

# Jihad

## Jihad: Answering the Fallacies

Jihad is considered as one of the most complex and misinterpreted concepts in today's world. Both Muslims and others are to be blamed equally. This idea is even hard for us Muslims to understand because so-called religious leaders with extremist viewpoints are misguiding the majority on the idea of jihad and its conditions.

One way or the other we have portrayed an image that has led to our defamation. For an average Muslim who is not so knowledgeable about Islam, it is important to have his/her mind clarified on the basic concept of jihad.

It is important that some important questions about jihad should be answered in its true spirit. This implies that in the light of the Holy Quran and hadith — guides for the Muslims — the meaning and concept of jihad should be made clear, so that it benefits humanity.

## Does Jihad mean “Holy War”?

The word 'jihad' has a root word juhd, which means 'effort'. Unfortunately these meanings have been altered by extremist-minded religious figures, who call for armed jihad against infidels. This word 'jihad' is self-explanatory and does not relate to the words armed, holy or even war. The wrong interpretation of this word has transformed it into something that means 'war', which is armed struggle against the enemy. However, the Quran and hadith provide guidance to Muslims, only if they are willing to take it. Actually the word 'qital' is often referred to as armed struggle or combative version of jihad. It means 'fighting'. This word has been used a number of times in the Quran along with instructions for Muslims to fight oppressors.

Jihad refers to efforts exerted in the way of God in general. Armed struggle or qital is only one aspect of the overall concept. These two words are used separately in the Quran, so it is injustice to equate both these words. It is written in Quran that: “The believers are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger, then do not doubt [the verity of Islam], and jahadu (do jihad) with their properties and selves in the way of Allah; those are the truthful” (49.15).

In another verse it is written, “And qatilu (fight) [O you who believe!] in the way of Allah, and know that Allah is Hearing, Knowing” (2.244).

In the earlier verse, Muslims are being told to exert efforts. The word jahadu is referring to jihad or effort. In the later verse the word qatilu is clearly informing the Muslims to fight. This verse is also referring that God knows better and is providing the reason to fight.

Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) while returning from a battle referring to jihad said: “We are now returning from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad, the jihad against the self.” The Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said during the farewell pilgrimage, “...The fighter in the way of Allah is he who makes jihad against himself — jahada nafsah — for the sake of obeying Allah.”

Qital or war has its own conditions, which are clearly described in the Holy Quran. God has gifted human beings with reason and it is the duty of every Muslim to seek guidance from the Quran and hadith, which serve as the ultimate guidance for the Muslims.

## What are the conditions of Qital (Fighting)?

In a verse, the conditionality of qital is provided to the Muslims, i.e. “Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress limits...And slay them wherever ye catch them. And turn them out from where they have turned you out; for persecution is worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the sacred Mosque unless they first fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who reject faith. But if they cease, Allah is oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. And fight them on until there is no more persecution. And the religion becomes Allah's. But if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression” (Surah 2:190-193). This verse is clearly laying down the limits of fighting or qital. It is only allowed when the enemy tries to prosecute Muslims. It is strictly being ordered that Muslims must at once stop fighting, when the enemy withdraws or the oppression ceases. Also converting people to Islam by force or coercion is not jihad but a crime in Islam. The Quran clearly states “There is no compulsion in religion, the path of guidance stands out clear from error” (2:256) and (60:8).

## Is an individual allowed to initiate Qital (Fighting)?

It is also imperative to know that qital can only be authorised by a senior Muslim leader such as an imam or the representative of a Muslim state. An individual cannot in any condition wage qital or war on his own. There are clear instructions about armed or combative jihad and that too is the responsibility of the state or the person representing the state, or any leader such as an imam, etc. Ibn Qudama, a noted Islamic scholar, in his book Al-Mughni argues that “declaring jihad is the responsibility of the imam and is his independent legal judgement”. Similarly, Al-Dardir, another Islamic scholar at Al-Azhar University argued that “proclaiming jihad comes through the imam's assignment of a leader”. Abu Bakr Al-Jazaa'iri described that the pillars of jihad are: “A pure intention and that it is performed behind a Muslim imam and beneath his flag and with his permission...it is not permissible for them to fight without an imam.”

## Is seeking permission from parents also necessary, while committing to Qital?

There is also a grave misconception in the minds of

jihadists that an individual can wage jihad and that too against the will of his parents. The following hadith might help in explaining the whole concept: a person once approached the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and said: “I have an old father and mother, who due to their attachment towards me, are not keen for me to go to jihad.” [Hearing this], the Noble Prophet (PBUH) said: “(If such is the case then) Stay with your parents for, by the One in whose control lies my soul, their attachment of one day and one night to you is better than one year of jihad” (Biharul Anwar, Volume 74, Page 82).

## Are suicide attacks permitted in Qital (Fighting)?

Suicide bombings present one of the biggest threats to the security of a common man. However, the jihadists also believe that committing suicide is a way to liberation and a sacred duty for the cause of Islam. Clear instructions are available in the Quran and hadith that suicide under any pretext is not permitted in Islam. This act is prohibited in other religions as well. There are specific sanctions expressed in the Quran against self-killing. Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) also assigns suicide to the lower levels of hell.

Allah says explicitly in the Quran, “And do not kill yourselves. Surely, Allah is Most Merciful to you” (Surah An-Nisa, Verse 29). In another verse of the Quran, Allah says: “And do not throw yourselves in destruction” (Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 195). Once a man killed himself, the Prophet (PBUH) said: “He is the dweller of fire”. But the people were surprised at this, because apparently he did so for a good cause. The Prophet (PBUH) 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.”

All the verses presented here are self-explanatory and do not require the interpretations of any scholar or religious leader. It is important that we take the ownership of our religion and start reclaiming what we have lost. Islam symbolises peace and this is the message that all of us must send out to everyone.

