

**In the name of Allah,
the Compassionate, the Merciful**

Jihad is only one concept among the maze of prevailing misconceptions about Islam. Under the influence of ever-intensifying outright lies about Islam, many have come to associate Jihad with violence and a threat to world peace. Rancid notions, such as Jihadism and Jihadists, are now widely used to demonize and limit the concept of Jihad to merely a synonym for war.

Jihad is absolutely not war. Instead, the Qur'an uses the term *Qital* for war in numerous places. Jihad is a very broad category which includes many aspects of Deen (religion), as mentioned in the following text, whereas *Qital* is the climax of struggle in the cause of Allah (*Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala*, SWT) after fulfilling many prerequisites.

This is the highest virtue, summum bonum (Latin for highest good), of the moral ideology/thought of Islam. The highest value of goodness in Islam is defined in these words of the Qur'an: **"(those who are)... the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflicts—these are they who are true (to themselves) and these are they who guard (against evil)."** [Al-Baqarah, 2:177]

Irrespective of the intentions of the combatants' actual motives, every Muslim war is wrongly labeled as Jihad. Even massacres by oppressive rulers to strengthen their rule have been dubbed as Jihad.

Most words in the Qur'an have a three-letter root which reflects in all derivatives of these words. The root word for Jihad is *Juhud*—to exert one's utmost. Struggle to achieve any objective is *Juhud*. However, this *Juhud* is a one-sided, uni-directional personal effort of an individual to achieve an objective.

When *Juhud* is converted into *Mujahadah* or Jihad, we see an additional meaning. The effort is not a one-sided attempt by a single party anymore. *Mujahadah* or Jihad becomes a multi-sided struggle in which every side struggles to achieve its own objective despite all odds and oppositions.

When it comes to struggle for any objective, one has to invest all his resources. The Qur'an refers to two investments, wealth (possessions) and lives (souls), when it discusses the concept of Jihad.

The main prerequisite is setting the objective for Jihad. A never ending struggle goes on among human beings in every sphere of life for self promotion, financial and material advancement, personal well being, national honor, personal or national ideologies, or supremacy of different systems and ideologies. All this comes under struggle, Jihad, the cause of one's country, nation, ideology, existence, etc. The Qur'an, however, stresses Jihad in the cause of Allah (SWT) alone (49:15).

The smallest but most potent *surah* (chapter) of the Qur'an

Jihad

*Deconstructing the myth of
Jihadism and Jihadists*

explains the most important and inter-related issues in this respect.

It says: **“I swear by the time. Most surely man is in loss. Except those who believe and do good, and enjoy on each other truth, and enjoy on each other patience.”** [Al-’Asr, 103:1-3]

It is very logical that a man behaves in this fashion in every aspect of life. First, he has to look and find out the truth, the just and right point of view. Second, he has to accept the truth when he finds it. Third, he has to strive to propagate the truth and say what he believes is just and right. Last, he has to bear all problems he may face while upholding the truth.

From an Islamic point of view, the best title for all these factors is “Jihad in the cause of Allah (SWT).” Whosoever understood the reality of the creation of the universe recognized Allah (SWT) and accepted Him, and has to strive in the cause of Allah (SWT) with all available means at his/her disposal. And Allah (SWT), of course, is not pleased with mischief on earth.

From here on, we have to see the basic steps and the ultimate destination of Jihad in the cause of Allah (SWT).

Starting Point of Jihad in the Cause of Allah (SWT): Jihad Against One’s Self

When a person’s belief in Allah (SWT), His prophets, His Books, the Day of Judgment, and the life after death is not merely a dogma or a racial creed, he is truly illuminated from within, and he is bound to go through a struggle against the impurities within and factors that harm the humanity outside.

This struggle or resistance is a natural product of the clash between his powerful animal instincts of the baser-self to which the Qur’an refers as *nafsul-ammara*, and the modern researchers, such as Sigmund Freud, refer to as Libido or Id, and his desire to be on the straight path.

These blind instincts force human beings to ignore the distinction between good and bad, right and wrong, moral and immoral. They need satisfaction at all costs. However, if one has believed in the truth, he has to respect the laws of Allah (SWT) and limits set by Him (SWT). One of the prerequisites of one’s belief in the truth is to **“obey Allah and obey His Messenger.”** [Al-Taghabun, 64:12]

Believers are warned not to put themselves **“forward before Allah and his Messenger.”** [Al-Hujurat, 49:1] **“...These are the limits of Allah, so do not go near them,”** [Al-Baqarah, 2:187] and **“Those who transgress the limits of Allah are the wrongdoers.”** [Al-Baqarah, 2:229]

It shows that the internal resistance and struggles begin the moment one realizes and accepts the ultimate truth from his heart. As long as belief in the truth is limited to one’s tongue, no internal resistance takes place.

That’s why the Qur’an says: **“O you who believe! Why do you say**

that which you do not do?” **“Grievously odious is it in the sight of Allah that you say that which you do not do.”** [Al-Saff, 61:2,3]

Internal resistance takes place when the baser-self demands one thing and the laws of Allah (SWT) demand another. That is why when Prophet Muhammad (*Sallallahu ‘Alaihee Wasallam*, SAW) was asked about the best form of Jihad, he replied *“an-tujahida nafsaka fi ta’atillah,”* which is to struggle against yourself to make your *nafs* (soul) obedient to Allah (SWT). This is the starting point of Jihad. The opposite—obeying one’s animal instincts rather than Allah (SWT)—is *Shirk* in Islam.¹

Jihad against one’s inner-self—the baser-instincts—is like a root. If this root is tightly held deep inside the human personality, the plant over it will thrive and flourish. If the root lacks depth and thoroughness, any temptation or difficulty in life can easily blow away the resistance required for overcoming baser instincts.

Second Stage of Jihad in the Cause of Allah (SWT): Propagation of the Truth

The struggle within leads to the struggle against the enemies of the truth and justice. The first step in the second stage of this struggle is propagation of and invitation to the truth. This is very logical from the perspective of human decency to spread what one considers is the benefit of humanity. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said, “None of you will have faith until he wishes for his brother what he likes for himself.” [Sahih Bukhari, Vol 1:12]

• Invitation to the Truth

This is actually the first step towards inviting all to what is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong. The main objective is *al-nahy ‘an al-munkar*, to “forbid the wrong.” The modern day concepts of freedom have made Muslims forget about this aspect of forbidding the wrong altogether.

Some Muslims consider themselves free, based on the argument that there is no compulsion in religion and that they have the right to interpret, reinterpret, and if necessary, reinvent the wheel in the light of human agency.

Despite their much-vaunted philosophy, the neo-mods of Islam have yet to come up with an answer to the clear orders from Allah (SWT) for both enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong, which appears at least eight times in the Qur’an. (3:104, 3:110, 7:157, 9:71, 9:112, 16:90, 22:41, 31:17)

To spread the truth and invite people to the straight path, one has to work in a way the Qur’an describes in the prayers of Prophet Noah (*Alaihis Salaam*, AS). He said: **“O my Lord! I have called to my People night and day. But my call only increases (their) flight (from the Right). And every time I have called to them, that You might forgive them, they have (only) thrust their fingers into their ears, covered themselves up with their**

garments, grown obstinate, and given themselves up to arrogance. So I have called to them aloud; further I have spoken to them in public and secretly in private.” [Nuh, 71:6-9]

This invitation to the truth is thus the first step towards external Jihad. We must keep in mind that war (*Qital*) came in the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) fifteen years after the invitation to the truth, in which he went through many pains along with his fellow believers.

The Qur’an refers to it in the following words: “**So for those who have left their homes, or been driven out therefrom, or suffered harm in My Cause, or fought or been slain...**” [Al Imran, 3:195] The command for *Qital* came two years after Prophet Muhammad (SAW)’s migration to Madinah and transformed his companions into the best form of human beings through Jihad against the baser-self.

• **Objectives of Invitation: Discharging Responsibility**

The basic objective of *Mujahadah* (Jihad) in the cause of Allah (SWT) is to discharge one’s responsibility to deliver the message of Allah (SWT) and invite humankind to the truth. This way, they would not be able to pretend that no one informed them of the truth or that they had no access to the truth.

According to the Qur’an, this has been the main objective of the Messengers of Allah (SWT) coming to mankind: “**And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive (with sincerity and under discipline). He has selected you and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion; it is the faith of your father Abraham. It is He Who has named you Muslims, both before and in this (Revelation); that the Messenger may be a witness over you, and you be witnesses over mankind! So establish regular prayer, give regular charity, and hold fast to Allah! He is your Protector—the Best to protect and the Best to help!**” [Al-Hajj, 22:78]

Of course, this needs commitment, devotion, and total dedication to discharge the responsibility of conveying the truth to humankind. This is the first step towards *Mujahadah* in the cause of Allah (SWT).

The Final Stage or Objective of Mujahadah (Jihad) in the Cause of Allah (SWT)

What we need to understand is that truth exists on Allah (SWT)’s Earth, but only His command should reign supreme and has the right to prevail for the ultimate peace and harmony on this planet. In Qur’anic words: “**...Verily the ‘Hukm’ (command, judgment) is for none but Allah...**” [Yusuf, 12:40] This ayah (verse) states that the privilege of rule is reserved for Allah (SWT) alone.

Hukum is a legal judgment. The *Hukum* is to pass judgment, issue a verdict, or a sentence. Allah (SWT) has ordered the Prophet

(SAW) to rule between Muslims by that which He (SAW) revealed to him and has obliged Muslims to conform themselves to all the rules of the Shari’ah.

An order of Allah (SWT) to the Prophet (SAW) is an order to the entire Ummah, unless there is evidence which limits his order. In this case, there is no such evidence, so the order to rule by all that Allah (SWT) has revealed is binding for all Muslims.

“And rule between them by that which Allah revealed to you, and do not follow their vain desires away from the truth which came to you.” [Al-Ma’idah, 5:48]

Here the order refers to all aspects of governing that have been revealed and not merely a part of it. This order to the Prophet (SAW) has been given in a decisive manner and does not leave room for doubt or alternative meanings.

If we have a look at the global order today, the situation is totally different than what was prescribed for human beings. Therefore, establishing this truth needs extra effort. If someone is preaching or propagating something that does not challenge the status quo or individual interests, no one will raise questions.

If invitation to the truth undermines vested interests, a bitter resistance is inevitable. However, true believers have to endure the subsequent pain without resorting to violent reaction or tit for tat revenge. There was resistance to Prophet Muhammad (SAW)’s efforts in Mecca as well, but the situation got worse when believers of the truth came out and declared that they were not only preachers but also establishers of the *Hukum* of Allah (SWT) in His land.

They were not there to give sermons on justice and fairness. They had to establish justice. This is what Allah (SWT) told Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to say: “**...I am commanded to judge justly between you...**” [Al-Shura, 42:15]

This is not about introduction and description of a system, but it is about establishing a just order. In this struggle, tough resistance is inevitable because those in power would never lose sight of their vested interests. At this stage, resistance will touch the climax.

• **Last Stage of Jihad in the Cause of Allah (SWT): Qital in the Cause of Allah (SWT)**

This is the stage to which the Qur’an has conveyed, “**Allah will complete (the revelation of) His light, even though the unbelievers may detest.**” [Al-Saff, 61:08]

At another place, the Qur’an repeats the same message with a negative stress: “**They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah will not allow but that His light should be perfected, even though the unbelievers may detest (it).**” [Al-Tawbah, 9:32]

Scholars unanimously agree that completing and perfecting His light means completing the Deen of Allah (SWT), which is also the main objective of the advent of the last Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

“It is He Who has sent His Messenger with Guidance and the Religion of Truth, that He may make it prevail over all the religions: and enough is Allah for a Witness.” [Al-Fath, 48:28]

The problem is that all steps from accepting the truth from the core of one’s heart to the propagation and establishment of the truth and just order have been ignored. On the one hand, Jihad has been declared as synonymous with war, and on the other, every Muslim war and struggle has been declared as Jihad. There are many conditions for the legality of Jihad. Among them, for example, are the following: **a)** the other side intends to attack Muslims, **b)** it creates a barrier against the call of Islam, **c)** in the case of a people subject to the oppression and tyranny of a group from among themselves, Islam says that we must fight those tyrants so as to deliver the oppressed from the claws of tyranny. This has been expressed in the Qur’an thus: **“Why is it that you do not fight in the way of God and the way of the deprived (mustad’afin)?” [Al-Nisa’, 4:75], d)** the struggle should not be for worldly objectives.

Notes

¹ The omission of any of the categories of *Tawheed* (Oneness) or deficiency in the fulfillment of any criteria of *Tawheed* is referred to as ‘*shirk*’ and the person is called a *Mushrik* (plural is *Mushrikeen*). ‘*Shirk*’ literally means sharing or associating partners. In Islamic terms, it means associating partners with Allah (SWT) and is equivalent to idolatry.

About IONA

The Islamic Organization of North America, IONA, is an organization dedicated to reviving the Qur’an in the hearts of Muslims, while bringing its message to non-Muslims.

The obligations of a Muslim as ordained by the Qur’an and Sunnah, can be understood as having four levels:

1. A Muslim is required to develop real faith and conviction in one’s heart – Iman
2. A Muslim is required to live a life of complete submission to the will of Allah (SWT) – Ibadah
3. A Muslim is required to propagate and disseminate the message of Islam to humanity as a whole – Shahada ‘alan-Nas
4. A Muslim is required to try his utmost in establishing the Just Islamic Order – Iqamat-ud-Deen

The first and foremost objective of establishing IONA is to assist the Muslims in North America to uphold and implement these obligations first on themselves, their families, to inform their friends and then to invite the non-Muslims to Islam. The ultimate goal is to seek Allah (SWT)’s pleasure and salvation in the Hereafter.

The Islamic Organization of North America invites you to study its literature to become aware of the responsibility towards the struggle for Iqamat-ud-Deen, or the establishment of the Just Social Order of Islam.



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