

## The Islamic Stance on Terrorism and War - Direct from the Sources

Having understood from the previous chapters that Islam is a total way of life, it then doesn't seem the least bit unusual that Islam should come with a code of regulations concerning war. How many societies from the beginning of civilization till now have constitutions that have no provision for war? Few, if any, have left out this important matter, for people of wisdom understand that war is unfortunately an inevitable reality in this life.

There will always be corrupt and ruthless individuals in this world (i.e. Hitler) and rogue, tyrannical governments that will take advantage of their strength in order to rob, raid and oppress weaker peoples and nations. Orderly civilizations must have an answer to deal with such groups or else such corruption would take over the world. Indeed Allah says in the Quran regarding this point after mentioning how He aided David over the oppressive forces of Goliath:

***By Allah's will, they routed them; and David slew Goliath; and Allah gave [David] power and wisdom and taught him whatever (else) he willed. And had not Allah checked one set of people by means of another, the earth would indeed be full of corruption: but Allah is full of Bounty to the Universe. [2:251]***

Yet ever since the inception of Islam and its spread into Christian territories in the seventh century, the religion of Islam has been falsely branded as a religion of violence. With the more recent violence in the Middle East and the events of 9/11, Islam has further been accused of being a religion of terrorism and intolerance. Is this true, or are there some important pieces missing from the puzzle?

### ***What are the Verses from the Quran that Mention Violence and War?***

As is often unfortunately the case, there are many people who intend to deceive the general public about what the Quran says concerning violence. Furthermore, these same people use the statements of religious extremists to strengthen their arguments, but never really mention the importance of context.

For example, when a person sees the following verse from the Quran they may be shocked and begin to believe much of the rhetoric:

***And kill them wherever you catch them (2:191)***

This incomplete portion of this verse is often used by those people who seek to stir up hatred and misunderstandings between Muslims and non-Muslims. And to make matters worse, some of the illiterate and uneducated poor in some Muslim countries have declared this to be their evidence for killing non-Muslims.

So what should someone then believe? As always, looking at the context of any statement is helpful so you can better understand what is intended. Let's review the context of these words then to see if the picture gets clearer.

***Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not be the transgressors; for Allah does not love those who transgress. [190] And kill them wherever you catch them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out; for persecution and oppression are worse than killing; but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque, unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you, then kill them. Such is the reward of those who deny faith. [191] But if they cease, Allah is Forgiving, Most Merciful. [192] And fight them on until there is no more persecution or oppression, and justice and Faith in Allah prevail; but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression. [193]***

So what should immediately become clear is that Allah is guiding the believers in this verse on how to deal with oppression and persecution; how to deal with those that would attack you!

So the valid question then becomes, should Allah have instead said, "Hug them wherever you find them, and kiss them in return for them evicting you from your homes and trying to murder you"? There is no law on Earth, nor logic that would support this, and this is quite clear in today's world where some nations even attack others based on the *possibility* that they will be attacked, not even waiting for hostilities to start (pre-emptive war), which is even more aggressive than what Allah here describes.

### *Islam and Tolerance of Other Faiths*

To get a clearer picture of how Muslims should deal with people who don't share their faith, we can review the following verses as well, understanding that Allah makes it very clear to maintain peace with ordinary and peaceful non-Muslims, and also to be very hostile to the hostile enemy:

***But if the enemy inclines towards peace, you also must incline towards peace, and trust in Allah: for He is One that Hears and Knows all things. (8:61)***

***Permission to fight is given to those who are being attacked, because they have been wronged. And surely Allah measures out help for them. (22:39)***

***Allah does not forbid you from showing kindness and dealing justly with those who have not fought you concerning your religion and have not driven you out of your homes. Indeed, Allah loves those who are just. Allah only forbids your friendship with those who fight you in the religion and drive you out from your homes and back those who drive you out. And whoever befriends them, such are the wrongdoers. (60:8)***

***And why should you not fight in the cause of Allah and of those who, because they are weak, are persecuted and oppressed? Whose cry is: “O’ Lord! Rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from Yourself one who will protect us; and raise for us from Yourself one who will help us.” (4:75)***

***Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from error. Whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that never breaks. And Allah Hears and Knows all things. (2:256)***

After seeing these verses it should then be clear that the religion of Islam does not support wild, uncontrolled killing of those who don't agree with them. It commands a careful, thoughtful approach to prevent persecution and oppression of both Muslims and non-Muslims, and to try to find peaceful solutions to such issues if at all possible before resorting to combat. A careful look into history will demonstrate that the Muslim armies were sometimes dispatched to protect non-Muslims as this is the command of Allah; justice and freedom for all peoples.

### ***Is Islam the Only Religion that Sanctions War and Fighting?***

Many people unfortunately have wrongly believed that Islam is the only religion that sanctions such acts of war. They point to the Jesus of the Bible and say that religions like Christianity are commanded with peace and even loving the enemy. Is this true?

Undoubtedly, we see the Christian nations and kingdoms throughout history leading the forefront in regards to warfare and killing as evidenced throughout the numerous Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, the forceful take over and forced conversion of the Native Americans of both North and South America, clear into the blood baths of the two World Wars. But, to be fair, let's look at the hard facts as written in the words of the Bible to see if there is evidence of Holy War in the Old or New Testament, and whether Jesus himself ever spoke of war or fighting.

Most Christians are very familiar with the following verses:

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. (NIV Bible, Matthew 5:43-44)

But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. (NIV Bible, Luke 6:35)

Thus most people have come to think that this is the Biblical guidance to those who would attack you, even though as just mentioned this is definitely not what the followers

of the Bible have followed throughout history. Maybe these other people were following the following verses:

[Jesus] replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them - bring them here and kill them in front of me.' After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. (NIV Bible, Luke 19:26-28)

Do not suppose that I [Jesus] have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. (NIV Bible, Matthew 10:34)

So [Jesus] made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, 'Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market?' (NIV Bible, John 2:15)

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters- yes, even his own life- he cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:26)

These verses are here mentioned to bring fairness to the attack of those who claim that Christianity has no basis of violence or hate within its folds, only love and forgiveness. These same people then take hold of a portion of one of the verses of the Quran and leave off the context in order to convince innocent people that Islam came with nothing but hate and violence. How then do such people explain the Biblical verses quoted above that speak of hating in order to be a disciple, whipping animals and overturning business stands, coming with a sword to the world, and even ordering that people be brought before Jesus to be killed?

Looking into the Old Testament, we find even more disturbing verses commanding killing, pillaging and even rape – all apparently in the name of God.

Now kill all the boys. And kill every woman who has slept with a man, but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man. (Numbers 31:17-18)

This was apparently God's command to Moses in regards to the unbelieving Philistines who occupied the Holy Land promised to the Children of Israel. Also,

All who would not seek the LORD, the God of Israel, were to be put to death, whether small or great, man or woman. (NIV Bible, 2 Chronicles 15:13)

In contrast to what other people say, as Muslims we strongly recommend that people go back to their Bibles and look into the context of these verses and study them to understand. Why would the God who is so often mentioned as Loving and full of Grace

command innocent women and boys to be mercilessly killed? Why would He allow the virgin girls to become the property of the Children of Israel to do with as they pleased?

In all honesty, a careful review of the first five books of the Old Testament will reveal even more commands of war, killing, enslaving of people and confiscation of property. The point of this book is not to analyze these circumstances or the theological questions they pose, but instead it is to demonstrate the truth to honest people seeking to understand the reality of religion. The unbiased reader is invited to compare such orders as found in the Old Testament, as well as the words mentioned above from Jesus, with the verses from the Quran that permit people to defend themselves when persecuted and to help oppressed nations.

### ***Why does Islam Always Seem to be Associated with Violence?***

Here we come to the issue of the media and its ability to effectively focus the attention of people. Moreover, this question raises the issue of how should one judge a religion?

In regards to the focusing of people's attention by the media consider the following facts that most people are unaware of since the media rarely discusses them:

- More Americans have been murdered or kidnapped in Central and South America than in all Muslim countries combined.
- Most people polled think that the problem of child molestation and sexual abuse is confined primarily to the Catholic diocese whereas it is a major problem involving every denomination of Christianity in America.
- The homicide rate in all Muslim countries combined (over one billion people) is significantly less than that of America alone where every night people are murdering one another over often trivial issues.

Although one can easily ascertain the truth of what was just mentioned, people have held the opposite opinion because of the attention given to certain issues on the media over others.

From another aspect, the question of how a religion is judged needs to be asked. Are we to judge a religion or idea based upon the actions of a small, extreme minority of its followers or based upon its foundations and texts or scriptures? Consider the following questions:

- Should Baptist Christians be branded terrorists because some members of the Baptist denomination twisted their scriptures to support and carry out numerous abortion clinic bombings wherein many innocent people were killed?
- Should Christianity be branded as a racist ideology since the Ku Klux Klan would burn crosses and used the Bible to support their racially motivated violence and murders?

- Since hundreds of thousands of innocent children had their youth deprived of them through the rape, sexual abuse and exploitation that they experienced at the hands of clergy; should we then say that Christians are mostly child molesters?
- Since Hitler was known to be a devout Christian acting out on what he believed was God's plan, should we then blame the religion of Christianity for the countless deaths and war crimes he ordered?
- From a more secular standpoint, are all Americans responsible for the death of the 200,000 innocent women, children and men who were annihilated by the nuclear bombs dropped upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki? As Americans we repeatedly say that war should be between armies and that innocent civilians should never be targeted, yet in this very notable case some people decided that killing such a large number of people might break the Japanese will and cause them to submit.

Most religions and even cultures have the concept of "people in glass houses shouldn't throw stones". So now consider for yourself, have you been throwing stones at Muslims while ignoring the condition of your own house?

But then some people will say that the people mentioned above acted on their own, whereas often times when you see Muslim on television after some act of violence they seem to be using verses from the Quran to support their crimes. Again, this is no different than abortion clinic bombers using the Bible to support their actions or the words of the Pope during the Crusades.

Consider the following quote taken from the book *The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eye Witnesses and Participants* by August C. Krey. In November of 1095, Pope Urban II initiated the first European attempt at colonizing the Muslim world, known in the West as the Crusades. He is recorded to have said (words placed in italics are only for emphasis):

For you must hasten to carry aid to your brethren dwelling in the East, who need your help, [for] which they have often asked. For the Turks, a Persian people, [referring here to the Muslim nations] have attacked them I exhort you with earnest prayer - ***not I, but God*** - that, as heralds of Christ, you urge men by frequent encouragement, men of all ranks, knights as well as foot soldiers, rich as well as poor, to rush to exterminate this vile race from the lands of your brethren, ***Christ commands it.***

And if those who set out thither should lose their lives on the way by land, or in crossing the sea, or in fighting the pagans, *their sins shall be remitted.* Oh what a disgrace, if a race so despised, base, and the instrument of demons, should so overcome a people endowed with faith in the all-powerful God, and resplendent with the name of Christ. Let those who have been accustomed to make private war against the faithful carry on to a successful issue *a war against the infidels.* Let those who for a long time have been robbers now become soldiers of Christ. Let those who fought against brothers and relatives now fight against these *barbarians.* Let them zealously undertake the journey ***under the guidance of the Lord.***

So in this very clear passage we see many statements that, when spoken by people of other religions or cultures, have been utterly condemned. The Pope herein calls Muslim people infidels and barbarians, and he commands the Christian people of Europe to empty their lands to go and murder them – one and all – in the name of Christ, in fact as a command of Christ. The book goes on further to actually describe the scene at the end of the battle of Jerusalem when the Crusaders had achieved victory.

And, if you desire to know what was done about the enemy whom we found there, know that in the portico of Solomon and his Temple [the area known as the Temple Mount], our men rode in the blood of the Saracens [derogatory term for Muslims] up to the knees of the horses.

When Jerusalem was conquered on the 15th of July 1099 by the Crusaders who were also known as the Christian Knights, more than 60,000 inhabitants, both Jewish and Muslim, were slaughtered in cold blood. In the words of one witness:

...there [in front of Solomon's temple] was such a carnage that our people were wading ankle-deep in the blood of our foes, and after that "happily and crying for joy" our people marched to our Savior's tomb, to honor it and to pay off our debt of gratitude.

It should be further understood that no one survived this carnage on the side of the Muslims or the Jews who were under their protection. Babies, children, women, the elderly – all fell under the swords of the Christian knights who then went to say “thank you” before the tomb of Christ. Should Christianity be judged by such events? Of course no Christian would agree to that, so then it is only fair that Islam not be judged for the far smaller minority of extremists who kill innocent people in the name of God.

### ***What Did the Prophet Muhammad Say About Fighting?***

I would like to summarize this portion by mentioning only one statement, the statement of the first Muslim caliph (ruler) Abu Bakr who upon dispatching an army to the territories of the Levant gave the following command to his General; a command which has its origin with the Prophet Muhammad:

Do not kill a woman, nor a child, nor a weak old person; do not cut down a fruit-bearing tree; do not destroy a dwelling [home]; do not kill a sheep or camel, unless [you need to kill it] for food; do not set bees on fire, nor drown them; do not misappropriate the spoils of war; and do not be cowardly. [Malik]

From this one statement containing ten commands, one should see that the Muslim is obliged in warfare not only to show mercy to innocent and non-combatant humans, but even to the environment and to the animals. If all armies would only follow this advice today then the world would certainly be a far more humane and conscious place as

opposed to the wide spread destruction that war brings with it today, no matter who the combatants are.

### ***Does Islam Condemn Terrorism Scripturally?***

In the Quran and Sunnah, Muslims are repeatedly reminded to be people of justice and to act upon the truth and not emotion. A Muslim should never act out of revenge or hatred or else he will be accountable to Allah for his lack of sincerity. Allah has indeed commanded in the Quran:

**O you who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to justice, and let not the hatred of others make you turn to wrong and departure from justice. Be just: that is next to righteousness: and fear Allah. For Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do” [5:8]**

The great Muslim scholar of Spain al-Qurtubi says while explaining this verse:

The fact that someone disbelieves [in Islam] does not prevent us from being just to him, and that our dealing with them (in a state of war) should only be restricted to fighting or capturing them if they deserve so. It is not permissible to mutilate their bodies, even if they kill our women and children to cause us grief, it is not for us to intentionally mutilate them to cause them grief and sorrow.

Furthermore, Muslims are not only to be people of justice and honor, yet they are also commanded to strictly guard their oaths and treaties with others, a fact attested to throughout the history of Islam. When the Prophet entered into a treaty with the pagans of Makkah, one of the clauses stated that anyone who embraces Islam from the Makkans and then migrates to Madinah seeking refuge must then be returned. Sometime later, a Makkan named Abu Jandal accepted Islam, and went to Madinah to be amongst the Muslims where he could escape the torture and persecution he was faced with in Makkah.

Upon being told about the treaty, he said to the Muslims in shock, "O' Muslims! Am I going to be returned to the pagans when I have come here as a Muslim? Are you not aware of the torture that I have endured?" The Prophet said in response, "O' Abu Jandal! Have patience and maintain hope for the reward from Allah for what you have endured, for we do not violate our treaties. Allah will show you a way out and give you relief."

Moreover, it must be remembered that the Prophet also gave instructions to the Muslims on how to deal with those people with whom they have an agreement or with whom you have entered into a treaty. Attesting to this fact, Bukhari records from the Prophet Muhammad the following warning, "Whoever kills a *Mu'ahid* (a non-Muslim with a guarantee of security from Muslims, or those people with whom the Muslims have entered into a treaty), will never smell the fragrance of Paradise, although its fragrance can be appreciated from the distance of forty years!"

The Prophet Muhammad is also recorded in another authentic hadith to have said frequently in his sermons, "The one who gives no security has no faith, and the one who does not respect his treaties has no religion.' [Ahmad and several others from the narration of Anas ibn Maalik]

Muslims living in the West, irrespective of which country they live in or which country they come from, be they citizens or residents, legally or illegal; all have been allowed into their respective country with a mutual pact of security. Just as the police officers in those countries have a legal and a moral responsibility towards all Muslims residing in their countries, the Muslims too have a legal, religious and a moral responsibility towards the lives and properties of those countries, even if those countries are at war with Muslims elsewhere in the world. It becomes a religious requirement upon the Muslims in such places to be law abiding citizens in all matters that do not contradict their religion. Hence, the Muslims are religiously prohibited from stealing, cheating and disturbing the peace - not to mention being forbidden from performing the wanton destruction of innocent lives and property that occurs with many terrorist acts.

The last important point that must be clarified is that Muslims are not allowed to individually declare war on others, as some people have wrongly done today. In Islam, order and structure are of paramount importance so as to prevent much of the anarchy that we see daily on the news. As was mentioned previously, the Muslim world today has no leadership (Caliphate) and thus cannot declare war upon another nation. Muslims have certainly been given the right to defend their homelands if and when they are attacked, but the act of crossing into another sovereign country by a small gang of people in order to attack it is entirely illegal in Islamic law so long as the Caliphate is absent.

Thus, the emotionally driven actions of various extremists around the world today are found again and again to be without basis Islamically, and moreover such people are seriously running the risk of being condemned to Hell for what they are doing. Allah indeed is forgiving, so we do not judge individuals in specific, but we do say very loudly and clearly that violating the treaties and guarantees of security that are assumed by entering into other countries and then cowardly killing innocents and non-combatants is something completely forbidden in Islam and leads to the punishment of Allah in the Hereafter.

In fact, in such turbulent times the Prophet strongly recommended the believers to step back and to wait patiently until issues became clear as opposed to taking action during times of confusion and trial. And no one doubts that the issues of today are anything but confusing and extremely frustrating making it all the more necessary to pull back and not get dragged into something that can very easily land someone in the Hellfire.

### ***Is Islam a Religion of Tolerance?***

This last section of this chapter discusses one of the most misunderstood aspects of the religion of Islam. Many books and speakers repeatedly attack the religion as one of

intolerance, unable to co-exist with other ideas or ways. Once again, we shall return to history to see if this is truly the case.

But first, it would be beneficial to review some verses from the Quran on this matter to see if there is any scriptural evidence to support tolerance and co-existence in Islam.

***If it had been your Lord's will, they would have all believed; all who are on earth! Will you then compel mankind, against their will, to believe! (10:99)***

***Say: 'Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger', but if you turn away, he is only responsible for the duty placed on him, and you for the duty placed on you. If you obey him, you shall be on right guidance. Alas, the Messenger's duty is only to preach the clear Message. (24:54)***

Indeed, in Islam all of humanity is but one big family,

***O humankind! We created you from a single [pair] of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. (49:13)***

The religion of Islam insists that all people, not just Muslims, enjoy freedom of religion and worship in safety and security. Islam provides protection all religious places of worship (whether Jewish, Christian or Muslim) and commands Muslims to defend the right of liberty of worship for all.

***Had not Allah checked one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure. (22:40)***

In fact, Jews and Christians are addressed in the Qur'an as "People of the Scripture" (Torah and the Gospel). Jews, Christians and Muslims are viewed as closely related people whose faiths are all based on divinely revealed scriptures and who share in common a prophetic tradition.

***...and nearest among them in love to the Believers will you find those who say 'We are Christians' (5:82)***

So now turning to history, let us look at just a few examples of how Muslims worked with other religions and peoples when power was in the hand of the Muslims. The first aspect that should be mentioned is how the Prophet dealt with the Christians whom were conquered during his lifetime. The following words taken from his treaty with the Christian people of Najran (part of present day Yemen) in fact form the basis of the Islamic understanding of relations with other religions.

Najran and their followers have the protection of Allah and the protection of Muhammed, the Prophet and Messenger of Allah, for themselves, their community, their land and their goods, both those who are absent and those who are present, and for their churches and their services (no bishop will be moved from his episcopate, and no monk from his monastery, and no church warden from his wardenship) and for all, great or little, that is under their hands. There is no usury and no blood revenge from pre-Islamic times.

Also, a similar covenant was made by the second Caliph of Islam, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab with people of Jerusalem after its peaceful takeover. In fact 'Umar's own assassin, who killed him while he was leading prayer a few years later, was a Magian (fire worshipper) non-Muslim, yet 'Umar still commanded his successor to be merciful to the non-Muslims. It is recorded in the most authentic Islamic books of narrations and history that he said:

I advise the Caliph who will follow me to be kind to the non-Muslims and to fulfill our covenants with them, to fight for the sake of their protection and not to overburden them.

Several hundred years later, this spirit of tolerance continued to exist in the Muslim lands. During the Mongolian Tartar invasions of the Muslim lands, the famous Muslim scholar and warrior Ibn Taimiyyah went as an emissary to Qaito Shah, one of the Tartar commanders, to negotiate the release of all prisoners of war. He was initially granted the release of only the Muslim POW's (prisoners of war), but persisted in his request for all POW's to be released (referring to the non-Muslims who lived under the protection of the Muslims) until it was later granted. It is important to note here that this great scholar risked his own life and the fate of all the Muslim POW's to secure the release of non-Muslims because he knew that this was his duty before Allah.

Furthermore, T. W. Arnold records that following the Islamic conquest of Constantinople (present day Istanbul) in 1453 Sultan Muhammad II proclaimed himself the protector of the Greek Church. Persecution of the Christians was forbidden and a decree was issued securing for the newly elected patriarch, Gennadios, and his bishops and successors after him, all privileges previously enjoyed under the former rule. The patriarch was also empowered to bring to the attention of the government and Sultan any acts of injustice done by any of the Muslim governors.

The Christian author P. Bayle makes the following observation regarding the Greek Church in his Dictionary under 'the article Mahomed',

The Christians have not been given orders to do anything but preach and instruct, yet, despite this, from time immemorial they have been exterminating by fire and sword all those who are not of their religion. We may feel certain that if Western Christians, instead of the Saracens and the Turks [names given by the Europeans to the Muslims], had won the dominion over Asia, there would be today not a trace left of the Greek Church, and that they would never have tolerated [Islam] as

the 'infidels' have tolerated Christianity there. We (Christians) enjoy the fine advantage of being far better versed than others in the art of killing, bombarding and exterminating the Human Race.

Not forgetting the Jewish people, Dr. William Baker, after reviewing the history of the Jewish people, also made the following remarks,

Although the Jews joined with the enemies of early Islam, neither they nor Judaism were targeted by Muhammad or Islam. It is a fact of history that when the Jews were being persecuted in Europe during the Middle Ages they found peace, harmony, and acceptance among the Muslim people of Spain. In fact, this was the era of Jewish history that they themselves refer to as 'the Golden Age'.

Even till today, anyone who has traveled abroad to Muslim countries will see Churches and Synagogues dating back well before Muslim rule and even the coming of the Prophet Muhammad. How were these places of worship protected during the spread of Islam? Even more important, how did the Christian and Jewish people of these territories continue to live there if Muslims were commanded to kill all who don't follow their opinion or religion as some people say? Compare this to the Spanish Inquisition and the Crusades and you shall see that true tolerance, freedom of religion and peaceful co-existence are all the foundation and practice of only Islam for the past 1400 years.