

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

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Concept of Jihad, Resorting to War, Aggression and Oppression

The subject of *jihad* has remained under discussion among both Muslims and non-Muslims for a long time. In context of what happened in Mumbai on and after Nov 26, 2008 we hear the word *jihad* being used even more frequently than before. Most people, including an overwhelming majority of the Muslims are ignorant of the true meaning of the Quran. They think that the Quran teaches its followers to be fanatic advocates and patrons of wars, that the religion of Islam was spread by the sword.

The term *jihad* has attained a very derogatory connotation. People make a very grave mistake when they speak of *jihad* but mean "war." They should check the Quran and see what it says on the issue of war, its true status and laws. Should not its meaning and implication be understood in light of Quranic teaching?

Literally speaking, *jihad* means struggle and/or striving in the cause of God and in its widest scope includes killing and being killed in His cause. There are two different aspects of ji-

had or struggle — 1) against Satan and all enemies of God and His religion, and 2) against the evil inclinations of one's inner self.

The injunctions on *jihad* and war are so abundant and comprehensible in the Quran that they leave no reservation or uncertainty in the minds of believers about the spirit of these very clear commands. These are important, undoubtedly, or they would not have been mentioned so many times.

When can we then resort to war? War is only allowed as a measure of security, and is restricted to fighting in self-defense. All aggressors have been strongly condemned. As long as disputes can be settled through conciliatory means and rights and claims can be peacefully attained and imposed, we are required to refrain from fighting. Only, when there is no other option, must we then fight with full vitality and induce the enemy to see his relief in peaceful and equitable co-existence with the believers. The rules of war are explained in the following verses:

[2:190] *You may fight in the cause of GOD against those who attack you, but do not aggress. GOD does not love the aggressors.*

[2:191] *You may kill those who wage war against you, and you may evict them whence they evicted you. Oppression is worse than murder. Do not fight them at the Sacred Masjid, unless they attack you therein. If they attack you, you may kill them. This is the just retribution for those disbelievers.*

[2:192] *If they refrain, then GOD is Forgiver, Most Merciful.*

[2:193] *You may also fight them to eliminate oppression, and to worship GOD freely. If they refrain, you shall not aggress; aggression is permitted only against the aggressors.*

We are instructed that all fighting is regulated by the basic rule in 60:8-9. Fighting is allowed strictly in self-defense, while aggression and oppression are strongly condemned throughout the Quran.

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[60:8] GOD does not enjoin you from befriending those who do not fight you because of religion, and do not evict you from your homes. You may befriend them and be equitable towards them. GOD loves the equitable.

[60:9] GOD enjoins you only from befriending those who fight you because of religion, evict you from your homes, and band together with others to banish you. You shall not befriend them. Those who befriend them are the transgressors.

We can see very clearly that the underlying principle of war is to curb and eradicate oppression, whenever and wherever it arises in the cause and way of God. It is not confined to war only when one is personally subjected to oppression, but it is incumbent upon all believers to help smother oppression wherever it is perpetrated. There is so much emphasis on this command that one should ponder the strong words used in condemning oppressors.

[4:75] Why should you not fight in the cause of GOD when weak men, women, and children are imploring: "Our Lord, deliver us from this community whose people are oppressive, and be You our Lord and Master."

Believers could fight when they are forced out of the land.

[22:39] Permission is granted to those who are being persecuted, since injustice has befallen them, and GOD is certainly able to support them.

[22:40] They were evicted from their homes unjustly, for no reason other than saying, "Our Lord is GOD." If it were not for GOD's supporting of some people against others, monasteries, churches, synagogues, and masjids—where the name of GOD is commemorated frequently—would have been destroyed. Absolutely, GOD supports those who support Him. GOD is Powerful, Almighty.

Despotism and repression must be resisted with full force. Short of initiating aggression, believers are directed to eliminate oppression with everything under their command. This is because God does not love the oppressors. What is the meaning of the word oppression? It is the creation of disorder, the act of subjugating by cruelty, the state of being kept down by unjust use of force or authority, to be repressed, subjugated, subdued, where there is coercion, cruelty, tyranny, intimidation, viciousness and brutality.

Killing is not permitted except in the course of justice for God has made life sacred.

[17:33] You shall not kill any person—for GOD has made life sacred—except in the course of justice. If one is killed unjustly, then we give his heir authority to enforce justice. Thus, he shall not exceed the limits in avenging the murder; he will be helped.

[5:32] Because of this, we decreed for the Children of Israel that anyone who murders any person who had not committed murder or horrendous crimes, it shall be as if he murdered all the people. And anyone who spares a life, it shall be as if he spared the lives of all the people. Our messengers went to them with clear proofs and revelations, but most of them, after all this, are still transgressing.

We are instructed in the Quran in explicit words that all acts of war must cease without delay if the enemies want peace and pledge to end all persecution and oppression and sincerely undertake to abide by their oaths and covenants.

[2:193] You may also fight them to eliminate oppression, and to worship GOD freely. If they refrain, you shall not aggress; aggression is permitted only against the aggressors.

[8:39] You shall fight them to ward off oppression, and to practice your relig-

ion devoted to GOD alone. If they refrain from aggression, then GOD is fully Seer of everything they do.

[8:61] If they resort to peace, so shall you, and put your trust in GOD. He is the Hearer, the Omniscient.

The issue of deterrence has also been discussed in the Quran. We are told that we must keep ourselves well prepared and avail ourselves of all sources of strength so that the enemy should, because of our preparedness, assume a peaceful attitude.

[8:60] You shall prepare for them all the power you can muster, and all the equipment you can mobilize, that you may frighten the enemies of GOD, your enemies, as well as others who are not known to you; GOD knows them. Whatever you spend in the cause of GOD will be repaid to you generously, without the least injustice.

From this verse it is clearly mentioned that we should be ready for hostility not for the sake of starting it but to keep the enemy from disturbing the peace.

War has not been mentioned even once in the Quran when it comes to the propagation of faith. Otherwise, Sura 109 - The Disbelievers (Al Kaaferoon) would never have been revealed. The Holy Quran strictly prohibited conversion by force by stating that there is no compulsion in religion

[2:256] There shall be no compulsion in religion: the right way is now distinct from the wrong way. Anyone who denounces the devil and believes in GOD has grasped the strongest bond; one that never breaks. GOD is Hearer, Omniscient.

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These facts should be an eye opener not just for non Muslims but also for certain jihadi and terrorist groups and the so-called *ulema* who have inadequate acquaintance with the Quran and say that Islam requires its followers to fight for the spread of the word of God.

Jihad can be exercised physically, through the use of wealth, speech, the pen, e-mail and even by immigration. It is obvious that its scope is very wide.

[16:125] You shall invite to the path of your Lord with wisdom and kind enlightenment, and debate with them in the best possible manner. Your Lord knows best who has strayed from His path, and He knows best who are the guided ones.

The Quran is a scripture which must be read in text and context.

[73:4] ... And read the Quran from cover to cover.

We cannot just take out one verse without considering the others, and extract a certain meaning, disregarding all the other thousands of verses that provide perfect balance in the message.

[3:7] He sent down to you this scripture, containing straightforward verses—which constitute the essence of the scripture—as well as multiple-meaning or allegorical verses. Those who harbor doubts in their hearts will pursue the multiple-meaning verses to create confusion, and to extricate a certain meaning. None knows the true meaning thereof except GOD and those well founded in knowledge. They say, "We believe in this—all of it comes from our Lord." Only those who possess intelligence will take heed.

The simple and obvious message for the Muslims is to unite and strive for their rights and freedom, and not to resort to war unless aggressed against. For those who believe in the Hereafter, no cost is too high to follow the command of God to fight against oppression. History will bear witness that God has favoured the Muslims with success as long as they worshipped God alone and contended against oppression with utmost sincerity of intention.

[29:6] Those who strive, strive for their own good. GOD is in no need of anyone.

GOD BE GLORIFIED!

Alim C./India

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God willing, we are looking forward to seeing you all again and to meet new submitters.