

JIHAD IN ISLAM: THE HOLY WAR OR THE MISS UNDERSTOOD CONCEPT

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ABSTRACT

Jihad is an Arabic word which literally means striving or struggling, especially with a praiseworthy aim. It can have many shades of meaning in an Islamic context. Jihad The word has entered into common usage in the United States in the wake of September 11, 2001. Politicians use it to conjure up terrifying images of irrational foreigners coming to destroy American freedoms; religious figures use it to define Islam. Jihad has even entered our everyday vocabulary, associated (by most non-Muslims) with unrestrained, unreasoning, total warfare. But what does it really mean? To discuss the various facets of "Jihād" according to the Quran and addresses the issues raised by critics who quote Quranic verses to argue that Islam is intrinsically non-peaceful. In my article, I will attempt to present the real meaning of jihad in Islam, as taught by the Holy Quran and practiced by the Holy Prophet (SAW).

KEYWORDS: *Jihad, Striving or Struggling, Holy Quran*

INTRODUCTION

The Arabic word "jihad" is often translated as "holy war," but in a purely linguistic sense, the word "jihad" means struggling or striving.

The Arabic word for war is: "al-Harb".

In a religious sense, as described by the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (s), "jihad" has many meanings. It can refer to internal as well as external efforts to be a good Muslim or a believer, as well as working to inform people about the faith of Islam.

If military jihad is required to protect the faith against others, it can be performed using anything from legal, diplomatic and economic to political means. If there is no peaceful alternative, Islam also allows the use of force, but there are strict rules of engagement. Innocents - such as women, children, or invalids - must never be harmed, and any peace overtures from the enemy must be accepted.

Military action is therefore only one means of jihad and is very rare. To highlight this point, the Prophet Mohammed told his followers returning from a military campaign: "This day we have returned from the minor jihad to the major jihad," which he said meant returning from armed battle to the peaceful battle for self-control and betterment.

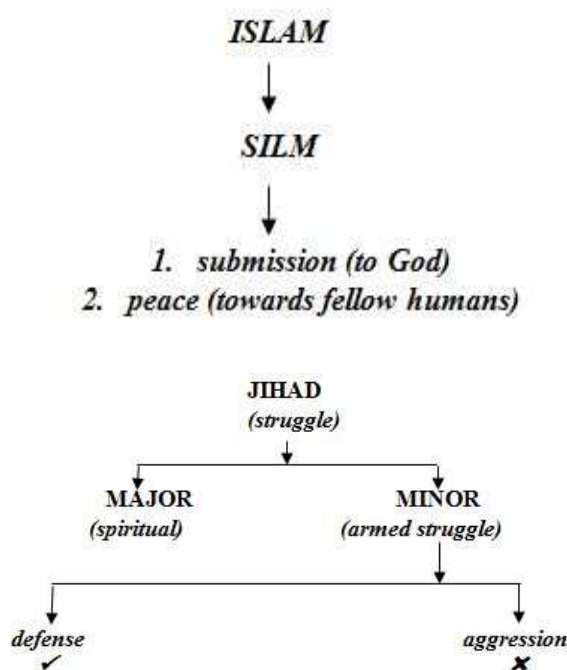


Figure 1

On September 11, 2001, a few individuals hijacked four civilian airplanes and used them as weapons to create terror in the United States, especially on the two World Trade Center buildings. All the crew and passengers in the four planes, as well as about three thousand civilians, lost their lives in those attacks.

The foreign policies of the United States of America is-à-is the Muslim countries do not justify that American civilians in the planes and the World Trade Center buildings be killed. This is not what Islam teaches. Look at the instructions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) during wartime: he clearly forbade the killing of the old, the children, and the women.¹ Those who lost their lives in the World Trade Center towers and the planes were all civilians, and quite a few of them were Muslims.

All Muslim leaders in the United States of America, Canada, and the entire world clearly condemned the hijacking that was committed in the United States an act of terrorism which is not acceptable in Islam.

Many individuals, laymen as well as experts, have tried to link 9/11 to the concept of jihad in Islam. In one of the famous radio talk shows of Toronto, soon after 9-11, I heard one caller saying that what happened on that day was 10% terrorism and 90% Islam. A fundamentalist Christian leader in the US said on his TV show that “Probably Muhammad was a terrorist.” So it is important to talk about jihad in Islam.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. What is the true concept of Jihad in Islam?

“As far as Islam is concerned, it categorically rejects and condemns every form of terrorism. It does not provide any cover or justification for any act of violence, be it committed by an individual, a group or a government..... I most strongly condemn all acts and forms of terrorism because it is my deeply rooted belief that not only Islam but also

no true religion, whatever its name, can sanction violence and bloodshed of innocent men, women, and children in the name of God.” (Reference: “Murder in the Name of Allah” by Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Fourth Successor to the Promised Messiah)

2. What According To Holy Qur'an Jihad means?

The Holy Qur'an relates the story of the first murder in human history, that of the two sons of Adam in which Cain (Qabīl) murdered his brother Abel (Hābīl). This is in Chapter 5 of the Qur'an, verses 27 to 31. At the conclusion of this story, Almighty God says:

“Whosoever kills a person without any reason (of murder or mischief in the earth), it is as though he had killed all the people. And whosoever saves a single life, it is as though he has saved all the people.” (Surah al-Maida, 5:32)

3. Why Muslims took up the sword?

The Holy Prophet had to confront with very great hardships. Quite a number of his dear ones and most loyal followers became the victims of the arrows and spears of the enemies – the cruel disbelievers. These followers of the Holy Prophet were tortured in a shameless way, and they included men as well as women. The limit was reached when the enemy planned to put the Holy Prophet's life to an end. He was chased. The man who followed him was promised great reward. The Holy Prophet had to hide in a cave. The chaser left no stone unturned to get hold of him, but as God had willed it, the Holy Prophet, despite the fact that he was within the reach of their sight could not be sighted by the chasers and thus he was very miraculously saved by God. When the cruelty of the Disbelievers reached its extreme limit and even the emigration of the Muslims did not satisfy them, God the Almighty permitted the Muslims to fight back. The Holy Quran says.....; that is to say that God has permitted the Muslims to take up the sword and the very fact that God had to give them the permission to fight proves conclusively that the Disbelievers were the wrongdoers, and their mischief and insolence had crossed all the bounds. Also, that the patience that was exercised by the Muslims had reached its limits. That being the case, God told the Muslims to put down those who had fought them with the sword, by using the sword. God the Almighty promised that He would show to the enemy that the Muslims being the oppressed party would be helped by Him, and the enemy would be destroyed at their hands. The result was that those who were considered to be weak and helpless and who was tortured by the Disbelievers became known as strong people in the East as well as in the West. Thus God helped them and showed to the world that they were really oppressed.

4. What is the perception of the layman regarding jihad?

Jihad is one of the most loaded and misunderstood terms in the news today. Contrary to popular understanding, the term does not mean "holy war." Nor does it simply refer to the inner spiritual struggle. This book, judiciously balanced, accessibly written, and highly relevant to today's events, unravels the tangled historical, intellectual, and political meanings of jihad. Looking closely at a range of sources of sacred Islamic texts to modern interpretations, Understanding Jihad opens a critically important perspective on the role of Islam in the contemporary world.

5. What is the conception of true jihad According to Ahmadiyya Muslim jimat International ?

With reference to an important subject toward which the attention of the world is focused, and as a result of which the non-Muslim world believes that Islam is the religion of extremism and terror. Indeed, some people declare that through terrorism, Islam is destroying their peace of the world. It is most unfortunate that there is a group that has a clear

understanding of the teachings of Islam, but this fanning the flame of this erroneous concept persists. Indeed, some educated non-Muslims have connected the concept of life after death and heaven and hell to be Muslim extremists, terrorists, and suicide bombers. So, the result is that the fatalist desire to enter paradise has awakened the peculiar concept of Jihad and of dying in the name of Allah, which has caused them to take up the sword and cause mayhem.

These terrorist groups today are, in reality, the byproduct of this teaching and concept. In any case, while I admit that the acts committed by certain ignorant and over-enthusiastic Muslims have no doubt given a totally wrong impression of the teachings of Islam, I must also point out that the literature written against Islam without the proper understanding of Islamic teachings has presented an erroneous concept about Islamic Jihad. Not only that but also this literature that is in great circulation denies the very existence of God and considers religion and God to be responsible for this disorder and chaos.

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