**'Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad**

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| **'Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad*Umayyad governor*** |
| **Full Name** | 'Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad b. Abih |
| **Teknonym** | Abu Hafs |
| **Well-known As** | Ibn Ziyad, Ibn Marjana |
| **Well-known Relatives** | [Ziyad b. Abih](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Ziyad_b._Abih) (father) |
| **Place of Residence** | [Khurasan](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Khurasan), [Basra](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Basra&action=edit&redlink=1), [Kufa](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Kufa) |
| **Death** | [67](https://en.wikishia.net/view/67)/686-87 |
| **Cause of Death** | [Battle of Khazir](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Battle_of_Khazir) |
| **Era** | [Yazid b. Mu'awiyya](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Yazid_b._Mu%27awiyya), [Umayyad Dynesty](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Umayyad_Dynesty&action=edit&redlink=1) |
| **Known for** | One of the key persons in the [martyrdom](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Martyrdom&action=edit&redlink=1) of Imam al-Husayn (a) |
| **Notable roles** | Ruler of Khurasan, Basra, and Kufa |
| **Activities** | Sending army to encounter [Imam al-Husayn (a)](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Imam_al-Husayn_%28a%29) in [Karbala](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Karbala), insulting the head of Imam al-Husayn (a), suppressing [Tawwabun Uprising](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Tawwabun_Uprising) |

**ʿUbayd Allāh b. Zīyād b. Abīh** (Arabic: عبيد الله بن زياد, b. [33](https://en.wikishia.net/view/33)/653-54, d. [67](https://en.wikishia.net/view/67)/686-87) was the famous [Umayyad](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Umayyad&action=edit&redlink=1) commander, the governor of [Kufa](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Kufa) at the time of the [Tragedy of 'Ashura](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Tragedy_of_%27Ashura) and one of the key persons in the martyrdom of [Imam al-Husayn (a)](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Imam_al-Husayn_%28a%29) and his companions. 'Ubayd Allah was the governor of [Basra](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Basra&action=edit&redlink=1), but after the chaotic situation in Kufa in 60/679, [Yazid](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Yazid) appointed him to the governorship of Kufa keeping the governorship of Basra as well and assigned him with the task of suppressing the uprising of Imam al-Husayn (a). Due to his role in the tragedy of [Karbala](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Karbala), 'Ubayd Allah is among the most hated figures before [Shi'a](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Shi%27a&action=edit&redlink=1).

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**Birth and Family**

Abu Hafs 'Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad b. Abih was born of a mother called Marjana. He is sarcastically attributed to his mother and called **Ibn Marjana** referring to his illegitimate birth and in some sources, his mother is clearly mentioned as infamous and adulterous.

His father, [Ziyad b. Abih](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Ziyad_b._Abih) was among [Umayyad](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Umayyad&action=edit&redlink=1) commanders and rulers who was known for his brutality in suppressing revolts in Islamic regions. There were also different opinions regarding who was the father of Ziyad and no one know who it was. Therefore, he was called as Ibn Abih (meaning "the son of his father"). It is said that [Abu Sufyan](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Abu_Sufyan) considered Ziyad a result of his act of adultery with Sumayya and thus [Mu'awiya](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Mu%27awiya) called Ziyad his brother.

**Moral and Behavioral Characteristics**

They say that he was very cruel, merciless and atrocious and some biographers have mentioned him as "Jabbar" [i.e. "oppressive"], as he demonstrated extraordinary brutality in suppressing [Khawarij](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Khawarij) in [Basra](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Basra&action=edit&redlink=1). This characteristics of 'Ubayd Allah made him also successful in wars with non-Muslims.

**Time of Mu'awiya**

There is no information about political positions and activities of 'Ubayd Allah when he was young; however, according to researchers, apparently he has not been away from governmental affairs in ruling territory of his father, Ziyad b. Abih, who was the governor of [Kufa](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Kufa) and Basra.

After the death of Ziyad, [Mu'awiya](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Mu%27awiya) appointed 'Ubayd Allah as the governor of [Khorasan](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Khorasan). 'Ubayd Allah had an important role in the victories of east and north east of [Iran](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Iran) at the time of Mu'awiya. After Mu'awiya became the governor of Khorasan, for the first time crossed Amu Darya river, took over the cities of Ramithan, Nasaf, and Baykand near Bukhara and hustled Qabaj Khatun, the rich queen of Bukhara and Turk army away.

In 55/674-75, 56/675-76 or 57/676-77, [Mu'awiya](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Mu%27awiya) removed 'Ubayd Allah from governorship of Khorasan and appointed him as the governor of Basra instead of 'Abd Allah b. 'Amr b. Ghilan.

In [Basra](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Basra&action=edit&redlink=1), 'Ubayd Allah encountered unrest provoked by [Khawarij](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Khawarij) which peaked in [58](https://en.wikishia.net/view/58)/677-78 and he suppressed it with extraordinary brutality and killed many people.

**Time of Yazid**

After the death of Mu'awiya in [60](https://en.wikishia.net/view/60)/680, [Yazid](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Yazid) wanted to remove 'Ubayd Allah from Basra, but apparently tense political situations of Basra and Kufa did not let him do so. With the beginning of the uprising of [Imam al-Husayn (a)](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Imam_al-Husayn_%28a%29) and sending his representative, [Muslim b. 'Aqil](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Muslim_b._%27Aqil) to Kufa, Yazid appointed 'Ubayd Allah, whose cruelty in suppressing revolts was famous, also as the governor of Kufa. It is said that Yazid appointed 'Ubayd Allah following the consult of his Christian consultant, Sergiu b. al-Mansur to encounter the uprising of Imam al-Husayn (a).

**In the Battle of Karbala**

**Arresting Muslim b. 'Aqil**

In 60/680, people of [Kufa](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Kufa) agreed to make allegiance with [Imam al-Husayn (a)](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Imam_al-Husayn_%28a%29) and expected coming of Imam (a) to Kufa. Ibn Ziyad entered the city while he had covered his face and people thought that it was Imam al-Husayn (a) and welcomed him, but soon found that it had been 'Ubayd Allah. The first action for 'Ubayd Allah was to search for the representative of Imam al-Husayn (a), Muslim b. 'Aqil.

As soon as Ibn Ziyad entered Kufa, made a speech and seriously threatened the opposition of the government of Yazid and promised support of those who would follow him.

According to al-Ya'qubi, [Hani b. 'Urwa](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Hani_b._%27Urwa) knew Ibn Ziyad from the past and was sick when he entered the city. He guessed that 'Ubayd Allah will come to visit him, thus made an appointment with Muslim b. 'Aqil to kill 'Ubayd Allah. In another version, [Sharik b. al-A'war](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Sharik_b._al-A%27war), one of the chiefs of [Shi'a](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Shi%27a&action=edit&redlink=1) in Kufa became sick in the house of Hani and made an appointment with Muslim b. 'Aqil to kill Ibn Ziyad upon his coming to visit Sharik b. al-A'war. However, since Hani was not happy with killing in his house, Muslim b. 'Aqil refused to do so and Ibn Ziyad survived it.

According to al-Tabari, shortly after entering Kufa, Ibn Ziyad could find the hiding place of Muslim b. 'Aqil through trickery. Then, he invited Hani to Dar al-Imara (emir's residence) and imprisoned him and after a short time, arrested Muslim b. 'Aqil as well and killed both of them and sent their heads to [Yazid](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Yazid).

**Sending an Army toward Imam al-Husayn (a)**

After threatening and bribing the people of Kufa, 'Ubayd Allah sent [al-Hurr b. Yazid al-Riyahi](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Al-Hurr_b._Yazid_al-Riyahi) to [Imam al-Husayn (a)](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Imam_al-Husayn_%28a%29) and ordered him to stop Imam (a) and also prevents him from camping where there is water. Then, he also sent ['Umar b. Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas](https://en.wikishia.net/view/%27Umar_b._Sa%27d_b._Abi_Waqqas) with an army to [Karbala](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Karbala).

'Umar b. Sa'd was already appointed by 'Ubayd Allah as the governor of [Rey](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Rey) and was about to move towards Rey, but Ibn Ziyad missioned him to take the allegiance of Imam al-Husayn (a) with [Yazid](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Yazid) or fighting him and when 'Umar asked 'Ubayd Allah to excuse him from doing so, Ibn Ziyad conditioned 'Umar's appointment to his encounter with Imam al-Husayn (a).

After speaking with Imam al-Husayn (a), 'Umar b. Sa'd informed Ibn Ziyad that Imam al-Husayn (a) wanted to return and thus there is no need to war.

Seemingly, Ibn Ziyad first became happy to hear this news, but then [Shimr b. Dhi al-Jawshan](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Shimr_b._Dhi_al-Jawshan) advised him not to accept peace; so, Ibn Ziyad wrote to 'Umar b. Sa'd that either takes the allegiance of al-Husayn (a) and sends him to [Kufa](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Kufa) or fights him and if he does not wants to fight with Imam (a), leaves the command of the army to Shimr.

**Capturing the Family of Imam al-Husayn (a)**

After the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn (a), Ibn Ziyad ordered that they capture the rest of his family and take them to Kufa. Entering of the caravan of the [captives of Karbala](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Captives_of_Karbala) to Kufa in chain led to events which are mentioned in different sources, including the encounter and argument of Ibn Ziyad with [Lady Zaynab (a)](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Lady_Zaynab_%28a%29) and her answers to Ibn Ziyad which made great effects in the gathering.

Among the events of Kufa at that time was taking the head of [Imam al-Husayn (a)](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Imam_al-Husayn_%28a%29) to the court of Ibn Ziyad. According to historical sources, he hit the teeth and lips of Imam al-Husayn (a) with the stick he had in his hand and disrespected Imam (a). [Zayd b. Arqam](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Zayd_b._Arqam), one of the [companions](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Sahaba) of the [Prophet (s)](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Prophet_%28s%29) who was in gathering, cried and said, "take that stick off the lips of al-Husayn (a)! I swear by [God](https://en.wikishia.net/view/God) that I saw many times that the Prophet (s) kissed those lips." 'Ubayd Allah became angry and said, "May God make you cry! What do you cry for? For the God-given victory?! By God I swear that if you were not old and I did not know you have lost your mind, I would behead you!" When Zayd heard this, left the meeting.

**After the Death of Yazid**

After the [Tragedy of 'Ashura](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Tragedy_of_%27Ashura), 'Ubayd Allah remained as the governor of [Kufa](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Kufa) and [Basra](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Basra&action=edit&redlink=1) using force and subjugation, however his rule became unstable after the death of [Yazid b. Mu'awiya](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Yazid_b._Mu%27awiya). According to al-Tabari and Abu 'Ali Miskawayh, after the death of Yazid, 'Ubayd Allah made a speech, the eve of which he had bribed the elders of Basra. After the speech, they raised and asked for continuation of his rule, but soon afterwards, people turned their back on him and went for making allegiance with ['Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr](https://en.wikishia.net/view/%27Abd_Allah_b._al-Zubayr).

According to [al-Baladhuri](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Al-Baladhuri&action=edit&redlink=1), after the death of Yazid, Ibn Ziyad asked people in Basra to temporarily make allegiance with him until they reach a consensus over choosing a caliph. When the people of Basra, made allegiance with him, he sent some people to Kufa to ask them for making allegiance with him; but the people of Kufa did not accept and so the people of Basra also refused his rule.

**Allegiance with Marwan b. al-Hakam**

When ['Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr](https://en.wikishia.net/view/%27Abd_Allah_b._al-Zubayr) reached power in [Medina](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Medina) so that even some parts of [Syria](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Syria&action=edit&redlink=1) accepted his [caliphate](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Caliphate) and even [Marwan b. al-Hakam](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Marwan_b._al-Hakam) went to [Hijaz](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Hijaz) to make allegiance with him, Ibn Ziyad met Marwan in Bathaniyya and stopped him from doing so and promised him that if he claims for caliphate, he himself will support Marwan. So, Marwan returned, Ibn Ziyad went to [Damascus](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Damascus&action=edit&redlink=1) and deceived [Dahhak b. Qays](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Dahhak_b._Qays&action=edit&redlink=1) who had taken the allegiance of people with Ibn al-Zubayr and threw him out of the city and took the allegiance of people with Marwan. In the battle between the adherents of Marwan with Dahhak b. Qays in Marj Rahit near Damascus in which Dahhak was defeated, Ibn Ziyad was the commander of the horsemen of Marwan.

In the rule of Marwan, 'Ubayd Allah was also in Damascus. [Tawwabun](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Tawwabun) led by [Sulayman b. Surad al-Khuza'i](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Sulayman_b._Surad_al-Khuza%27i) raised to take revenge on [Imam al-Husayn (a)](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Imam_al-Husayn_%28a%29). Marwan b. al-Hakam sent Ibn Ziyad from Damascus to fight against them and promised him the rule of [Iraq](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Iraq) in the condition of defeating them. 'Ubayd Allah was informed of the death of Marwan ([65](https://en.wikishia.net/view/65)/685) when he arrived in Mesopotamia, but he continued his advance. Eventually in a bloody battle in 'Ayn al-Warda (towards the end of [Jumada I](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Jumada_I) [65](https://en.wikishia.net/view/65)/684) Sulayman and his companions were defeated and killed.

Ibn Ziyad, then tried to dominate the cities of Mesopotamia who previously made allegiance with Ibn al-Zubayr and did not go to Iraq where [al-Mukhtar al-Thaqafi](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Al-Mukhtar_al-Thaqafi) had raised to take revenge on Imam al-Husayn (a) from [Umayyads](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Umayyad&action=edit&redlink=1). However eventually, he attacked [Mosul](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Mosul&action=edit&redlink=1) which was controlled by the forces of al-Mukhtar. Adherents of al-Mukhtar withdrew towards [Tikrit](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Tikrit&action=edit&redlink=1) and informed al-Mukhtar of the Ibn Ziyad's attack; so, al-Mukhtar sent an army to fight Ibn Ziyad. The army of al-Mukhtar defeated the army sent by Ibn Ziyad. ([Dhu l-Hijja 10](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Dhu_l-Hijja_10%22%20%5Co%20%22Dhu%20l-Hijja%2010), [66](https://en.wikishia.net/view/66)/[July 11](https://en.wikishia.net/view/July_11), 686)

**Death**

See also: [Battle of Khazir](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Battle_of_Khazir)

After the victory of the army of al-Mukhtar, Ibn Ziyad himself with an army attacked and al-Mukhrar's army pulled back. Al-Mukhtar who actually sought to kill Ibn Ziyad and others who had any role in the [Tragedy of Karbala](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Tragedy_of_Karbala), sent [Ibrahim b. Malik al-Ashtar](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Ibrahim_b._Malik_al-Ashtar) with an army to fight the army of Ibn Ziyad. Ibrahim who wanted to reach Ibn Ziyad before his coming to [Iraq](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Iraq), reached the army of [Syria](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Syria&action=edit&redlink=1) in the bank of Khazir river near a village called Barbitha 5 parasangs [around 28 km] from Mosul. In a fierce battle between the armies of Iraq and Syria, Ibn Ziyad was defeated (Muharram [67](https://en.wikishia.net/view/67)/686); and Ibn Ziyad together with his soldiers were killed. According to a narration from [Abu Mikhnaf](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Abu_Mikhnaf&action=edit&redlink=1), apparently Ibrahim b. al-Ashtar himself killed Ibn Ziyad in a hand-to-hand fight.

**View of Shi'a**

The action of Ibn Ziyad towards [Imam al-Husayn (a)](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Imam_al-Husayn_%28a%29) and making of the Tragedy of 'Ashura made 'Ibn Ziyad notorious and hated and aroused the fury of many Muslims, especially the people of [Kufa](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Kufa) towards him; in such a way that according to some historical sources, 'Abd Allah b. 'Afif al-Azdi rose up in the middle of the speech of Ibn Ziyad after the event and addressed him and Yazid with bitter swearing. It is even said that his mother, Marjana, reprimanded 'Ubayd Allah so much. Due to his role in the Tragedy of 'Ashura, 'Ubayd Allah is among the most hated figures of the Islamic history before [Shi'a](https://en.wikishia.net/index.php?title=Shi%27a&action=edit&redlink=1). His name has been mentioned in some famous [Ziyarahs](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Ziyarah) including the [Ziyarah 'Ashura](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Ziyarah_%27Ashura) where he has been cursed.

**References**

* The material for this article is mainly taken from [عبیدالله بن زیاد](http://fa.wikishia.net/view/%D8%B9%D8%A8%DB%8C%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87_%D8%A8%D9%86_%D8%B2%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%AF) in Farsi Wikishia.