioned an English translation, not of the original Persian text, but of the translation in Arabic. The resulting version, crude and unreliable, was subsequently published in a vulgar and sensational format by Manor Books, a commercial publisher in New York. What follows is an integral and faithful translation of the third edition of the Persian text, published at Najaf in 1391 A.H./1971.

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