

*Questions
&
Answers*
on

JIHAD

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Foreword

This booklet is written to provide readers with correct and basic understanding of jihad today.

It is presented in a simple questions and answers format to facilitate easy reading and understanding.

The booklet is written for all segments of society, Muslims and non-Muslims, with the objective of developing correct and contextual understanding of jihad in the society, eradicating misrepresentation and stereotypes and promoting harmonious relations between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Readers who wish to delve further in the issue are advised to seek guidance from recognized asatizah (religious teachers).

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to all parties, especially MUIS and PERDAUS, for their support and sponsorship that enable the publication of this booklet.

May God Almighty accept this small effort.

*Muhammad Haniff Hassan
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1. What is the meaning of jihad?

The term jihad is derived from the Arabic rootword jahada, which means 'to strive' or 'to struggle'. In Islam, jihad essentially means to strive with our utmost energies and to the best of our abilities in carrying out God's commands, be it to perform righteous deeds or to refrain oneself from evil deeds with the overall objective of safeguarding the well-being of all creations. Jihad is part of the overarching Islamic teaching of peaceful submission to God and peaceful relations with all others.

Jihad against a hostile enemy is just one of the forms of jihad as stated above.

2. What are the various forms of jihad in Islam?

Jihad can take many forms. It can take the form of verbal jihad, which means to offer advice to those who need it or jihad with strength and service, as in performing community service for the less fortunate.

Hence, armed jihad is just one of many forms of jihad in Islam and not the only one.

3. What are the objectives of jihad?

Just as the meanings of jihad are wide, its targets are also multiple. Among them are:

a. *Subjugation of Self-Desires*

Muslims are asked to develop moral and spiritual strength, in order to overcome the challenges in life with confidence. Thus, they need to perform jihad to fight and control their self-desires, which may urge man towards evil deeds. This can be done by purifying oneself from negative traits and replacing them with virtuous traits through acts of worship like reading the Quran, performing *zikr* (remembrance of God), fasting, giving alms and cultivating beautiful manners in social interactions.

This form of jihad actually precedes the other forms of jihad including armed jihad, as it is difficult to perform virtuous deeds and sacrifice in the name of Allah if one is controlled by his desires and his heart is void of sincerity.

b. *Uplifting Intellects*

Muslims need to perform jihad to continuously upgrade their intellectual capacities and sharpen their minds to contribute towards the benefit of all. This should be done by being open to learning from one's own civilisation and from others, and the preparedness to receive, process and develop knowledge so that a Muslim becomes a source of blessing for others.

c. *Advising those who perform evil deeds or follow their desires*

Muslims should perform jihad to guide and engage this group of people with wisdom and beautiful preaching to bring them back to the correct path.

d. *Advising those who cause destruction to lives, property and the world.*

Muslims need to perform jihad, by means of pursuing appropriate legal means to prevent this group from continuing their destructive path.

e. *Self-defence.*

When a country in which Muslims reside is unjustly attacked or illegally occupied, it is obligatory upon them to defend it even if it means taking up arms.

4. Does the term jihad apply to jihad against poverty, intellectual jihad, jihad against illiteracy, to develop economy etc.?

No doubt the usage of these terms with respect to jihad is new but this does not render them null and void, as their meanings are in-line with that of the wider jihad and the precepts of Syari'ah. However, the introduction of these meanings of jihad is not to replace, obscure or deny the other

forms of jihad, including armed jihad. Its purpose is just to guide us to refocus our energies and realign our priorities based on today's context.

5. What are the forms of jihad that remain relevant today?

The types of jihad that remain relevant today are dependent upon the different needs and situations of Muslims in a particular area and can therefore change from one place to another.

The leaders of the Muslim community in that area should make an evaluation of the most pressing problems facing the particular community and assign their priorities.

Based on this argument, armed jihad is not an obligation upon every Muslim community in all parts of the world, as each area would have their own unique set of problems and thus, a differing order of priorities.

Social and economic problems and the lack of education beset many Muslim societies the world over. These are certainly priorities that must be addressed immediately and the responsibility of doing so falls upon both leaders and communities. All these are also great jihad.

6. Does the concept of armed jihad remain relevant today?

Armed jihad is an Islamic ruling that remains relevant. In fact, armed jihad is synonymous to the concept of nations protecting their sovereignty. However, even in self-defence, Islam promulgates a set of ethics and rulings which must be observed.

7. What are the ethics and laws with regards to armed jihad?

Among its ethics and laws include:

a. *Having an objective sanctioned by the Quran*

The correct objective of jihad is for self-defence against enemy attacks and aggression (The Quran, 2:193-4), defending those who are oppressed or persecuted (The Quran, 22:39-40) and confronting rebels and those who wreck havoc, chaos and destruction (The Quran, 49:9).

Oppression, rebellion and acts of destruction that legitimizes the use of armed jihad refer to acts which threaten human lives and properties through violent and extreme means, not mere acts of discrimination and corruption. Furthermore, the decision to go to war should be made as the final resort after all peaceful means have been exhausted.

b. *Possessing the right intention*

Armed jihad is forbidden if the intention is to seek revenge, seize the properties of others or for pride and power. It is only permissible when supported by proper religious sanctioning as an act of service in the path of God.

c. *Under the leadership of an appropriate authority*

Scholars are in agreement that the issue of armed jihad should be decided by the leaders of a country. Individuals and organizations do not have the authority to launch armed jihad in the name of Islam or on behalf of the Muslim community. This is because the issue of armed jihad has huge repercussions on the general public. Hence, only those in power and have received the mandate of the people are in a position to decide.

Only in a situation where a particular government has been removed by the enemy can Muslims be allowed to collectively carry out armed jihad to overcome enemies who are occupying their country.

d. *No transgression of limits*

All actions taken in armed jihad should not transgress limits set in Islam (The Quran,

2:190, 194, 229; 16:126; 43:40; 4:171; 5:77).

This means that armed jihad should be waged in line with the Islamic law of jihad and in congruance with international law and conventions.

(Note: International laws and conventions in this booklet refer to international laws and conventions on armed conflict.)

e. *Discriminative*

Discriminative here means that the targets of armed jihad should be confined to members of the armed forces or combatants as defined by international law.

Hence, it is not permissible to kill civilians, non-combatants, prisoners of war and those who are injured. The objective of military power in Islam is not the total annihilation of the enemies but to defeat them by weakening their capability to instill fear, such that they stop their enmity and make peace.

Islam is a religion that has been sent down for the protection of all mankind. As such, Islam believes that mankind should be protected, not eliminated so that everyone would have the opportunity to learn about the teachings of Islam.

f. *High probability of success*

It is prohibited to wage a war in which

the probability of attaining victory is dismal. In a *hadith* (Prophetic tradition) narrated by At-Turmuzi, the Prophet, may peace be upon him, prohibited a Muslim from self-debasement. When asked what is meant by self-debasement, the Prophet said, “It is when he exposes himself to dangers in which he is not able to bear.”

Islam prohibits Muslims from doing something that potentially leads to greater calamity, danger or destruction, even though the initial intention is to prevent evil.

War is only permissible if it brings about greater benefits or prevents greater dangers than the acts of going to war itself. If the chances of victory are minimal, it follows that the chances of reaping a bigger benefit or prevent a greater calamity is also low.

g. *War as a last resort*

Even though Islam permits armed jihad, it prefers peace (The Quran, 8:61). Furthermore, the nature of Islam itself as a religion of peace demands that war becomes an option only after all peaceful avenues have been exhausted. Another proof of this is the fact that God ordained

armed jihad only after 13 years of the Prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Furthermore, the Prophet’s history points to the fact that Islam spread faster following the Hudaibiyah Peace Treaty, which ended the conflict between the people of Mecca and Medina. The number of converts to Islam after the Peace Treaty was more than the sum total of converts from the beginning of his prophethood till the introduction of the Peace Treaty.

8. Does Islam permit war only to defend the Muslims?

No, Islam permits the Muslims to carry arms to defend those who are oppressed or persecuted irrespective of their race or religion (The Quran, 22:40). The Quran states that God will ensure that a group of people who can reject and stop the evils and aggressions from another group will emerge till all the mosques, churches and other places of worship are saved from destruction. This indicates that rejecting evil deeds of any kind is not just to ensure the safety of Muslims but the safety of all. In this, it is very clear that Islam is an inclusive religion, which seeks to secure the rights and safety of all members of a

society. This is also in line with Islam being a religion of mercy for all mankind.

9. Does Islam direct armed jihad to fight non-Muslims permanently?

No, Islam does not direct Muslims to wage a perpetual war against those who do not share the Islamic faith. Armed jihad is only called for in specific circumstances (please refer to questions 6 and 7). In Islam, even Muslims who transgress the rights of followers of other faiths, resulting in losses of lives, properties and honour, must be fought and stopped, after all other preventive measures have been taken.

10. Is it true that the verses, which permit armed jihad only when attacked, have been abrogated?

No, there is no evidence to support this claim. All the verses concerning jihad has to be understood collectively and in tandem, as with all other verses of the Quran. Verses whose meanings are general are made more precise by verses which are more specific and conditional. Hence, the verses which may imply that non-Muslims are to be fought without conditions should be interpreted to refer to those

who initiate attacks/aggression on Muslims.

It is very clear that Islam does not permit to fight the non-Muslims who conduct peaceful relations with the Muslims (The Quran, 59: 8-9, 5:2).

11. Is it true that armed jihad constitutes the best and most honourable Islamic worship?

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) characterizes jihad as the peak of Islamic worship. This is the general position of jihad in Islam. It is considered as the most noble of deeds because it requires a great deal of sacrifice and is among the most challenging to carry out. This is so, when a community is attacked and subjected to the aggression by others.

However, this does not mean that it is the only and most preferred solution for all problems concerning Muslims, in all kinds of situations and locations.

As Islam is a comprehensive religion, it offers a range of options and approaches, guided by its strict ethical code and system, for its adherents to solve their problems. As we have explained before, jihad does not only mean to carry arms. In fact, the focus of Islam is on peaceful resolution to all problems.

12. How is armed jihad carried out?

As has been stated before, in principle, only the official authorities of a state can proclaim armed jihad. Authorities can only do this through the declaration of war and in strict conformity with international law.

13. Why must we adhere to international law with regards to war when Islam already has a law of jihad?

Armed jihad must adhere to the law of jihad as determined by the Quran and *hadith* and interpreted by Muslim scholars.

However, in today's context, the international law with regards to war complements the law of jihad. This is because the international law with regards to war does not contradict the law of jihad as both aim to contain the dangers of war. Besides, adhering to international law is consistent with juristic rulings, which permit the use of contemporary conventions and norms as a source of law, as long as it does not contradict the *Syari'ah*.

To ignore the international law with regards to war, on the basis that it does not originate from the Islamic teachings, is wrong because:

- a. Islam calls upon its followers to benefit from people or sources which are not their own.
- b. It contradicts the juristic ruling as explained above.
- c. It runs counter to the agreements signed by country leaders to adhere to international law.
- d. It will damage the image of Muslims as a community who do not respect the international system and cannot live with it.
- e. It may lead to other nations not adhering to international law when dealing with the Muslims.

Hence, the study and application of the law of jihad today should be complemented with knowledge of, and compliance with, international law with regards to war.

14. What is the position of Islam with regards to the acts of hostage taking, hijacking public transport and attacking public places?

All these are prohibited in Islam under the rulings of *hirabah* (The Quran, 5:33-34). These acts constitute among the greatest sins and deserve a severe punishment-the death penalty.

15. Some parties endorse the killing of civilians as they pay taxes and vote for

the governments who oppose the Muslims. Is this right?

Such views are inaccurate. The collection of government taxes from their people is not a new practice. Neither is the involvement of the general public in government policies. In a tribal system that dominated the people before, the leaders of the tribes often involved their members in important issues, which affect them. Democratic ideas and its practices have also been carried out by the Greeks and the Romans. Yet, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) strictly prohibits the killing of ordinary citizens in war.

16. In what situation is it permissible to kill civilians working for the enemy?

As mentioned earlier, a strict code of ethics govern jihad in Islam. This must be adhered to at all times, and with no exceptions. The acts of killing civilians who work for the enemy are not permissible at all times and situations. This can be deduced from a *hadith* in which the Prophet (pbuh) prohibited the killing of what is referred to as *asif*. This group constitutes those who were not involved in the armed conflict but were present in the war zone to manage the logistic needs of the army.

If Islam forbids the killing of this group of people, what more the civilians who are not even in the war zone.

17. Is it true that armed jihad is *fardhu ain* (personal obligation) on all Muslims today?

In principle, armed jihad is *fardhu kifayah* - an obligation which if carried out by a section of the Muslim community, the other Muslims are not required to carry out.

The ruling can become *fardhu ain* - individual obligation only if:

- a. The country in which a community resides has been attacked illegally and the government makes a general call to war on its people.
- b. If someone becomes a professional in the army or security forces.

18. Is it necessary for Singaporean Muslims to go to the war zone to help their oppressed brothers?

Ordinary Singapore citizens should not be involved in any armed conflict in other countries because of the following reasons:

- a. It will compromise the safety and interests of the nation.

- b. It violates the laws of the country.
- c. Each Muslim individual is needed to develop the Muslim community in Singapore.
- d. Islam demands that its followers prioritize their duties and obligations to their nearest communities before rendering assistance to those who are further away.
- e. It will result in a variety of problems for the Muslims in Singapore.
- f. There are other legal channels to assist those who are oppressed.

19. How can a Muslim best respond to acts of oppression and persecution against the Muslim population in other countries?

A Muslim can do this by showing sympathy and support for the Muslim communities who are oppressed like the Palestinians.

However, he should observe the following:

- a. It should be done by taking into consideration the realities of one's position.
- b. It should be carried out according to the laws where one resides.
- c. It should take into account one's capabilities and current priorities.

Among the things that can be done are:

- a. Offer prayers of peace and restoration of calm to the societies involved. Supplicate for the oppressed after each prayer or any other suitable times.
- b. Offer financial assistance through trusted organisations that channel aid to humanitarian missions.
- c. Always stay informed about their problems through trusted news sources.
- d. Raise awareness of all parties involved regarding the oppression by disseminating accurate information about them.
- e. Participate in humanitarian relief missions organized by trusted and recognized agencies.
- f. Cooperate with various parties to achieve a peaceful solution by organizing various activities like conferences, petitions, exhibitions and reading materials.

However, it is important to note that Islam calls for a struggle against all forms of oppression on earth, regardless of whether it affects Muslims or others (please refer to questions 7 and 8).

20. What are Islam's views with regards to acts of armed rebellion against governments that are unjust, corrupt and authoritarian?

Organizing an armed rebellion against an authoritarian regime known for its cruelty and injustice is not encouraged by Islam as there is a high likelihood of bloodshed and the killing of innocents, all of which are sinful acts. Furthermore, in certain situations, armed rebellion may be counter-productive, that is, it may serve to strengthen the position of the authoritarian government.

This does not mean to say that Islam asks of its followers to endure the injustices inflicted by such regime. Instead, Muslims must strive to improve the situation by dispensing advice or using other options besides armed rebellion. History has witnessed many examples of authoritarian governments who were successfully replaced without the process of armed rebellion.

21. Does Islam permit attacking enemies wherever they are?

No, this is prohibited in Islam. Armed operations should be conducted only in the conflict zones or areas recognised as such under international law.

22. What is Islam's stand on suicide operations, which are becoming more rampant these days?

Suicide operations are not allowed in Islam as the act of taking our own lives are against the teachings of Islam. In addition, suicide operations often compromise innocent civilians. Furthermore, Islam has been linked strongly with violence because of suicide bombings.

The efforts by certain parties to draw analogies between contemporary suicide operation and the acts of the companions of the Prophet (pbuh) and Muslim army as recorded in historical texts are not acceptable because of the following differences:

- a. Those who perform daring acts in the past are destroyed by the weapons owned by their enemies while the current suicide operators are killed by detonating their own weapons.
- b. The acts in the past occurred during battle but suicide operators of today explode themselves at random and not during battle as evident in incidents like 9/11 and train bombings in London and Madrid. They also destroy infrastructure, which is a very clear prohibition in Islam.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the legitimacy of suicide operation as claimed by some parties is syubhat (dubious).

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