

Jihad, often mistranslated as 'Holy War' (a popular phrase from the Crusades), actually means: *to strive and endeavour in Allah's Cause*. Hence, *jihad* can be expressed in a purely peaceful way. The Prophet Muhammad had said that:

'The best jihad is by one who strives against (the evil of) his own self for Allah, the Mighty and Majestic.' (Tabarani)

So obey not the disbelievers, but make a great *jihad* against them (preaching) with this (Quran). (25:52)

Likewise, when it becomes necessary to physically fight evil, *jihad* takes on a martial dimension, the so-called '*jihad of the sword*.' The Prophet and his followers, like many Israelite Prophets before them, fought wars in self-defence and in order to abolish idolatry, tyranny and oppression.

And what is wrong with you that you do not fight in the Cause of Allah and for those weak and oppressed among men, women and children whose only cry is: 'Our Lord! Rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors, and raise for us from You one who will protect, and raise for us from You one who will help!' (Quran 4:75)

Bearing in mind the relentless, violent persecution that was inflicted upon Muhammad and his followers whilst in Mecca, it is not difficult to see why God would order their new community in Medina to prepare and ready themselves to face off the clear and present danger to their fledgling Islamic state.

And make ready against them all you can of (military) power, including steeds of war, to terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides whom you may not know, but whom Allah knows. And whatever you shall spend in Allah's Cause shall be repaid to you, and you shall not be treated unjustly. But if they incline towards peace, you too incline to it. And trust in Allah. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower. (Quran 8:61-2)

This right, to possess the means to defend against and ward off any known or unknown external threat, is one which every nation in every age reserves for itself. Even so, regardless of how cruel the enemy, Islam insists upon a measured response which avoids excessive or unrestrained acts of vengeance.

And if you punish (your oppressors), then punish them with the like of that with which you were afflicted. But if you endure patiently, it is indeed better for those who are patient. (Quran 16:126)

The Prophet Muhammad also forbade behaving treacherously with one's enemies and the violation of treaties and cease-fires. Hence, the combative *jihad* of the sword is like a surgical operation: it does not exceed the area of infection.

And fight in Allah's Cause those who fight you, but do not transgress the limits (of war set by Allah). Truly, Allah loves not the transgressors. (Quran 2:190)

Even during open war, the believers are ordered with compassion and to continue the greater *jihad* of calling to truth

And if any of the pagan (enemy) seeks your protection then grant it - in order that he may hear the Word of Allah - and escort him to where he can be secure. That is because they are men who do not know. (Quran 9:6)

As for non-combatants or civilians, we read:

Allah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion, nor drove you out of your homes. Verily, Allah loves those who deal with equity. (Quran 60:8)

The Prophet expressly forbade Muslim armies from attacking women and children, the sick and elderly, monks and hired labourers. He also outlawed the wanton killing of animals, the burning of crops and vegetation, the polluting of waters and the destruction of homes and places of sanctuary.

For were it not that Allah checks one set of people by means of another, monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques wherein the Name of Allah is mentioned much would surely have been pulled down. (Quran 22:40)

Once, when news reached the Prophet that children had been killed in a battle, he exclaimed: *'What is with some people that the killing today caused them to go so far as to kill children?'* Someone answered: *'O Messenger of Allah! They are but children of polytheists!'* The Prophet replied: *'Nay! Verily, the best of you are children of polytheists. Do not kill children! (I say again,) do not kill children! For every soul is born upon a natural (Islamic) disposition (innocent, monotheistic and good) - until its tongue speaks on its behalf...'* (Ahmad)

Also, when the Prophet once passed a fallen idolatress, he denounced her killing, insisting that the woman was not one against whom war was to be fought.

In fact, there exists in Islam a great library of texts clearly forbidding murder whilst extolling the sanctity of human life, **'life, which Allah has made sacred'** (Quran 6:151); from the Prophet Muhammad's dire warning that: *'The first cases to be adjudicated against on the Day of Judgement will be those of bloodshed.'* (Bukhari), to his stark threat that: *'Whoever kills one (non-Muslim) under contract (of Muslim protection) will never smell the scent of Paradise.'* (Ibn Majah)

We ordained for the Children of Israel that if anyone killed a person not in retaliation for murder or for villainy in the land, it would be as if they killed the whole of humanity. And if anyone saved a life, it would be as if they saved the whole of humanity. (Quran 5:32)

As for suicide bombing, it is forbidden on a number of levels. Firstly, on the crime of suicide itself, the Prophet warned: *'Whoever kills himself will certainly be punished in Hellfire, where he shall dwell forever.'* (Bukhari & Muslim) The Prophet also said: *'He who kills himself with anything, Allah will torment him with that in the Hellfire.'* (Muslim)

And do not kill yourselves. (For) surely, Allah is Most Merciful unto you. (Quran 4:29)

Suicide attacks also contravene the Islamic principle which states: *that which is built upon falsehood is itself falsehood*. In other words, the ends cannot justify the means if those means (e.g. self-destruction) are themselves anti-Islamic. Moreover, suicide attacks almost always result in collective punishments for the wider civilian populous, contravening yet another Islamic principle: *fighting evil itself becomes evil if, as a consequence, it leads to more harm*.

And beware the affliction which affects not in particular those of you who do wrong (but may also harm innocents). And know that Allah is strict in punishment. (Quran 8:25)

Another headline-grabbing tactic that is unsanctioned by the religion of Islam is the killing of civilian hostages. This is decidedly illegal as it is simultaneously murder, a targeting of non-combatants and a misplacement of responsibility.

And no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another (each carry their sins alone). (Quran 6:164)

If we define terrorism to be misdeeds of inexcusable and unjustifiable aggression perpetrated against civilians and their interests, then terrorism is no less than an act of war against the Creator, Allah, and His Prophet, Muhammad. And there is a severe punishment to fit such a crime:

The recompense of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and hasten about the earth to make mischief therein is this: they shall be slaughtered, or crucified, or their hands and feet shall be struck off, or they shall be banished from the land. That is their disgrace in this world; and in the Hereafter, theirs is a heavy punishment. (Quran 5:33)*

And so, the very notion of 'Islamic Terrorism' is exploded as an oxymoron, a clear contradiction in terms. Terrorising defenceless and non-threatening civilian populations, destroying their homes, killing, maiming and taking hostage their peaceful men, women and children, are all criminally sinful and evil acts according to the divine law of Islam.

* This verse was revealed after a group of men who were entrusted by the Prophet to the care a shepherd, actually murdered that shepherd and scattered his herd (Ibn Kathir).

In fact, all manifestations of injustice and oppression are condemned by Islam and its God-fearing, orthodox adherents. The Prophet said: *'Oppression will be darkness multiplied on the Day of Resurrection.'* and he also related that Allah said: *'O My servants! Indeed, I have forbidden oppression upon Myself and I have forbidden it amongst you. Therefore, do not oppress one another.'*

O you who believe! Stand steadfast for Allah as witnesses of justice, and let not the hatred of a people prevent you from justice towards them. (Nay!) be just: that is closer to piety. And fear Allah! Verily, Allah is well aware of what you do. (Quran 5:8)

The few heretics who blasphemously justify murder in the name of Islam, passing off the terrorism of cowards for the *jihad* of the brave, do so only by twisting Islam's texts and playing upon the fears and prejudices of an uninformed public. Prince Charles, visiting Oxford University in 1993, rightly stated how: *'Our common attitude to Islam suffers because the way we understand it has been hijacked by the extreme and the superficial.'* Indeed, the Prophet himself warned his followers to: *'Beware of extremism in matters of religion. For truly, those before you were destroyed on account of (their) religious extremism.'* (Ahmad & Nisai)

Islam's non-Muslim enemies likewise selectively quote or misquote the Revelation to suggest that Islam encourages the wanton persecution and slaughter of infidels. However, an honest, holistic study of the Quran and *Sunna* reveals that those passages dealing with warfare are explicit in calling for equity and justice; always taking the side of the oppressed - believer or disbeliever - against the oppressor, advising leniency and a halting of war in favour of peace.

Wherewith Allah guides all those who seek His Good Pleasure to ways of peace; and He brings them out of darkness by His Will unto light and guides them to a straight way. (Quran 5:16)

The Prophet had said: *'Do not desire an encounter with the enemy; but if you do encounter them, be firm.'* (Muslim) It is this very steadfastness of the believers marching in Allah's Just Cause, 'those who, when a wrong is inflicted on them, (are not intimidated, but) fight back' (Quran 42:39), that drives frustrated evil-doers to forge so many a hate-filled lie against Islam. For if terrorism is, ultimately, nothing but oppression, then the true *jihad* is the ultimate act of counterterrorism.

Truth has come and vanquished falsehood. Truly, falsehood is bound to perish. We send down in the Quran that which is a healing and a mercy to those who believe. (But) for the evil-doers, it increases them in nothing but loss. (Quran 17:81-2)



Jenin, Apr-02

The phenomenal global growth of Islam is a cause of great concern for many in the West. Steadfast adherence to Islam is readily equated with backwardness and bigotry. Devout Muslims who piously observe their religion are often mocked for being 'fundamentalist', banded together with genuine extremists, and frequently suspected of supporting terrorism - even though terrorism as a whole is carried out against Muslims and not by them. [Zionist state terrorism, for example, as pictured above and below.]



Beirut, 13-Jul-06

As a matter of fact, under the pretext of combating 'Islamic Terrorism', despotic powers will readily employ increasingly cruel terroristic methods to mercilessly silence cries for freedom, justice and other basic human rights. And as for *jihad*, its very mention strikes fear and revulsion in many hearts and minds. Yet, despite its negative press, Islam continues to grow faster than any other way of life through entirely peaceful conversions. So, is the Islamophobia really justified? What is *jihad*? And what does Islam *really* say about terrorism?



New York, 11-Sep-01



Madrid, 11-Mar-04



London, 7-Jul-05