

The Salahudin Roadmap for the Liberation of Palestine

Born in 1137 in Iraq, Salahudin rose to prominence during a tumultuous period when Muslim lands were disunited and under the shadow of Crusader occupation. Upon assuming rule in Egypt in 1169, he embarked on a mission to strengthen the Khilafah (Caliphate) State and unify various Arab regions. Recognizing the importance of Muslim unity, Salahudin strategically unified smaller states surrounding Palestine, laying the groundwork for a unified front against the Crusaders. The turning point in Salahudin's military campaign came in 1187 with the infamous attack by Reynold de Chatillon, the Christian King of Kerak, located in modern-day Jordan, on a Muslim caravan. This event shattered a temporary peace and provided Salahudin the opportunity to fulfill his longstanding dream of liberating Jerusalem.

Salahudin's quest to unify the Islamic front faced a significant challenge from Crusader control over Syrian coastal cities and key fortresses like Kerak and Crac de Montreal, in modern-day Jordan. These strongholds hindered communication between Egypt, Greater Syria, and part of Iraq, crucial axes for Salahudin's state. Previously, Imad ad-Deen Zangi [Zenki] laid the foundation for unity by uniting Greater Syria. This legacy was continued by Noor ad-Deen [Nur ad-Din], who united Egypt with Syria.

The Battle of Hattin was preceded by a series of events, starting with the death of King Baldwin V in 582 AH. Internal conflicts erupted among Crusader princes vying for the throne of Jerusalem. Salahudin capitalized on this instability, strategically intervening in Crusader affairs. The marriage of Guy of Lusignan to Sybille, King Baldwin V's mother, granted him the kingship, creating tensions between Guy de Lusignan and Raymond III, the other candidate for kingship.

Salahudin's truce with Raymond III, Count of Tripoli, in modern-day Lebanon, and a separate truce with Bohemond III, Count of Antioch, in modern-day Turkey, allowed him to manipulate Crusader politics. Renewing alliances with Raymond III and Bohemond III strategically weakened the Crusader principalities of Tripoli and Antioch. This infuriated Reynald de Chatillon, Count of Kerak, who, despite a previous truce, broke his agreement by intercepting a merchant caravan. Salahudin's strategic diplomatic approach to resolving this breach created mistrust and division between King Guy and Reynald, laying the groundwork for the Battle of Hattin.

Salahudin seized the opportunity to unify Muslim ranks and prepare armies across Egypt, Mesopotamia, Mosul in Northern Iraq and Syria. Marching from Damascus in 583 AH, he strategically moved towards Kerak, concealing his true objective, the Kingdom of Jerusalem. This move not only threatened Reynald de Chatillon but also showcased Salahudin's military and strategic prowess. Salahudin al-Ayyubi orchestrated a series of strategic moves leading to the pivotal Battle of Hattin.

Preceding this clash, his reconnaissance force achieved a significant victory at Sepphoris, in modern-day Galilee, instilling fear in the Crusaders. Salahudin, demonstrating foresight, opted for a decisive battle despite differing opinions among his commanders. His plan aimed to exploit the divisions in the Crusader ranks and capitalize on the death of King Baldwin V, weakening their resolve. The Crusaders' internal divisions, moral decay, and lack of unity contributed to their downfall. Facing a unified Muslim front, the Crusaders, numbering around fifty thousand, struggled to cope.

Salahudin exploited these weaknesses, creating a strategic advantage and setting traps that the Crusaders fell into. Understanding the significance of terrain, Salahudin strategically drew the Crusaders towards Tiberias, in modern-day Galilee, creating a dire situation for them. The Crusaders, exhausted and thirsty, fell into Salahudin's trap. Salahudin strategically outmaneuvered the Christian armies, avoiding direct confrontation until conditions favored the Muslims. Eventually, the Battle of Hattin, fought in the scorching heat,

exploited the Crusaders' weaknesses in bulky armor and lack of water, resulting in a resounding Muslim victory. The ensuing Battle of Hattin saw a fierce confrontation, with Salahudin's psychological warfare, encirclement, and capture of the True Cross amplifying the impact.

Salahudin's victory at Hattin demonstrated the Divine Support promised to those who uphold Allah's cause. This battle marked a turning point in the Khilafah-Crusader wars, leading to Salahudin's decisive victory and subsequent efforts to unify Greater Syria. The city of Jerusalem, after 88 years of Crusader occupation, became the focal point of Salahudin's strategic plan. Salahudin's ultimate goal was the liberation of Al-Quds (Jerusalem).

Before laying siege to the holy city, he strategically cut off Jerusalem from the Mediterranean Sea, isolating it. Salahuddin collaborated with the Egyptian navy to prevent the Christian navy from approaching, showcasing his comprehensive approach to military strategy. Salahudin's strategic brilliance unfolded after the Battle of Hattin, marked by his focus on coastal Crusader cities. By conquering Tiberias, Akka, Jaffa, Ascalon, Sidon, Beirut, Jubayl and others, he dismantled the Crusader presence in the region. These coastal fortresses that had long plagued Muslim territories fell one after another, breaking the stronghold of the Crusaders. By securing coastal cities first, he deprived the Crusaders of naval bases, weakened their forces, and prevented European reinforcements. External diplomatic efforts included alliances with Constantinople and strategic dealings with Italian fleets, limiting their influence on the Crusader principalities.

His calculated approach, sparing lives and property facilitated an unprecedented wave of victories. These series of conquests reshaped the political landscape and weakened the Crusaders, culminating in the eventual liberation of Jerusalem. Salahudin's leadership initiated a new era, challenging the colonialist movement and laying the foundation for the eventual expulsion of the Crusaders from the region.

As Salahudin advanced towards Jerusalem, the city's Crusader defenders faced challenges. With over 60,000 Crusader fighters in Jerusalem, preparations intensified as Salahudin's forces regrouped. The city's fortifications were reinforced, mangonels (traction trebuchets) were deployed on every hill, and ditches were dug to defend against the impending Muslim siege. Salahudin's strategic brilliance unfolded in a well-designed military plan. He sought to unify Islamic forces, weaken the Crusaders on their own territory, and isolate Jerusalem from reinforcements. Salahudin leveraged a media campaign to mobilize Muslims for jihad. The coastal conquests and victories were highlighted to rally support from across the Muslim world. Salahuddin laid siege to Jerusalem, lasting for twelve days, bombarding the city until the Christians surrendered on October 2, 1187. Salahudin's superior artillery played a crucial role in breaching the walls. After intense fighting, Salahudin agreed to negotiate with Balian de Ibelin, aka Balian of Jerusalem, a prominent Crusader military leader. The Crusaders agreed to surrender Jerusalem, leading to a specific set of conditions and the payment of a ransom.

Salahudin's entry into Jerusalem marked the city's liberation. Salahudin displayed mercy by setting reasonable ransoms for the Crusaders. Upon entering Jerusalem, Salahudin ordered the rebuilding of the city to its original state, reversing changes made by the Crusaders. Christians were allowed to stay, pay jizyah, and live under the protection of Islamic law. Notably, he rejected suggestions to demolish churches. Salahudin's compassion extended to the Crusader captives. He released prisoners and demonstrated kindness, even to the families of fallen Crusader knights. Christian sources and historians acknowledged Salahudin's remarkable tolerance and humanity, contrasting sharply with the atrocities committed by the Crusaders in the past.

Eight days after the conquest, the sacred mosque was purified, and the first Jumu'ah prayer was held. Al Qadi Muhyi ad-Deen ibn az-Zaki delivered a powerful khutbah, praising Allah (swt) for the victory over kufr, emphasizing His (swt) control over all affairs, and acknowledging the blessings bestowed upon the believers. The khutbah underscored the importance of the conquest, the sanctity of the mosque, and the historical significance of al-

Masjid al-Aqsa. He urged to follow Allah's commands, and continue the jihad for the liberation of the Muslim lands.

Salahudin extended beyond Jerusalem, reaching southern and northern regions of Greater Syria. The fortresses of Kerak and Crac de Montreal resisted, resulting in a year-long siege. The surrender of these fortresses marked a significant step in Salahudin's efforts to solidify the Khilafah's control of the region. Salahudin then shifted his focus northward, targeting regions in the principalities of Tripoli and Antioch. Conquests in Tripoli and Antioch weakened Crusader strongholds, leading to truces and acknowledgments of Salahudin's territorial gains.

Salahudin demonstrated remarkable political acumen. He understood the interconnectedness of uniting the Islamic front and waging jihad against the Crusaders. A temporary truce with some Crusader forces allowed him to focus on consolidating his power and avoiding scattered engagements, showcasing his far-sighted approach. Salahudin's troops demonstrated unwavering patience in their jihad, undeterred by opposition or obstacles. Scholars played a vital role in preparing the Ummah for jihad, boosting morale and providing intellectual support. Salahudin maintained close ties with scholars, consulting them on war and administrative affairs. Al-Qadi al-Fadil, a prominent scholar, played a crucial role, offering advice and wise counsel.

After meticulous preparations, Salahudin turned to Allah (swt) in sincere supplication, acknowledging dependence on Divine Support. His humility and trust in Allah were evident in his prayers and prostrations, seeking success from the Most High. His honor and glory were attributed to his dedication and commitment to Sharia. As 'Umar ibn al-Khattab emphasized that Islam was the source of the Ummah's honor, highlighting the inseparable link between the Ummah's status and its commitment to Shariah.

"We were created only for Worship and for Jihad," were Salahudin's words upon entering Damascus highlighted his unwavering commitment to Iman. Salahudin's victory wasn't just military; it stemmed from embracing Iman, adhering to Islamic principles and following the path of the Prophet. His success showcased the potency of the language of the Noble Qur'an in mobilizing sincere believers, emphasizing the importance of Iman and jihad in uniting the Muslim world. His success at Hattin and the subsequent liberation of Jerusalem were the result of a comprehensive strategy encompassing unity, political acumen, governance, diplomacy and a sincere commitment to jihad rooted in Islamic principles. His legacy serves as a beacon for strategic leadership and strong adherence to Islamic principles.

Today, the Ummah is facing a similar situation. The sons and daughters of the Ummah are being butchered mercilessly in Gaza. Jewish Colonialist settlers have occupied the sacred land and it happened just with the destruction of the Khilafah Caliphate and division of the Muslim front into unnatural and artificial nation-states, with agent rulers of Muslims over these states serving the colonialist interests. The land that Salahudin freed from Crusaders, the land that the Caliph Abdul Hamid II protected have fallen in the lap of the Jews with the covenant of Colonialist powers. The Ummah awaits yet another Salahudin. It awaits another heroic of the magnitude of Salahudin's genius, chivalry, commitment to Islamic faith and love for Jihad.

The recent gathering of Muslim rulers in Riyadh serves as a stark contrast to the actions of Salahudin Ayyubi. While these leaders condemned the atrocities in Gaza through speeches and statements, their words lacked the transformative power that comes from aligning actions with Islamic values. Dominance in war requires action, not just rhetoric. The example of Salahudin teaches us that mere rhetoric without decisive action falls short of addressing the urgency of the situation. Muslim leaders advocating for a two-state solution betray the essence of Islam. Palestine, the blessed land of Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, cannot be divided between its people and its enemies. Instead, its solution is as Allah Al-Aziz, Al-Jabbar, said, and His Saying is the true solution, ﴿وَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَأَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَخْرَجْتُمْ﴾

“And kill them [in battle] wherever you overtake them, and expel them from wherever they have expelled you.” [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah 2:191].

The call to action is not only a collective duty but also a reflection of our commitment to the Islamic Aqeedah. The Quranic injunctions to fight oppression and support those seeking help for the sake of religion must resonate within the hearts of Muslims. As Salahuddin mobilized armies to protect the sanctity of Al-Aqsa, contemporary soldiers must respond to the call in Gaza. These soldiers share the same Aqeedah as that of Salahudin, which is the powerful Aqeedah of Islam. Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَإِنِ اسْتَنْصَرُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمُ النَّصْرُ﴾ **“And if they seek help from you for the Deen, then you must help.” [TMQ Surah Al-Anfal 8:72].**

O Muslim Soldiers! O sons of Salahudin! It is Islam alone that can revive us. It is Islam alone that moves us. It makes us fear Allah (swt). It makes us conscious of the accountability on the Grand Last day of Judgement. It pushes us to organize our actions according to the commandments of Allah (swt), whether we are light or heavy.

O Muslim Commanders! In the face of the relentless aggression against your brothers and sisters in Gaza, it is incumbent upon you to reflect deeply on your duty to defend the oppressed and free the Blessed Land. This reflection must be grounded in the principles of Islamic Aqeedah and the awareness of being held accountable on the Day of Judgment. Do you not yearn for one of the two good deeds, victory or martyrdom? Do you not yearn for dignity in this life and the Hereafter? Allah (swt) said, ﴿يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَيُدْخِلْكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَمَسَاكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِي جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ * وَأُخْرَىٰ تُحِبُّونَهَا نَصْرٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيبٌ وَبَشِيرٌ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ **He (swt) will forgive your sins, and admit you into Gardens, under which rivers flow, and house you in splendid homes in the Gardens of Eternity. That is the ultimate triumph. He will also give you another favor that you long for: support from Allah (swt) and an imminent victory. So give glad tidings, O Prophet, to the believers.” [TMQ Surah As-Saf 61:12-13].**

O sincere Muslim military commanders! Today, the call to action echoes as we witness the plight of our brothers and sisters in Gaza. As the Ummah confronts this tragedy, the Islamic Aqeedah and the noble roadmap of Salahudin al-Ayyubi must guide you toward meaningful and impactful responses. It is crucial to draw parallels between Salahuddin’s era and the current situation in Gaza, as his leadership showcased the strength derived from Islamic Aqeedah. It is necessary to epitomize the political, strategic and military genius of Salahudin. The time for action is now. Embrace the teachings of Islam and follow in the footsteps of Salahudin al-Ayyubi. Mobilize to support your brothers and sisters in Gaza, standing against the aggression of those who have earned the wrath of Allah. Allah (swt) said, ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَا لَكُمْ إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ انْفِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَنْتَقَلْتُمْ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ أَرْضَيْتُمْ بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ فَمَا مَتَاعٌ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ * إِلَّا تَنْفِرُوا يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا وَيَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ وَلَا تَضُرُّوهُ شَيْئًا وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ﴾ **“O you who have believed, what is the matter with you, that when it is said to you, march forth in the Path of Allah (swt), you cling firmly to the earth? Do you prefer the life of this world over the Hereafter? The life of this world is insignificant compared to that of the Hereafter. If you do not march forth, Allah (swt) will afflict you with a painful punishment and will replace you with other people. You are not harming Him in the least. Allah (swt) is the most capable over everything.” [TMQ Surah at-Tawbah 9:38-39].**

The steadfastness of the Muslims in Gaza against overwhelming odds is a testament to the strength derived from their unwavering faith. The united forces of oppression cannot break the resolve of those who stand firm in the path of Allah. In contrast, the oppressors, find themselves unable to confront the spirit of the believers. The combined forces of the kuffar and Jews equipped with advanced technology and weaponry, have failed to subdue the Muslims in Gaza. Indeed, the Jews are as Allah (swt) said, ﴿لَنْ يَضُرُّوكُمْ إِلَّا أَذًى وَإِنْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ لَنْ يُنصَرُونَ﴾ **“They can never inflict harm on you, except for a little annoyance. If they face you in battle, they will flee and they will have no helpers.” [TMQ Surah Aali Imran 3:111].**

The kuffar, confined to fortified strongholds, stand divided in their hearts, unable to face the resilience of the believers. The present division among the Colonialist's ranks reflect back to the situation of Crusaders before the Battle of Hattin. Allah (swt) said, **﴿لَا يَقْتُلُونَكُمْ جَمِيعًا إِلَّا فِي مَحْصَنَةٍ أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ جُدُرٍ بِأَسْهُمٍ بَيْنَهُمْ شَدِيدٍ تَحْسَبُهُمْ جَمِيعًا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ شَتَّىٰ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ﴾** **“They will not fight you all except within fortified cities or from behind walls. Their violence [i.e., enmity] among themselves is severe. You think they are together, but their hearts are diverse. That is because they are a people who do not reason.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Hashr 59:14].

As Muslims, we are reminded that our actions are subject to scrutiny on the Day of Judgment. The rulers and commanders who stood idly by, witnessing the atrocities and siding with the oppressors, will be held accountable for their betrayal of the Ummah. The call to mobilize, whether light or heavy, is rooted in Islamic Aqeedah and the prophetic tradition. Failure to respond may lead to their replacement with soldiers who genuinely love Allah and His cause. Allah (swt) said, **﴿هَٰأَنتُمْ هَٰؤُلَاءِ تُدْعَوْنَ لِتُتَّقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يَبْخُلُ وَمَنْ يَبْخُلْ فَإِنَّمَا يَبْخُلْ عَن نَّفْسِهِ وَاللَّهُ الْغَنِيُّ وَأَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ وَإِن تَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُونُوا أَمْثَلَكُمْ﴾** **“Here you are, being invited to donate ‘a little’ in the cause of Allah. Still some of you withhold. And whoever does so, it is only to their own loss. For Allah is the Self-Sufficient, whereas you stand in need of Him. If you still turn away, He will replace you with another people. And they will not be like you.”** [TMQ Surah Muhammad 47:38].

O Sons of Ummah in Muslim Armies! Finally, remember that Victory for Islam and Muslims is not contingent on human capabilities alone. Rather, it is granted by Allah, awaiting the sincere and deserving individuals who are willing to sacrifice for their Deen. The call to mobilize is a call to trade the transitory world for the eternal hereafter. The establishment of the Caliphate, on the methodology of Prophethood, will guarantee a united Muslim front and is the path to reclaim the honor and dignity of the Ummah. It is a call deeply rooted in Islamic Aqeedah and the consciousness of being answerable to Allah on the Day of Judgment. Allah (swt) said, **﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ * وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَتَعْسًا لَّهُمْ * وَأَضَلَّ أَعْمَالَهُمْ﴾** **“O you who believe! If you support Allah (swt), He (swt) will support you and make your foothold firm. As for the disbelievers, they are doomed and their deeds are made void. That is because they hate all that Allah (swt) has revealed so He (swt) renders their deeds void.”** [TMQ Surah Muhammad 47:7-9].

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
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