

Islam and war

While Islam advocates for peace and justice, it also acknowledges the necessity of war under specific, strict, and defined circumstances, such as self-defense, protecting the vulnerable, freedom of choice, and freedom of belief (Yes! the freedom to believe). These guidelines are aimed at ensuring that war remains just, controlled, and humane.

Islam is fundamentally, intrinsically, and inherently a religion of peace, as reflected in its name “Islam”. Islam is derived from the word “Salaam,” meaning peace. The Quran clearly states, **“But if the enemy inclines towards peace, you also incline towards peace and trust in Allah”** [Quran 8:61].

War, or “Jihad” [in its combative sense], is viewed as a last resort and only permissible under specific conditions. Islamic teachings emphasize that war should never be initiated to conquer lands or subjugate people. The Quran commands: **“Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors”** [Quran 2:190]. In the way of Allah means guided by God’s rules. This verse also emphasizes the importance of restraint and just conduct in war.

So what is Jihad? Does it mean “Holy war”? Jihad is often misunderstood, especially in the mainstream media. The term “Jihad” means “to struggle” or “to strive” in the path of God. This means being aligned

with the rules of God. Following these articles, one would know that Muslims’ lives and actions are always to please God. The term Jihad encompasses both personal and societal struggles. Armed Jihad, or war, is only one aspect of Jihad and is only permitted under very specific circumstances. There are two main types of Jihad: “defensive war” and “offensive war – under specific conditions”. Defensive Jihad is clear. Islam permits war primarily in self-defense. The Quran makes it clear that if Muslims are attacked, they are allowed to fight back: **“Permission to fight is given to those who are being fought because they were wronged—and indeed, Allah is capable of granting them victory”** [Quran 22:39]. This form of Jihad is intended for people to protect themselves and their possessions in their own countries. The other type of Jiha, the offensive Jihad, is to protect the oppressed. Islam advocates fighting to protect those who are oppressed, regardless of their faith. The Quran says: **“And what is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah and [for] the oppressed among men, women, and children who say, ‘Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people and appoint for us from Yourself a protector and appoint for us from Yourself a helper?’”** [Quran 4:75]. This verse demonstrates that war can be waged to protect those who are vulnerable and



Guest Column

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suffering from injustice. Throughout the history of Islam, not a single incident of forcing people to convert is ever recorded. Compare this claim (a bold one, I know) with Spain’s Inquisition. Islam does not condone religious coercion, as explicitly mentioned in the Qur’an: **“There is no compulsion in religion”** [Quran 2:256]. However, war can be justified to protect the freedom of individuals to practice their faith without persecution.

Islamic law on warfare is rooted in compassion and respect for human life. Once war becomes necessary, it is tightly regulated to ensure ethical conduct. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) provided extensive guidance on the conduct of war, outlining the treatment of combatants and non-combatants, property, and the environment. One of the most important principles in Islamic warfare is the protection of non-combatants. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) instructed his followers: *“Do not kill women or children or the elderly or the infirm. Do not cut down fruit-bearing trees. Do not destroy an inhabited place”* Non-combatants such as women, children, the elderly, and religious

figures (monks, priests) are to be left unharmed. Their religious buildings are to be intact and should be left alone.

Islam forbids the mutilation of bodies or excessive violence. The Quran instructs: **“And do not exceed the limits, for indeed, Allah does not like transgressors”** [Qur’an 2:190]. This emphasizes that combatants must exercise restraint and avoid unnecessary cruelty even in war. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also prohibited the use of fire as a weapon against the enemy stating it is a grave sin, *“fire is the punishment of God and no one has this right except God.”*

Remarkably, Islam even dictates rules regarding the protection of the environment during war. The destruction of crops, trees, and water resources is forbidden. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) specifically commanded: *“Do not kill animals except for food, and do not destroy palm trees or burn them with fire.”* This instruction reflects the broader Islamic principle of stewardship of the Earth.

Islam prescribes humane treatment for prisoners of war. The Quran says: **“And they give food despite love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive”** [Quran 76:8]. Prisoners of war (captives) are to be treated with dignity and provided for. Their ultimate fate must be their release. It could be in exchange for ransom or as an act of mercy. Many times

captives were released for teaching children how to read and write. No single incident was ever recorded of the opposite in the history of Islam.

Islam forbids acts of treachery and betrayal during war. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) emphasized the importance of maintaining trust, even with enemies. The Quran instructs: **“Fulfill the covenants, for you will be questioned about them”** [Quran 17:34]. This includes treaties and agreements made during the war, as breaking them is considered a serious violation.

Another essential aspect of Islamic war ethics is “the principle of proportionality”. War should be proportionate to the harm that has been inflicted and should not cause more destruction than necessary. In modern international law, this concept aligns with the Just War Theory, which stresses the need for a legitimate cause and a proportional response. The Quran states clearly, **“If you retaliate, then let it be equivalent to what you have suffered. But if you patiently endure, it is certainly best for those who are patient (126) Be patient (O Prophet), for your patience is only with Allah’s help. Do not grieve over those (who disbelieve), nor be distressed by their schemes (127) Surely Allah is with those who shun evil and who do good (deeds) (128)”** [Quran 16:126-128]

Islamic scholars have

long debated the balance between the necessity of war and the imperatives of peace and justice. Some classical scholars argued that Muslims should always seek peace whenever possible. This is illustrated in the example of the “Treaty of Hudaibiyyah”, where Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) entered into a peace treaty with the Quraysh tribe, despite the opposition from some of his major companions.

The Islamic rules of warfare, continue to be relevant today, especially in discussions of just war theory and international humanitarian law. These principles of justice, proportionality, and the protection of non-combatants are not only ethically sound but are also practical in preventing the horrors and chaos that come with unregulated warfare.

In modern times, however, the misinterpretation and misuse of the term “Jihad” by many, mostly for political gains, and misinformation have distorted the true meaning of Islamic warfare. Muslim scholars and leaders worldwide have repeatedly emphasized the peaceful teachings of Islam and its strict rules concerning the conditions and conduct of war. Unfortunately, they are never given the chance in mainstream media!

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For more information: [youtube.com/watch?v=h6NWfVWxqSM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h6NWfVWxqSM)

Archdiocese of Los Angeles agrees to pay \$880 million to victims of clergy sexual abuse

LOS ANGELES – The Archdiocese of Los Angeles has agreed to pay \$880 million to victims of clergy sexual abuse dating back decades, in what an attorney said was the largest single child sex abuse settlement with a Catholic archdiocese, it was announced Wednesday.

After the announcement of the agreement in principle, Archbishop José H. Gomez said

in a statement, “I am sorry for every one of these incidents, from the bottom of my heart.” “My hope is that this settlement will provide some measure of healing for what these men and women have suffered,” the archbishop added. “I believe that we have come to a resolution of these claims that will provide just compensation to the survivor-victims of these past abuses.”

Attorneys for 1,353 people who allege that they suffered horrific abuse at the hands of local Catholic priests reached the settlement after months of negotiations with the archdiocese, the Los Angeles Times reported.

The agreement caps a quarter-century of litigation against the most populous archdiocese in the United States.

Attorneys in the Plaintiffs’ Liaison Committee said in a joint statement, “While there is no amount of money that can replace what was taken from these 1,353 brave individuals who have suffered in silence for decades, there is justice in accountability.”

Under the settlement, the plaintiffs will engage in a process – that will not involve the

archdiocese – to allocate the settlement amount among the participants.

The archdiocese has previously paid \$740 million to victims in various settlements and had pledged to better protect its church members, so this settlement would put the total payout at more than \$1.5 billion, the Times said.

—AP

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“who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty”



Revelation 1:8

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JB Bond, Senior Pastor

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The Islamic Society of Stillwater

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Wednesday Mass
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6 p.m. (en español)

Friday Mass
12:10 p.m.
Saturday Mass
9 a.m. | 5 p.m. (Vigil Mass)
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