

The 21st-Century Humanitarian Crisis in the Perspective of al-Ghazali and Abbasid History

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ABSTRACT

*This study discusses the humanitarian crisis of the 21st century by reviewing the historical experiences of the Abbasid Dynasty and the thoughts of Imam al-Ghazali. Globalisation, which has brought advances in science and technology while also giving rise to humanitarian problems such as social inequality, moral decadence, and spiritual disorientation, shows a pattern similar to the decline of Islamic civilisation during the Abbasid period. **This study uses a qualitative approach** with a literature review method. Data was collected from classical and contemporary literature, then analysed through content analysis and a historical-comparative approach. **The results** of the study show that the decline of the Abbasids was not only caused by external attacks, but also by internal crises in the form of weak morality, corruption, and a loss of spiritual orientation. Imam al-Ghazali's thoughts, particularly in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, emphasise the importance of purifying the heart, strengthening morality, and integrating knowledge with faith and ethics as fundamental solutions to the humanitarian crisis. Thus, the historical lessons from the Abbasids and al-Ghazali's thoughts provide important reflections for modern global society to not only focus on material progress but also to build moral and spiritual foundations for the creation of a just and sustainable civilisation.*

Keywords: Humanitarian Crisis, Abbasid Dynasty, Imam al-Ghazali.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini membahas krisis kemanusiaan abad ke-21 dengan meninjau kembali pengalaman sejarah Dinasti Abbasiyah serta pemikiran Imam al-Ghazali. Globalisasi yang menghadirkan kemajuan ilmu pengetahuan dan teknologi sekaligus memunculkan problem kemanusiaan, seperti kesenjangan sosial, dekadensi moral, dan disorientasi spiritual, menunjukkan pola yang serupa dengan kemunduran peradaban Islam pada masa Abbasiyah. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan **metode studi kepustakaan**. Data dikumpulkan dari literatur klasik dan kontemporer, kemudian dianalisis melalui analisis data dan pendekatan historis-komparatif. **Hasil penelitian** menunjukkan bahwa kemunduran Abbasiyah tidak hanya disebabkan oleh serangan eksternal, melainkan juga oleh krisis internal berupa lemahnya moralitas, korupsi, dan hilangnya orientasi spiritual. Pemikiran Imam al-Ghazali, khususnya dalam *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, menekankan pentingnya penyucian hati, penguatan moral, serta integrasi ilmu dengan iman dan etika sebagai solusi mendasar atas krisis kemanusiaan. Dengan demikian, pelajaran historis dari

Abbasiyah dan pemikiran al-Ghazali memberikan refleksi penting bagi masyarakat global modern agar tidak hanya berfokus pada kemajuan material, tetapi juga membangun fondasi moral dan spiritual demi terciptanya peradaban yang berkeadilan dan berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Krisis Kemanusiaan, Dinasti Abbasiyah, Imam al-Ghazali.

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century was initiated by the major event of September 11, 2001, in the United States, which was regarded as having a significant impact on global transformations. The event was considered a new momentum for the discourse on globalization. In general, discourses on globalization have been discussed as addressing the future advancement of human civilization, such as the development of science and technology. Issues of globalization have also been addressed in relation to humanitarian aspects. *First*, the unification of humankind across nations, ethnicities, and groups has been proposed. *Second*, matters of identity and culture have been raised, and *third*, the issue of equality in human life has been emphasized. (Affan, 2021).

Globalization has been defined as a process through which human civilization advances toward a global mode of existence. The development of science, technology, digitalization, and artificial intelligence has been acknowledged as contributing to the enhancement of knowledge, the acquisition of information, and the facilitation of communication among humans. On the other hand, human advancement has been observed to gradually generate humanitarian problems; impacts such as social inequality, moral decadence, cultural assimilation, and individualistic lifestyles have been viewed as potentially destroying the very progress that has been achieved by humans. This situation has been attributed to the flow of globalization, which has been seen as creating increasingly complex human needs, leading to competition in fulfilling those needs, ultimately changing human lifestyles and eroding existing norms. (Nurhaidah & Musa, 2015).

When the history of Islamic civilization from the 8th to the 12th centuries is examined, it can be shown that Islam was propelled into a period of rapid advancement, especially in the fields of knowledge, philosophy, and culture. During the rule of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (786–809 M), the Abbasid Dynasty was recognized for successfully positioning Baghdad as the center of world civilization. The establishment of Bayt al-Hikmah (House of Wisdom) was regarded as a symbol of intellectual achievement, functioning not only as a library but also as a center for translation, research, and scientific development in which works from Greek, Persian, and Indian traditions were translated into Arabic. Thus, Baghdad was transformed into an international center of knowledge and was demonstrated to embody the openness of Islamic civilization toward cultural and intellectual interaction across traditions. (Fathiha, 2021).

However, these achievements were not sustained permanently. The Abbasid Dynasty eventually was brought into a phase of decline triggered by various internal and external factors.

Internal factors, which were identified as the most dominant, included humanitarian problems manifested in moral decadence among political elites, widespread corruption, social disintegration, and the spiritual disorientation of the community. These factors were recognized as gradually weakening the foundations of Islamic civilization. Additionally, external factors such as military conflicts and foreign invasions were understood as accelerating the disintegration. This process was culminated in 1258 M, when Baghdad was invaded by Mongol forces and its political structure and intellectual center were destroyed. The event was marked not only as the collapse of the dynasty but also as a symbol of the downfall of a civilization that had once reached its golden age. (Nurtanti & Wulandari, 2023).

Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111 M), widely known as Imam al-Ghazali, has been recognized as a leading Muslim scholar who devoted significant attention to moral and humanitarian crises in his era. He lived during a time when the Abbasid Dynasty was undergoing decline. According to him, humanity was conceptualized as collective well-being, which could be achieved through the fulfillment of five essential human rights: protection of faith, protection of life, freedom of thought and expression, protection of personal dignity, and protection of property. These five principles were identified by al-Ghazali as the foundation of humanitarian efforts and welfare, which must be realized and must be implemented to ensure the rights of each individual. His thought has been regarded as worthy of deep reflection, especially because humanitarian problems today have been viewed as manifestations of similar issues. (Muhammad, 2022).

This research is aimed at analyzing the humanitarian crises occurring today, which have been influenced by human advancement, and at offering solutions to these crises by drawing upon the history of earlier civilizations that were gradually destroyed by similar humanitarian problems. The study is intended to emphasize that humanitarian problems must be regarded as critical issues requiring serious attention, given that such problems have been faced by human beings throughout history.

METHODS

A qualitative approach using the library research method was employed in this study. This approach was selected because the research is focused on the examination of texts and literature in order to understand the phenomenon of the humanitarian crisis through the historical perspective of the Abbasid Dynasty as well as the thought of Imam al-Ghazali.

The type of research was characterized as descriptive-analytical, in which humanitarian problems of the twenty-first century were described and were analyzed by relating them to the decline of the Abbasid Dynasty and the ideas of al-Ghazali.

The data sources of this research were divided into two categories. Primary sources were constituted by the works of Imam al-Ghazali, particularly *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* and *al-Munqidz min al-*

Dhalal, along with historical literature concerning the Abbasid Dynasty. Secondary sources were comprised of books on Islamic civilization, journals, scientific articles, and contemporary studies relevant to globalization, morality, and humanitarian crises.

Data collection was conducted through a literature review by examining, recording, and classifying information from various classical and contemporary references. Data analysis was carried out using content analysis to interpret al-Ghazali's ideas and Abbasid historical sources, along with a historical-comparative approach to identify the relevance between the decline of Islamic civilization and the humanitarian crises of the twenty-first century.

RESULTS

1. The Abbasid Dynasty: The Dynamics of Its Emergence, Golden Age, and Factors of Decline

a. *The History of the Establishment of the Abbasid Dynasty*

The Abbasid Dynasty was referred to as a ruling dynasty that was recognized to have held power for approximately five centuries. The name "Abbasid" was derived from the name of their ancestor, al-Abbas bin Abdul Muthalib bin Hashim. Al-Abbas was identified as the son of Abdul Muthalib. In the Islamic world, al-Abbas has been known as the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), through whom the Abbasid Dynasty was acknowledged to possess a genealogical connection to the Prophet. (Aizid, 2023).

The Abbasid Dynasty was established after the Umayyad Dynasty was overthrown in 750 M, an event that was caused by the rise of a new power supported by the Banu Hashim. This process was culminated in the Battle of Zab in early 750 M. The battle was won by the Abbasids, resulting in the weakening and eventual collapse of the Umayyads. This victory was solidified as the foundation for the Abbasids' emergence as a symbol of Muslim power for nearly 500 years.

b. *Golden Age*

the Abbasid Dynasty **was recognized** as having ruled from 750 M to 1258 M, during which 37 caliphs **were recorded** to have held power until the dynasty **was brought down** by the Mongol forces in 1258 M. However, among all caliphs who ever ruled, several **were regarded** as prominent due to their policies that **were considered** to have brought prosperity to Muslims and **were respected** by foreign powers.

1) **Abu Ja'far al-Mansur**

Abu Ja'far al-Mansur was known as one of the caliphs under whom strong foundational structures were established for the Abbasid Dynasty, enabling it to later be transformed into the intellectual center of the Islamic world. One of his strategic policies was carried out through territorial expansion, by which significant political influence was generated for the caliphate. During his reign, the Bosphorus Strait, which was placed under the authority of Queen Irene, was successfully conquered by Abbasid forces. This defeat was followed by the submission of Byzantium

under Irene, which was compelled to pay tribute to the Abbasids. In addition to his military accomplishments, al-Mansur was recognized as a wise and dignified leader with strong political intelligence. His charismatic reputation was respected by both the populace and his political rivals. His reign was maintained for nearly two decades, from 136–158 H, a period that later was regarded as a crucial foundation for the stability and future glory of the Abbasid Dynasty. (Syaidariyah Hasibuan, 2022).

2) **Harun al-Rashid**

Harun al-Rashid was born in the city of Rayy in 767 M and was elevated to the caliphate at a relatively young age. Despite this, he was widely acknowledged as one of the most celebrated Muslim rulers due to his wisdom and authority, which were reflected in his simple and humble character, even though he lived within the luxuries of the palace. This character was viewed as one of the factors behind his success in guiding Islamic civilization toward its Golden Age.

During his reign, Islamic scholarship was advanced at an extraordinary pace. Harun's support for intellectual activities was demonstrated through the establishment of Bayt al-Hikmah, which was positioned as a center for translation and scientific study and was regarded as a symbol of the respect accorded to knowledge and scholars. Numerous disciplines were developed, including medicine, mathematics, philosophy, astronomy, physics, and Islamic jurisprudence, the latter of which continues to be relied upon by Muslims today. Harun's appreciation for scholars was expressed through generous stipends—reaching up to 200 dinars per month—to ensure their welfare so that scientific and intellectual work could be pursued without hindrance.

Besides promoting intellectual advancement, Harun's leadership was characterized by an orderly administrative system and economic stability that was credited with enhancing public prosperity. These conditions were viewed as having fostered a conducive atmosphere for the rise of Muslim intellectuals who were able to contribute significantly to the advancement of world civilization. The legacy of Harun al-Rashid has been remembered as a testament to how the elevation of knowledge can be established as a vital foundation for human progress. (Farrell Ardiansyah dkk., 2025).

3) **Al-Ma'mun**

Abu al-'Abbas ibn al-Rashid, widely known as al-Ma'mun, was born in 786 M and was appointed caliph after the death of his brother al-Amin in 813 M. He was regarded as one of the three most prominent caliphs in Abbasid history. Unlike many of his predecessors, al-Ma'mun was distinguished by several major policies across various sectors that were considered to have had significant influence on the sustainability of Islamic civilization.

In the political sphere, a relatively systematic governmental structure was developed by al-Ma'mun, in which authority was divided into six main offices: the caliph as supreme leader, the vizier as ministerial assistant, the *diwan al-kitābah* as the state secretariat, the *amir* as provincial governors under Abbasid authority, the armed forces led by an *Amīr al-Umara* commanding more than 10,000 troops, the treasury (*al-khazānah*) as the fiscal administrator, and judges who exercised judicial authority. This structure was viewed as demonstrating a clearer differentiation of governmental functions compared to earlier periods.

In economics, the logistical network was strengthened by the construction of major trade routes known as the Silk Road. This policy not only facilitated the movement of goods but also ensured that Baghdad was connected to international trade hubs. In the field of education, his reign was marked by the height of translation efforts, during which works from foreign civilizations were translated into Arabic. This large-scale project was supported by the translation institutions established by al-Ma'mun, which later were recognized as essential in shaping the intellectual transformation of the Islamic world.

Intellectually, the development of rationalist tendencies within Islam was encouraged by al-Ma'mun. The integration of Islamic theology with Greek philosophy was promoted, giving rise to the Mu'tazilite tradition, which emphasized the use of reason in interpreting revelation. Thus, the era of al-Ma'mun was regarded as a significant milestone in the development of Islamic philosophical thought characterized by intellectual rigor.

Furthermore, the Abbasid period as a whole, including the era of al-Ma'mun, was widely referred to as the Islamic Golden Age, especially in culture, art, and architecture. The focus of the Abbasids was shifted away from territorial expansion toward civilizational development through artistic and intellectual pursuits. Various artistic fields were expanded, including literature, music, calligraphy, and architecture. Baghdad was designed as a magnificent administrative center with an orderly layout, adorned with palaces, mosques, and madrasas that were constructed as symbols of both technical skill and aesthetic refinement. Abbasid architecture was enriched by Persian cultural influences, resulting in a fusion of functionality, durability, and beauty. All these achievements were seen as evidence that the glory of the Abbasid era was manifested not only in politics and military affairs but also in knowledge, culture, and the arts. (Hastuti dkk., 2025).

c. Factors Behind the Decline of the Abbasid Dynasty

The golden age of the Abbasid Dynasty was not sustained permanently. Signs of disintegration had been observed from the early period, although they were obscured by the strength of the caliphal leadership during its peak. As weaker caliphs were installed, the potential for rebellion was intensified, and several regions began to be separated from central authority. This situation became evident during the reign of al-Mu'tasim, the successor of al-Ma'mun, when several

controversial policies were implemented. Among them was the relocation of the capital from Baghdad to Samarra, as well as the appointment of Turkish soldiers as the main military force of the Abbasid state. These policies resulted in the displacement of Persian and Arab dominance, while at the same time opening the way for the rising influence of Turkish military power in the political sphere.

During the reign of al-Mustakfi (the 22nd caliph), the Abbasid state was confronted with a new crisis when the Banu Buwaih were involved to reduce Turkish military dominance. However, due to the weakness of the caliph's authority, the Buwaih ended up taking control of the government and imposing Shi'a ideology. This condition was eased only during the time of al-Qa'im, who formed an alliance with the Sunni Seljuk Dynasty. The collaboration was able to end Buwaih rule with the arrest of Malik al-Rahim as their last leader.

The good relations between the Abbasids and the Seljuks were followed by a shared vision to revive Islamic civilization, particularly in education and theology. The establishment of the Nizamiyah University was regarded as concrete evidence of intellectual revitalization, which strengthened the Ash'ari tradition and Shafi'i jurisprudence as important foundations of Muslim religious life. Thus, although politically the Abbasids were weakened, their intellectual legacy continued to contribute significantly to the development of Islamic civilization. (Fathiha, 2021).

In addition to internal political factors, the rise of smaller dynasties within the Abbasid territories was considered to have had a significant impact on the decline of central authority. The vast Abbasid domain which once extended from India to North Africa and al-Andalus—was gradually fragmented as political instability increased and caliphal leadership weakened. Several regions were transformed into autonomous governments, such as the Tahirids in Khurasan, the Barzukanis in Arab lands, the Idrisids in Morocco, the Fatimids in Egypt, and the establishment of the second Umayyad State in al-Andalus.

Economic decline also was exacerbated the situation. The weakening of caliphal authority resulted in reduced state revenue, since the seceded regions refused to pay tribute. Meanwhile, state expenditures continued to rise due to increasing administrative and military needs. The hedonistic lifestyle of several caliphs, along with corruption within the bureaucracy, made the fiscal condition increasingly unstable. This situation triggered public dissatisfaction, generated poverty, and ultimately accelerated the decline and collapse of the Abbasids.

Another factor that aggravated the situation was the rise of sectarian fanaticism, spiritual crisis, and intellectual disorientation. The influence of foreign ideologies such as Zoroastrianism, Mazdakism, and Manichaeism from Persia was believed to have shaped the mindset of many Muslims, eventually leading to stagnation (*jumūd*) in intellectual activity. The accumulation of these factors rendered the Abbasid Dynasty internally fragile, despite its outward image as a center of Islamic civilization. (K. Hitti, 2016).

Problems were experienced not only within the Abbasid administration but also beyond it. The Crusades (1096–1270 M), which were waged continuously, claimed many lives and resources. This series of wars was regarded as the beginning of long-term conflicts between the Western world and Islam, as well as the early stage of Western imperialism driven by religious motives. These wars gradually weakened Abbasid strength, reaching their peak during the Mongol invasion of 1258 M, in which the Abbasid state was utterly destroyed and was stripped of its prestige. (Sastra Ningsih, 2025).

According to Firas Alkhateeb in *Lost Islamic History*, the Abbasids actually had begun to recover after the suppression of several major revolts. Shi'a uprisings had been contained, the Fatimids had been defeated, and the Crusader forces were engaged in internal conflicts. This period was seen as an opportunity for the Abbasids to rebuild. However, the dynasty was completely annihilated on 10 February 1258 M after the fall of Baghdad to the Mongol forces led by Hulagu Khan. The fall of Baghdad was remembered as the darkest moment in Islamic history thousands of scholarly works were dumped into the Tigris River until its waters were said to have turned black, Muslim inhabitants were massacred, and the caliph was executed brutally. This tragedy marked the end of the Abbasid dynasty in Baghdad, though the caliphate was continued symbolically in Egypt under the Mamluks. Ultimately, Abbasid glory was never restored, lasting only as a ceremonial institution until 1537 M. (Alkhateeb, 2016).

2. Imam al-Ghazali: Biographical Analysis, Response to Human Crisis, and Contributions to Civilizational Reconstruction

a. A Brief Biography of Imam al-Ghazali

The Full Name Abu Hamid al-Ghazali bin Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Tusi al-Ghazali was borne by him. He was born in Tus (one of the cities in Khurasan) in the year 450 H/1058 M. He was born into a modest family. The profession of a wool and silk weaver was practiced by his father to meet their needs, by which a life of scarcity tended to be lived by al-Ghazali. However, his spirit was not broken by this situation; his father was sometimes assisted by him in meeting daily needs.

Imam al-Ghazali is known as a figure by whom high enthusiasm in seeking knowledge was possessed, as was inherited from his father. It was this spirit that led his intellectual journey until he came to be known as a philosopher, theologian, and great Sufi in the Islamic tradition. His early education was pursued in his hometown alongside his brother, Ahmad. At this stage, the Qur'an, Hadith, as well as the stories and poems of the Sufis were studied under the guidance of a Sufi teacher.

Afterwards, his education was continued at the madrasa founded by Nizam al-Mulk, a prominent vizier of the Seljuk Dynasty. At that institution, instruction was received from Ahmad bin Muhammad al-Radzani al-Tusi in the field of Fiqh. Then, the knowledge of Fiqh was deepened in Jurjan, Mazandaran, under the care of Abu Nasr al-Isma'ili, before knowledge was finally sought from Imam al-Haramain al-Juwaini in Naisabur in the fields of Fiqh and Kalam (theology). His intellectual brilliance was made more prominent after the death of al-Juwaini in 1085 M, by which al-Ghazali was encouraged to continue his career in Mu'askar.

In that city, al-Ghazali was appointed as a teacher at the Nizamiyah Madrasa because his depth of knowledge was directly acknowledged by Nizam al-Mulk. He was made a highly respected figure by his ability to present sharp analysis and solid arguments. As a teacher, the fields of theology and Fiqh were taught, with classes attended by around three hundred students, including prominent figures from the Hanbali school such as Ibn 'Aqil and Abu al-Khattab. Al-Ghazali's capacity as a multidisciplinary scholar is demonstrated by this, as well as the proof of his great influence in the Islamic intellectual world, even though exclusivism and potential conflict were often birthed by the differences in schools of thought (mazhab) at that time. (Asrori, 2018).

The peak of al-Ghazali's intellectual career was reached in 1091 M when he was appointed as the highest leader of the Nizamiyah Madrasa in Baghdad, one of the most prestigious educational institutions of its time. However, behind this success, a deep inner struggle was experienced by al-Ghazali. Fundamental doubt regarding the absolute truth among the various streams of Islamic theology was caused by the science of Kalam that had been previously pursued. He was driven by this hesitation to undertake existential reflection, and a conviction was eventually found that truth is not reached only through rationality, but through the path of Sufism oriented toward the purification of the heart.

In 1095 M, Baghdad was left by al-Ghazali on the pretext of performing the Hajj pilgrimage. However, the journey was simultaneously utilized as a means of spiritual search. Damascus and Palestine were visited to deepen worship practices and to internalize the Sufistic life before the Hajj pilgrimage was finally performed in Mecca. Upon his return, the choice was made to settle in his hometown, Tus, to continue the spiritual wandering through the path of Sufism.

After nearly a decade, Baghdad was returned to by al-Ghazali, and teaching was conducted for approximately two years. However, a decision was then made to return to

Tus, where a madrasa was founded and a simple life focused on devotion to Allah was led. His life was concluded in 1111 M in his hometown, and a monumental legacy of thought was left behind in the fields of philosophy, theology, law, and Sufism, by which Islamic civilization continues to be influenced to this day. (Kusuma & Rahmadani, 2023).

Many works were written by Al-Ghazali during his lifetime; these works are ranged from Fiqh, theology, and philosophy, to ethics and Sufism, so it is not surprising that the title Hujjatul Islam (The Proof of Islam) was given to him. There are 72 works of al-Ghazali recorded in history, but the most phenomenal are considered to be *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, which is focused on the field of Sufism, and *Tahafut al-Falasifah* in the field of philosophy. (Asrori, 2018).

b. Al-Ghazali's Response to the Crisis of Humanity and the Reconstruction of Civilization

Al-Ghazali was situated in an era of Abbasid decline. This decline was driven by several factors such as internal conflicts, the moral decadence of political leaders, social disintegration among Muslims, as well as threats of war, territorial disputes, and foreign invasions. During this period, knowledge which had once symbolized the glory of the Abbasid civilization—was misused solely for personal and worldly interests, causing knowledge to become deprived of its proper orientation and resulting in serious humanitarian problems. (K. Hitti, 2016).

This socio-political context was made the basis for identifying the problems occurring within the Muslim community by al-Ghazali. According to him, the decline was not caused merely by governmental or administrative issues; rather, its root was located within the Muslims themselves namely, the corruption of the heart and the loss of sincerity in worship, which ultimately led to a spiritual crisis and to human orientations being directed only toward worldly matters. These issues eventually were transformed into humanitarian problems, because fundamentally, when the human self is good, all aspects of life are improved, whereas when humans become consumed by worldly desires, various problems are generated, culminating in a crisis of humanity (al-Ghazali, 2008). To respond to these problems, a monumental and widely recognized work among Muslims—*Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* was authored by al-Ghazali. This work was composed to emphasize the importance of morality and ethics in daily life. According to al-Ghazali, religion without morality is reduced to mere formality, while knowledge without ethics is bound to produce crises and destruction (al-Ghazali, 2008). In his work *al-Munqidz min al-Dhalal*, it was asserted that spiritual and intellectual crises do not occur without clear causes; rather, such crises are

brought about by the failure of intellectuals to integrate reason, rationality, and spirituality. Philosophers, he argued, tended to rely solely on rationality without considering the spiritual dimension, whereas the middle path was identified by al-Ghazali as one in which reason and the Shari'ah are oriented toward ethics and morality. (Hamid al-Ghazali, 1988).

In the work of K.H. Husein Muhammad entitled *Perempuan Islam dan Negara*, it was explained that the attainment of a prosperous civilization requires the fulfillment of five essential aspects (*al-Kulliyat al-Khams*): the protection of religious conviction (*hifz al-din*), the protection of life (*hifz al-nafs*), the protection of intellect (*hifz al-'aql*), the protection of dignity and lineage (*hifz al-nasl*), and the protection of property (*hifz al-mal*). These five dimensions, according to al-Ghazali, must be fulfilled in order for a prosperous civilization to be built and for human beings to be regarded as creatures endowed with rights and protections. Al-Ghazali's grand vision can be observed within the values that constitute human rights recognized by both Muslims and non-Muslims. (Muhammad, 2022).

3. *Humanitarian Crisis as a Recurring Historical Phenomenon: Lessons from the Abbasid Decline and Its Relevance in the 21st Century*

The history of human civilization has been shown to demonstrate that humanitarian crises are recurring phenomena. Every major civilization, after reaching its peak of glory, has been observed to enter a phase of decadence characterized by the weakening of morality, a crisis of leadership, and spiritual disorientation. This pattern can be seen in the experience of the Abbasid Dynasty, which, after attaining its golden age in the 8th to 10th centuries M, was gradually brought into decline due to complex internal problems. Baghdad, once regarded as a center of knowledge and culture, was transformed into an arena of power struggles, corruption, and social disintegration. (K. Hitti, 2016).

The decline of the Abbasids was not caused solely by external attacks, such as the Mongol invasion of 1258 M, but was fundamentally driven by internal crises. Philip K. Hitti has noted that the weakening of the Abbasids was rooted in political fragmentation, the hedonism of the elite, and the erosion of moral integrity among the rulers (K. Hitti, 2016). Marshall Hodgson further has emphasized that the spiritual decadence of Muslims during this period made the civilization internally fragile, rendering it unable to withstand external shocks. Thus, the fall of Baghdad has been understood not merely as a military tragedy but as the logical consequence of the weakening of the moral and spiritual foundations of the civilization.

The thought of Imam al-Ghazali (1058–1111 M) has been regarded as an important intellectual lens for understanding this phenomenon. In *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, various spiritual diseases such as greed, worldliness, and the hypocrisy of scholars were identified by al-Ghazali as primary

causes of social decay (al-Ghazali, 2008). Harsh criticism was directed by him toward scholars who used knowledge as a tool to obtain status, as well as toward rulers who neglected justice. According to him, civilizational crisis could only be addressed through moral-spiritual reform beginning with the purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and the strengthening of integration between knowledge, ethics, and faith. (al-Ghazali, 2008).

When applied to the context of the 21st century, the global world has been confronted with humanitarian crises that exhibit similar patterns. Globalization indeed has been accompanied by economic integration and technological advancement, but it has also been linked to social inequality, identity conflicts, and moral crises. Amartya Sen has argued that global development frequently fails to address fundamental human issues because the dimensions of justice and freedom are neglected (Sen, 1999). Consequently, contemporary humanitarian crises can be understood as repetitions of historical patterns: when material progress is not balanced by the strengthening of ethical and spiritual values, civilizations are rendered fragile and vulnerable to collapse. Therefore, the lessons drawn from the Abbasid experience have been made relevant to the 21st century. For modern civilization to endure, reliance on technological and economic power is not considered sufficient; instead, a solid moral foundation must be established. The thought of al-Ghazali provides the direction that sustainable civilization requires the integration of knowledge with ethics and spirituality, so that humanitarian crises can be responded to in a more substantive and just manner.

DISCUSSION

Humanitarian crises, both in historical and contemporary contexts, have been understood to be rooted in the weakening of moral, spiritual, and social-ethical foundations. The experience of the Abbasid Dynasty has shown that political and intellectual glory was not ensured to sustain a civilization when the moral integrity of leaders, scholars, and society was eroded. Political fragmentation, elite hedonism, and spiritual disorientation, as noted by Hitti and Hodgson, have been regarded as indicators that the fall of Baghdad in 1258 CE was not viewed merely as a military event, but rather was interpreted as a sign of internal civilizational fragility. In this context, the thought of al-Ghazali has been considered relevant because a reformative framework was offered that placed ethics, purification of the soul, and the integration of knowledge and morality at the core of renewal.

When extended to the 21st century, similar patterns have been observed to re-emerge in the form of global crises such as economic inequality, identity polarization, weakened social solidarity, and the reduction of human values due to the dominance of technology and materialism. It has been emphasized by Amartya Sen that development lacking justice and disregardful of human freedom has been shown to exacerbate the structural vulnerabilities of modern societies. Therefore, the

lessons drawn from the Abbasid period and the intellectual contributions of al-Ghazali have been viewed as pointing toward the necessity of a renewed and strengthened moral framework for the sustainability of modern civilization. The integration of scientific knowledge, public policy, and spirituality is required as a fundamental condition so that material progress is not turned into a destructive force capable of undermining civilization itself. Thus, this analysis has highlighted that the substance of civilization is not located solely in economic or technological power, but rather is grounded in the steadfastness of ethical and spiritual values upon which it stands.

CONCLUSIONS

The history of civilization has been shown to indicate that humanitarian crises are recurring phenomena that emerge in every phase of civilizational decline. The Abbasid Dynasty, after reaching its golden age, was brought to collapse not solely by external factors such as the Mongol invasion, but rather by internal crises marked by moral decadence, social disintegration, and the loss of spiritual orientation. A similar pattern has been observed in the context of the 21st century, in which globalization has been accompanied by advancements in science and technology while also giving rise to social inequality, identity crises, and weakened human ethics.

The thought of Imam al-Ghazali has been regarded as offering a relevant conceptual framework for understanding and responding to these crises. In *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, the importance of purification of the heart, moral strengthening, and the integration of knowledge, faith, and ethics was emphasized by al-Ghazali. According to him, the continuity of a civilization can only be preserved when spiritual and ethical foundations are upheld alongside material development. Thus, the historical lessons from the Abbasid period and the intellectual contributions of al-Ghazali have been viewed as meaningful reflections for today's global society. Modern civilization is not sustained merely by technological and economic strength, but rather must be guided by moral and spiritual dimensions in order to build a just, inclusive, and sustainable order.

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