

Misconceptions – Jihad, War & Terrorism

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A bomb goes off in a marketplace in Jerusalem. A suicide bomber launches himself into a bus full of women and children in Tel Aviv. Foreign tourists get massacred at a holiday resort in Luxor, Egypt. Villages upon villages get annihilated in Algeria. The list of events worldwide which have come to symbolise the 'Islamic terror' are endless. From the times in the 70's and 80's when Pan Am and TWA aeroplanes would be hijacked, to the mid 80's in war torn Lebanon where Americans and Europeans would be held as hostages for years; all such incidents have come to be identified with the religion of Islam. Such incidents from past and present have undoubtedly affected Muslims worldwide and more so in the West. Any Muslim, who wants to practice his/her religion and expresses the pious desire to live under the banner of Islam, is labelled a fundamentalist or extremist. Any Muslim man who walks down a busy street in London or Paris (and Paris moreso) with a beard and a scarf on his head, is looked upon as being a terrorist who's probably got an AK47 stashed somewhere on his person. Muslim women who are veiled can't go anywhere in the Western world without being taunted as being oppressed or being mad (for covering up). However, are such beliefs and opinions about Islam really justified?

Exploring the myth

One of the many short comings which has arisen in the West, is judging Islam by the conduct of a minority of its people. By doing this, segments of Western society have deliberately played off the desperate actions of many Muslims, and have given it the name of Islam. Such behaviour is clearly not objective and seeks to distort the reality of Islam. For if such a thing was done (Judge a religion by the conduct of its people) then we too could say that all Christianity is about child molesting and homosexuality [1] whilst Hinduism was all about looting and breaking up mosques [2]. Generalising in such a manner is not seen as being objective, yet we find that the Western world is foremost in propagating this outlook on Islam. So what is the reality of Islam? How does one dispel the myths which have been created and spread so viciously? The only way to examine Islam is to simply examine its belief system. Look at its sources, the Qur'an and Sunna, and see what they have to say. This is the way to find the truth about

what Islam says about terror, terrorism and terrorists. One who is sincerely searching for the truth, will do it no other way. The very name Islam comes from the Arabic root word 'salama' which means peace. Islam is a religion which is based upon achieving peace through the submission to the will of Allah. Thus, by this very simple linguistic definition, one can ascertain as to what the nature of this religion is. If such a religion is based on the notion of peace, then how is it that so many acts done by its adherents are contrary to peace? The answer is simple. Such actions, if not sanctioned by the religion, have no place with it. They are not Islamic and should not be thought of as Islamic.

Jihad

The word jihad sends shivers down the spines of many Westerners. They readily equate this term with violence and oppression. However, it must be said that the meaning of jihad, as a 'holy war', is something which is totally foreign and not from Islam. If anything, such a description belongs more so to Christianity and its adherents. It was terms like this which were used to justify the slaughter and pillage of towns and cities during the crusades by the Christians. By simply looking into the sources of Islam, one is able to know that the true meaning of jihad is to strive/make effort in the way of Allah. Thus striving in the way of Allah can be both peaceful and physical. The Prophet Muhammed (saws) said:

"The best jihad is (by) the one who strives against his own self for Allah, The Mighty and Majestic" [3]

In the Qur'an, Allah also says:

"So obey not the disbelievers, but make a great jihad (effort) against them (by preaching) with it (the Qur'an)"
(Surah Al-Furqan 25:52)

By controlling and fighting against ones desires, the Muslims can then also physically exert themselves in the path of Allah. It is this physical or combative jihad which receives so much criticism. Because of the sheer ignorance of this type of jihad Islam is regarded as terror, and Muslims are regarded as terrorists. However, the very purpose of this physical jihad is to raise the word of Allah uppermost. By doing this, it liberates and emancipates all those who are crying out for freedom all over the world. If the likes of the pacifists of this world had their way, then the world would indeed be full of anarchy and mischief. The combative jihad seeks to correct this as Allah says in the Qur'an:

"And if Allah did not check one set of people by means of another, the Earth would be full of mischief. But Allah is full of bounty to the worlds"
(Surah Al-Baqarah 2:251)

Such would be the corruption on this Earth if there had never been a combative jihad that Allah says:

"For had it not been 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. Indeed Allah will help those who help His (cause). Truly Allah is All strong, All mighty"
(Surah Al-Hajj 22:40)

This combative jihad being both defensive and offensive, is something which is commanded by Allah upon the Muslims. Through this command the oppressed and weak are rescued from the tyranny of the world:

"And what is the matter with you that you do not fight in the cause of Allah and for those weak, ill treated 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"
(Surah An-Nisa 4:75)

Anyone who knows the early history of Islam, will know that all those nations and empires which came under the fold of Islam were indeed previously oppressed. When the companions of the Prophet Muhammed (saws) went out for the offensive jihad against the Egyptians, the Persians and the Romans, we find that the people did not resist against them at all. Rather, they accepted Islam on such a scale, that it is inconceivable that the jihad of Islam could be anything other than a liberation for these people; a liberation from centuries of tyranny. In fact, with the Byzantine Egyptians and the people of Spain, the Muslims were even beckoned to come and liberate these lands from the oppression of their kings. This is the glorious track record of the Muslim jihad Compare this with the brutal track record of warfare in the Western world over the centuries. From the crusades against the Muslims to the days of colonial warfare, the Western world has killed, destroyed and plundered everything which has come in its way. Even today this merciless killing goes on by the Western nations. While claiming to be about world peace and security, Western nations are ready to bomb innocent civilians at the drop of a hat. The classic example of this is the recent bombings of Sudan and Afghanistan. Whilst claiming that Sudan and Afghanistan were havens for Islamic terrorists, the bombings of these two nations could not have come at a better time for the American president Bill Clinton. The destruction of innocent lives which were a result of these bombings clearly seem to have been an attempt by Clinton to avert attention away from his sexual misdemeanours; [4] something which he so often gets caught up in. Without doubt this was the reason for such terror from the American military upon innocent people. This is the same American military which claims to enter the worlds trouble spots under the guise of being peace keepers. But

"& when it is said to them; 'Make not mischief on the Earth', they say; 'We are only peace makers'. Indeed they are the ones who make mischief, but they perceive it not" (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:11–12)

The hypocrisy of the West is indeed astounding.

By looking at the rules and regulations of this combative jihad it will be clear to any sincere person that this is indeed the religion of truth. When fighting an unjust enemy, no matter how unjust they are, it is forbidden by Islam that their retreating forces are mutilated, tortured or slaughtered. The treacherous violation of treaties and carrying out assassinations after a cease fire, are also prohibited. Allah says in the Qur'an:

"And fight in the way of Allah those who fight you. But do not transgress the limits. Truly Allah loves not the transgressors"
(Surah Al-Baqarah 2:190)

Not transgressing the limits means not to kill women and children, for the Messenger of Allah (saws) "forbade the killing of women and children" [5]. Not transgressing the limits means that the elderly, the sick, monks, worshippers and hired labourers are not attacked. Not transgressing the limits means not killing animals wantonly, burning crops and vegetation, polluting waters and destroying homes, monasteries, churches and synagogues:

"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. Indeed, Allah loves those who deal with equity"
(Surah Al-Mumtahinah 60:8)

After reading such passages from the Qur'an and knowing about what Islam commands and prohibits in jihad, the rules of warfare are given a new meaning; a meaning of justice. How sad it is then, that whilst Islam is condemned for striking terror into the hearts of the people, the likes of the Serbs, the Indian army in Kashmir and the Israeli soldiers in Palestine are left untarnished for the atrocities they have committed in the name of warfare.

So what about suicide bombing, is this too a part of jihad in Allah's path? From what has already been stated above, it can be deduced that this is not from the religion. However, unfortunately many Muslims have taken suicide bombing as being a virtuous act by which one receives reward. This could not be further from the truth. The Prophet (saws) said: "Those who go to extremes are destroyed" [6]. Suicide bombing is undoubtedly an extremity which has reached the ranks of the Muslims. In the rules of warfare, we find no sanction for such an act from the behaviour and words of the Prophet Muhammed (saws) and his companions. Unfortunately, today (some misguided) Muslims believe that such acts are paving the way for an Islamic revival and a return to

Misconceptions – Jihad, War & Terrorism

the rule of Islam's glorious law. However, we fail to bear in mind that the Prophet (saws) said:

"Do not be delighted by the action of anyone, until you see how he ends up" [7]

So, for example what is the end of a suicide bomber in Palestine?, a leg here, an arm there. Massive retaliation by the Israeli's in the West Bank and Gaza. More Muslims killed and persecuted. How can we be delighted with such an end? What really hammers the final nail in the coffin of this act, is that it is suicide; something which is clearly forbidden in Islam. The Messenger of Allah (saws) said:

"He who kills himself with anything, Allah will torment him with that in the fire of Hell" [8]

Some are under the misconception that by killing oneself for an Islamic cause, one commits an act which deserves Paradise. Once when a man killed himself, the Prophet (saws) said: "He is a dweller of the Fire". When the people were surprised at this, the Prophet (saws) said:

"A person performs the deeds which to the people appears to be the deeds befitting the dweller of Paradise, but he is in fact one of the dwellers of the Fire" [9]

The taking of ones life which Allah has given as a trust to the human, is a great sin. Likewise the taking of other lives (which is so often the case with suicide bombing) is also forbidden, as human life is indeed precious:

"...If anyone killed a person not in retaliation for murder or to spread mischief in the land, it would be as if he killed the whole of mankind. And (likewise) if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the whole of mankind"
(Surah Al-Maaida 5:32)

Thus, all other types of extremities such as hostage taking, hijacking and planting bombs in public places, are clearly forbidden in Islam.

The Media

By going through the teachings of Islam, it is clear that such a religion has only come to benefit mankind – not to destroy it. So why is there so much hatred for this noble religion in the West? The answer is simple, the media. It is the Jewish influenced media of the West which has portrayed Islam to be something that it is not. During the 70's and 80's when the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) were carrying out daring highjacks on the worlds airways, the media in the West portrayed it as being Islamic. When the Shi'ite suicide bombers of the 80's were causing so much havoc in the Lebanon and in

the Gulf region, the media in the West portrayed it as a part of Islam. However, it is known by the heads of the media that the likes of the PLO were not an Islamic organisation, and that according to Islam, Shi'ites are outside the fold of Islam [10]. Yet such facts are never portrayed by a media which seeks to cover the truth of this religion. A number of years ago, when the Oklahoma City bomb went off, a headline in one of the newspapers, 'Today' [11], summed up this attitude. With a picture of a fire fighter holding a dead child in his arms, the headline read: "In The Name of Islam" Time has of course proven that this bigoted assumption was incorrect, as Timothy McVeigh, a right wing radical now faces the death penalty for the crime [12]. Likewise the bombs which went off in the Paris metro in 1995, were also blamed on Muslim fanatics. It has now emerged that the Algerian secret service who having routinely bribed many European journalists and MPs, were actually behind it. The desire to throw a veil over Islam is immense by these people:

"They intend to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah will complete His light even though the disbelievers hate (it)"
(Surah As-Saff 61:8)

With such immense pressure against it, it is indeed a blessing from Allah that Islam goes from strength to strength. It continues to grow faster than any other religion in the Western world, conquering the hearts and minds of thousands. All this should not even surprise us though, for Allah has promised us that this religion will prevail:

"It is He who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, so that He may make it victorious over all other religions, even though the disbelievers detest it"
(Surah As-Saff 61:9)

It is a must that humanity comes towards the religion of Islam. Without it, we will continue to slip down the road of inequity and darkness. With it we can establish a society of justice and peace. Religion of terror? ... no. The way forward? ... yes.

"There is no compulsion in religion. The right path has indeed become distinct from the wrong. So whoever rejects false worship and believes in Allah, then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break. And Allah is All Hearing, All Knowing"
(Surah Al-Baqarah 2:256)