# Shahada

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*This article is about the Islamic creed. For other uses, see* [*Shahada (disambiguation)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shahada_(disambiguation))*.*

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The **shahada** ([Arabic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic_language): الشهادة‎ *aš-šahādah* [audio](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f9/As-shahadah.ogg) ([help](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Media_help)·[info](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:As-shahadah.ogg))) (from the verb شهد *šahida*, "to witness" or "to testify"), or **Kalimat ash-Shahādah** (Arabic: كلمة الشهادة), is an [Islamic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam) [creed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creed) which declares belief in the [oneness](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tawhid) of [God](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_in_Islam) and acceptance of [Muhammad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad) as God's [prophet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophets_in_Islam). The declaration in its shortest form reads:



لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا الله مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ الله *(lā ʾilāha ʾillā-llāh, muḥammadun rasūlu-llāh)* (in Arabic)

*There is no god but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God.* (in English)

In [Shia Islam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shia_Islam), the creed is expanded with the addition of a phrase concerning [Ali](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ali) at the end.

وعليٌ وليُّ الله (*wa ʿalīyyun walīyyu-llāh*) ["and Ali is the [*wali*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wali) (friend; viceregent) of God"].



Silver coin of the [Mughal Emperor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mughal_Emperor) [Akbar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akbar) with inscriptions of the Islamic declaration of faith, the declaration reads: "There is no god but God, and [Muhammad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad) is the messenger of God."

## Overview

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The word *Shahadah* (شَهادة) is a noun stemming from the verb *shahida* (شَهِدَ), meaning "he observed, witnessed, or testified"; when used in legal terms, *shahādah* is a testimony to the occurrence of events, such as debt, adultery, or divorce. The *shahādah* can also be expressed in the [dual](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dual_(grammatical_number)) form *shahādatān* (شَهادَتانْ, lit. "two testimonials"), which refers to the dual act of observing or seeing and then the declaration of the observation. The person giving the testimony is called a *shāhid* (شاهِد), with the stress on the first syllable. The two acts in Islam are observing or perceiving that there is no god but God and testifying or witnessing that Muhammad is the messenger of God. In a third meaning, *shahādah* or more commonly *istishhād* (إسْتِشْهادْ), means "martyrdom", the *shahīd* (شَهيد) pronounced with stress on the last syllable ("martyr") demonstrating the ultimate expression of faith. *Shahīd* can also be used in a non-Islamic religious context. Long before the advent of Islam, [Christian Arabs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_Christians) of the Middle East used the word *shahīd* referencing to someone that was wrongly killed or someone that died for his family, his Christian faith or his country. The two words *shāhid* (شاهِد, "witness") and *shahīd* (شَهيد, "martyr") are pre-Islamic. Both are paradigms of the root verb (شَهَدَ, *shahada*, "he observed").

This declaration, or statement of faith, is called the *kalimah* (كَلِمة, lit. "word"). Recitation of the *shahādah*, the "oath" or "testimony", is the most important article of faith for Muslims. Non-Muslims wishing to convert to Islam do so by a public recitation of this creed. Most Muslims count it as the first of the [Five Pillars of Islam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_Pillars_of_Islam), while the [Twelver](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelver) and [Ismaili](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ismailism) Shi'a connect it to their respective lists of pillars of the faith. The complete *shahādah* cannot be found in the [Quran](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quran), but comes from [hadiths](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadith).

## Recitation

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|  | Declaration of faith is called the Shahada  [Shahadah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shahadah.ogg)  Shahadah - "I testify that there is no god but God and I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of God" |
| *Problems playing this file? See* [*media help*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Media_help)*.* | |

Three honest recitations of the Shahadah in Arabic is all that is required for [a person to convert to Islam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_conversion#Islam) according to most [traditional schools](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madh%27hab) (*madh'hab*). In usage, the two occurrences of *ašhadu ʾanna* or similar ([Arabic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic_language): اشهد أن‎, "I testify that" or "I bear witness that...") are very often omitted. The recitation of the Shahadah needs to be done with an Imam and others to witness.

## History



A [mancus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mancus) / gold [dinar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dinar) of the king [Offa of Mercia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Offa_of_Mercia), copied from the dinars of the [Abbasid Caliphate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbasid_Caliphate) (774); probably unintentionally, it still includes the Arabic text *Muhammad is the Apostle of God*.



*Qiblah* of Imam Mustansir in the [Mosque of Ibn Tulun](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosque_of_Ibn_Tulun) of Cairo showing the Shi'i Kalima

Another of the earliest surviving translations of the Shahadah into a foreign language is in [Greek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language), from the reign of [al-Walid I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Walid_I) (86–96 AH, 705–715 CE): (Ούκ Έστιν θεός εἰ μὴ ὁ θεὸς μόνος, Μααμετ ἀπόστολος θεοῦ) (*Ouk estin theos ei mē ho theos monos; Maamet apostolos theou).* "There is no god except for the God alone; Muhammad is the Apostle of God."; *i.e.*, "[Allah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allah)", the Arabic word for "the God", is translated as "ὁ Θεός" and Muhammad is transliterated as Μααμετ.



Photo of a variation of the shahādah at Bab al-Futuh/Bab al-Nasr Fatimid Cairo with the phrase *ʿalī walī allāh*.

A variation of the shahādah can be found at [Bab al-Futuh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bab_al-Futuh) built by the [Fatimid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatimid_Caliphate) minister [Al-Afdal Shahanshah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Afdal_Shahanshah) (952-975 A.D.), northern wall of Fatimid Cairo. It reads: *bismi -llāhi -r-rahmāni -r-rahīm lā ʾilāha ʾilā -llāh waḥdahu lā sharīk lahu muḥammad rasūlu -llāh ʿalī walī allāh* (بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له محمد رسول الله علي ولي الله). ("In the name of God the Merciful the Compassionate, there is no god but God the One, no partner has he, Muhammad is the Messenger of God, Ali is the walī of God").

## Conditions

Muslims believe that the Shahadah is without value unless it is earnest. Islamic scholars have therefore developed, based on the data of the Quran and hadith, essential criteria for an expression of the Shahadah to be earnest. These criteria are generally divided into seven to nine individual criteria; the varying numbers and orderings are not due to disagreements about what the criteria actually are, but rather different ways of dividing them.

One such list of seven critical conditions of the Shahadah, without which it is considered to be meaningless, are as follows:

* Al-ʿIlm (العلم): Knowledge of the meaning of the Shahadah, its negation and affirmation.
* Al-Yaqīn (اليقين): Certainty – perfect knowledge of it that counteracts suspicion and doubt.
* Al-Ikhlāṣ (الإخلاص): Sincerity which negates [shirk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shirk_(Islam)).
* Aṣ-Ṣidq (الصدق): Truthfulness that permits neither falsehood nor hypocrisy.
* Al-Maḥabbah (المحبة): Love of the Shahadah and its meaning, and being happy with it.
* Al-Inqiyād (الانقياد): Submission to its rightful requirements, which are the duties that must be performed with sincerity to God (alone) seeking His pleasure.
* Al-Qubūl (القبول): Acceptance that contradicts rejection.

The second part of the Shahada carries several conditions as well:

* To believe in Muhammad and in whatever he said and conveyed in his message as the [seal of the prophets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khatam_an-Nabuwwah).
* To obey him in whatever he commanded.
* To stay away from or avoid whatever he commanded Muslims not to do.
* To follow or emulate him in our *ʿibādah (عبادة; worship),* ʾaḫlāq *(أخلاق; manners), and way of life.*
* To understand, practice, and promote his [*sunnah*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunnah) ("habits") in the best way possible, without creating any chaos, enmity or harm.

## Flags

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|  | **This article contains** [**Arabic text**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic_script)**.** Without proper [rendering support](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Arabic), you may see [question marks, boxes, or other symbols](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Replacement_character). |

### National flag



The [flag of Saudi Arabia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Saudi_Arabia), displaying the Shahadah.



The [flag of Afghanistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Afghanistan) also contains the Shahadah, above the [mosque](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosque).



The [flag of Somaliland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Somaliland), featuring the Shahadah

The [flags of Saudi Arabia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Saudi_Arabia) and [Afghanistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Afghanistan) are the only flags of internationally recognized sovereign states which display the shahada.

The design from the Saudi flag has been used in the [flag](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Somaliland) of the unrecognized state of [Somaliland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somaliland) (1996).

The 2004 [draft constitution of Afghanistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Afghanistan) proposed a flag with the shahada in white script centered on a red background.

An analysis of the calligraphy used in the flags of Saudi Arabia and [Hamas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamas) is presented below:



It can be seen in the second flag that the name of God (الله) is written in a higher position. The name for God is written twice in each flag, but the first *ʾ*[*alif*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleph) (ا) is written after the second [*lām*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lamedh) (ل) only once in the first instance of Allah in the flag of Hamas (pink), and only once in the second appearance in the flag of Saudi Arabia (green). This overwriting is also visible for the lam of [*rasul(u)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apostle_(Islam)) (light blue), but only in the Saudi Arabian flag. The [ligature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic_alphabet#Ligatures) *lām + ʾalif* (لا) is always written the same way in the Saudi Arabian flag, but [calligraphy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calligraphy) is changed in the case of the second لا (red) of the Hamas flag at the left.

### Islamic flag

*Further information:* [*Islamic flags*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_flags)

Flags reported as in use in Islam have been frequently displaying the shahada, usually on a black background, the time of Muhammad. The [Taliban](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taliban) used a white flag with the shahada inscribed in black from 1997, until 2001 as the flag of their [Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_Emirate_of_Afghanistan).

Flags showing the shahada, often written on a green background, have also been displayed by supporters of Hamas in rallies during the 2000s.

## Turkish national anthem

The Shahadah is referenced in the eighth stanza of the [Turkish national anthem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C4%B0stikl%C3%A2l_Mar%C5%9F%C4%B1), which can be translated as:

Oh glorious God, the sole wish of my pain-stricken heart is that,

No heathen’s hand should ever touch the bosom of my sacred Temples.  
These [*ʾaḏān*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adhan)s, whose shahadahs are the foundations of my religion,  
May their noble sound last loud and wide over my eternal homeland.

## See also

* (Not to be confused with) [shahid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shahid)
* [Basmala](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basmala) (or Bismillah)
* [Glossary of Islam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_Islam)
* [List of Christian terms in Arabic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_terms_in_Arabic)
* [Six Kalimas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_Kalimas)
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