

# Islam the religion of love and peace

By

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## Introduction

Today, many non-Muslims regard Islam as a religion that promotes violence, terrorism and war. In that they rely on biased media influenced by their owners who have agendas against Islam. The enemies of Islam are pointing to all the violence that is going on in different parts of the Muslim world, violence in which Muslims are involved in one way or another, and saying that it is all Islam's fault.

The foundation of true and lasting peace on earth and in any society is justice, love, compassion, integrity, truth, reasonableness and sound morality.

Where this foundation is absent or weak, and where people's most basic needs and legitimate rights and aspirations are not met, and are persistently and blatantly denied, chances of stable and lasting peace are minimized or jeopardized.

All too often, then, those who have been systematically denied their basic and legitimate rights, and who are not allowed by nations, societies and governments any rightful recourse to the redress of their lawful grievances, begin to resort to force and violence as an instrument of resistance to their domination, subjugation and exploitation by others and for the amelioration of their situation.

For example, extreme poverty, deprivation, hopelessness, oppression, marginalization, cruelty and systematic discrimination and abuse may potentially move people toward violence. So also may serious perceptions of injustice, usurpation of property, abuse of power, violation of basic rights and deeply held values such as honor, personal dignity and the life, honor and dignity of family members.

Colonization, mass enslavement, social and political tyranny, occupation of lands, exploitation and stealing of resources will all make nations and societies rise up in revolt.

This has been the history of the world. And everyone knows that. Accordingly, violence in the Muslim world has nothing to do with the religion of Islam (1).

Muslims had been thoroughly intimidated and demoralized by the relentless and ruthless propaganda that brands Islam and Muslims as inherently violent and irrational.

What should Muslims say then, when they are hounded by people who want to brand them as violent and irrational and blood thirsty? People who have filled the air and Allah's world with so much vicious falsehood and propaganda against Islam and Muslims that a rational and sane person cannot even take a normal breath anymore?

Muslims should simply tell the truth. For Islam is all about truth. Muslims should simply say that Islam is about peace, which is what Islam is all about.

Islam is a religion of peace in the fullest sense of the word. The Koran calls it: "the ways of peace":

People of the Book, now there has come to you Our Messenger, making clear to you many things you have been concealing of the Book, and effacing many things. There has come to you from Allah a light, and a Book manifest whereby Allah guides whosoever follows His good pleasure in the ways of peace, and brings them forth from the shadows into the light by His leave; and He guides them to a straight path (Al-Maidah, 16).

The Koran describes reconciliation as the best policy between people:

If a woman fear rebelliousness or aversion in her husband, there is no fault in them if the couple set things right between them; right settlement is better; and souls are very prone to avarice. If you do

good and are god-fearing, surely Allah is aware of the things you so (Al-Nisa', 128).

The Koran states that Allah abhors any disturbance of peace:

O believers, enter the peace all of you, and follow not the steps of Satan, he is a manifest foe to you...(Al-Baqarah, 208).

The root word of Islam is 'Silm', which means peace. So the spirit of Islam is the spirit of peace. The first verse of the Quran breathes the spirit of peace; it reads: "In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate."

This verse is repeated in the Quran no less than 114 times. It shows the great importance Islam attaches to such values as Mercy and Compassion. One of Allah's names, according to the Koran, is As-Salaam, which means Peace. Moreover, the Koran states that the Prophet Muhammad was sent to the world as a mercy to mankind.

We have not sent thee, save as a mercy unto all beings (Al-Anbiya', 107).

A perusal of the Koran shows that most of its verses and also the Hadeeth (sayings of the Prophet) are based on peace and kindness, either directly or indirectly. The ideal society, according to the Quran is Dar As-Salaam, that is, the house of peace.

And Allah summons to the Abode of Peace, and He guides whomsoever He will to a straight path (Yunus, 25).

The Koran presents the universe as a model characterised by harmony and peace . When Allah created heaven and earth, He so ordered things that each part might perform its function peacefully without clashing with any other. The Koran tells us that it is not allowable for the sun to reach the moon, nor does the night overtake the day, but each, in an orbit, is swimming. For billions of years, therefore, the entire universe has been fulfilling its function in total harmony according to Allah's divine plan.

It behooves not the sun to overtake the moon, neither does the night outstrip the day, each swimming in a sky (Yasin, 40).

According to Islam, peace is not simply an absence of war. Peace opens doors to all kinds of opportunities which are present in any given situation. It is only in a peaceful situation that planned activities are possible.

According to Islam, peace is the rule and war is only an exception. Even in defensive war we have to analyse its result; if the result is doubtful, Muslims should avoid war. Stray acts of aggression are not enough for Muslims to rush into war. They have to assess the whole situation and adopt a policy of avoidance when war is not certain to achieve a positive result (2).

It is no exaggeration to say that Islam and violence are contradictory to each other. Islam claims to be an eternal religion and such a religion cannot afford a principle in its scheme which will not be sustainable in later periods of human history.

No wonder then that the Prophet so earnestly used to entreat his Lord in his daily prayer:

"O Allah, you are the original source of Peace; from You is all Peace, and to You returns all Peace. So, make us live with Peace; and let us enter paradise: the House of Peace. Blessed be You, our Lord, to whom belongs all Majesty and Honor!"

### **The Islamic society is based on peace**

Islam in fact is a religion of peace and strongly prohibits all forms of violence and aggression against all people regardless of their faith or race.

Islam is against all forms of injustice, inequity, cruelty, oppression, exploitation, domination, tyranny and abuse.

Islam brings social and political peace because submission to Allah requires that a society totally rejects corruption, wrongdoing, deviant and harmful behaviors. Commitment to peace with Allah and His creation leads to a community

enjoying unity, love, harmony, dialogue, and respect for others.

An ideal society is what human beings have been dreaming of since even before Plato's 'Republic' or Augustine's 'Eternal City of God'. With Muhammad the ideal society was formed of his faithful companions who totally submitted to the Message of Islam in obedience to their Creator Allah and His Messenger (3).

The Koran commands the believers to enter into friendly relations with one another and promote all Allah's requirement of peace and good order, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan because he is their avowed enemy.

O believers, enter the peace, all of you, and follow not the steps of Satan; he is a manifest foe to you (Al-Baqarah, 208).

Allah summons to the abode of peace. In contrast with this material life and its uncertain pleasures, there is a higher life to which Allah is always calling. It is called the "Abode of Peace". There is no fear, nor sorrow there. The invited are those who have sought no material advantages, but the good pleasure of Allah.

And Allah summons to the Abode of Peace, and He guides whomsoever He will to a straight path (Yunus,25).

The enforcement of the Muslim brotherhood is the greatest social ideal of Islam. On it was based the Prophet's sermon at his last pilgrimage, and Islam cannot be completely realized until this ideal is achieved.

The believers indeed are brothers; so set things right between your two brothers, and fear Allah; haply so you will find mercy (Al-Hujurat, 10).

Allah commands Muslims to obey Him and His Messenger and not to contend with each other with opposing arguments lest they lose heart and their power depart. Muslims must be

patient and persevering for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.

And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not quarrel together, and so lose heart, and your power depart; and be patient; surely Allah is with the patient (Al-Anfal, 46).

## **The salutation of Muslims is peace**

The Islamic society was initially based on peace and brotherhood between all Muslims. Peace was declared verbally in every daily encounter of two individuals or more. The Islamic salutation (As-Salaamu Alaikum) means "Peace be upon you".

Allah says in the Qur'an:

Greet one another with a greeting from Allah, blessed and good (Alnur, 61).

He also says:

"And when you are greeted with a greeting greet with a fairer than it, or return it; surely Allah keeps a watchful count over everything (Al-Nisa', 86).

The Prophet was once asked:

"Which is the best Islam?" He replied: "You feed the hungry and you say Salaam (peace) to those you know and those you don't know." (related by al-Bukhari and Muslim).

The Prophet also said:

"You won't enter Paradise unless you believe, and you won't believe unless you love each other. Do you want me to show you something that if you do it you will love each other? Say Salaam to each other- Send messages of peace to each other-" (Related by Muslim).

Even Prophet Abraham who was a pure monotheist (a Muslim) his salutation was "Salaam" meaning peace.

Allah says about Abraham:

"Our Messengers came to Abraham with the good tidings; they said, 'Peace' and he said 'Peace'" (Hood, 69).

Thus, expressing peace verbally is very important in Islam because it unifies people and makes them feel totally secure among themselves. This enactment of salutation in Islam on a daily basis and in every encounter of two people or more is indeed a renewal of commitment to peacefulness and a reminder of one another of the rights and duties implied by the statement: "As-Salaamu alaikum!" meaning "Peace be upon you!"

That is why peace is translated into physical actions, which cannot be achieved unless there is sincere submission and commitment. Islamic faith is the combination of belief and conviction in the heart, verbal declaration with the tongue, and action. A true Muslim, or submitter, is the one who promotes peace rather than enmity, violence, disrespect and hatred. The Prophet Muhammad said:

"The Muslim is the one who avoids harming others with his hand and his tongue" (al-Bukhari and Muslim).

In another narration the Prophet added:

"...and the believer is the one that people are safe from him in regards of their lives and properties" (at-Tirmidhi, an-Nassa'i, and Ahmad).

This means that any verbal or physical action, which results in harm, offense, and violence, is contradictory to true submission, unless it is a matter of a necessary self-defense against outside aggression.

## **The Muslim society is based on peace**

Peace in Muslim society is based on two important issues: (1) Tawheed, which means believing in Allah, the only God of the universe, and worshipping Him alone without associating with Him any partners; and (2) working good deeds. The first issue must always come first, and the

second comes next. Good deeds are insignificant in the Day of Resurrection if Allah's servants hadn't believed in Allah's oneness (Tawheed) and worshipped Him alone.

## **1- Tawheed**

This is what we call "Islamic monotheism, or believing in Allah's oneness". Tawheed is the most important Islamic belief upon which the Muslim society is built. It implies that everything in existence originates from the one and only Creator, who is also the Sustainer and the sole Source of Guidance. This belief should govern all aspects of human life. Recognition of this fundamental truth results in a unified view of existence which rejects any divisions of life into religious and secular. Allah is the sole source of Power and Authority, therefore He is entitled to worship and obedience from mankind. There is no scope for any partnership with the Creator. Tawheed tells man that Allah is not born, nor is anyone born of Him. He has no son or daughter. Human beings are His subjects. In other words, Tawheed is to single out Allah alone for worship.

## **2- working good deeds**

Working good deeds is the second principle on which the Muslim society is based.

Allah says in the Koran:

And perform the prayer at the two ends of the day and in some hours of the night; surely the good deeds will drive away the evil deeds. That is a remembrance unto the mindful (Hud, 114).

In this verse, Allah orders His believing servants to perform the five daily prayers which are the greatest pillar of Islam, and a proof that the servant believes in Tawheed – Islamic monotheism.

Allah also emphasized in this verse that doing good deeds wipes out the bad deeds.

At the end of this verse, Allah emphasized that his commandments are a reminder for His servants who remember Him and believe in Him.

The Messenger of Allah said:

"...And follow the bad deed with a good one that will wipe out the bad one..." In another narration the Prophet said, "If you do a bad deed, then follow it with a good one that will wipe it out."

The Prophet also said:

"Allah accepts a slave's repentance till his death rattle begins (that is before the soul of the dying person reaches the throat)."

But what are the good deeds Allah commanded Muslims to do in order to achieve a peaceful society? In other words what are the characters the believers must adorn their lives with in order to create a happy peaceful society?

As commanded by Allah, the believers must sow the seeds of love, justice and peace in their society. They must walk on earth softly, gently, and in humility, and when addressed by the insolent they say, 'Peace', as much as to say, 'May it be well with you, may you repent and be better'; or 'May Allah give me peace from such wrangling'; or 'Peace, and Good-bye; let me leave you!'

Humble prayer brings them nearer to Allah. They spend a good part of the night prostrating in adoration of Allah, their Creator. They express their thoughts in their prayers: 'Save us and protect us O Allah, our Creator from the torment of the Fire for its torment moves to horror.'

They are neither extravagant nor niggardly, but hold a just balance between those extremes. They do not invoke besides Allah another god nor do they deprive anyone of life Allah has made sacred unless it be justified for a proved

crime, nor do they commit adultery. They do not give false evidence nor listen to it, and if they pass by futility, they withdraw nicely with self-sustained dignity.

These are the ones who will be rewarded with the highest place in heaven because of their patient constancy; therein shall be met with salutations and peace, dwelling therein – how beautiful an abode and place of rest.

As we read in the Koran:

The servants of the All-Merciful are those who walk in the earth modestly and who, when the ignorant address them, sa, 'Peace'; who pass the night prostrate to their Lord and standing; who say, 'Our Lord, turn Thou from us the chastisement of Gehenna; surely its chastisement is torment most terrible; evil it is as a lodging place and an abode; who, when they expend, are neither prodigal nor parsimonious, but between that is a just stand; who call not upon another god with Allah, nor slay the soul Allah has forbidden except by right, neither fornicate...and those who bear not false witness, and when they pass by idle talk, pass with dignity; who when they are reminded of the signs of their Lord, fall not deaf and blind thereat; who say, 'Our Lord, grant unto us wives and offspring who will be the comfort of our eyes, and make us a model to the god-fearing. Those shall be recompensed with the highest heaven, for that they endured patiently, and they shall receive therein a greeting and – peace' Therein they shall dwell forever; fair it is as a lodging place and an abode (Al-Furqan 63-68, 72-76).

Backbiting, gossip and idle talk remain the main causes of the destruction of personal relationships. It destroys friendships and families, and fuels mistrust among community members. Allah described the true believers as the ones "who avoid vain talk" ( Al-Muminun,3). Avoiding

idle talk and vain deeds is a significant feature of the true believers.

The righteous do not encourage idle talk or foolish arguments about things sacred. If they find themselves in some company in which such things are fashionable, they leave politely. Their only rejoinder is: 'We are responsible for our deeds, and you for yours; we have no ill-will against you; we wish you well and that is why we wish you to know of the knowledge we have received; after that knowledge you cannot expect us to go back to the ignorance which we have left.

It is among the strategies of Satan to hinder man from remembering Allah, from seeing the countless signs and miracles of Allah surrounding him, and from reflecting upon the purpose of life by indulging man in idle talk.

For example, the subjects that keep common people busy are sports, recipes, the problems of child raising, and so forth.

Exchange rates, the stock exchange and other subjects related to commerce and economy occupy the minds of people involved in business.

Another sector of society who call themselves intellectuals and who want to show themselves as highly cultured indulge in prolonged dialogues, thinking that they have solved great difficulties, but which generally bring no benefit to society.

One frequently sees examples of this in open forums held on television. Participants discuss a particular issue for hours, only to be recognized for their knowledge and to impress others.

There are people who take such forums as an opportunity to attack religion and reveal their aversion to truth.

Allah describes these attitudes in the Koran:

But there are some people who trade in distracting tales to misguide people from Allah's Way knowing nothing about it and to make a mockery of it. Such people will have a humiliating punishment (Luqman, 6).

While indulging in worthless talk is a characteristic of the unbelievers, avoidance of it is a quality of the believers:

When they hear idle talk they turn away from it and say, 'We have our deeds and you have your deeds. Peace be upon you. We desire not the company of the ignorant.' (Al-Qasas, 55).

A believer must always avoid ignorance, bad manners and blameworthy speech. The absence in Paradise of any offensive speech is described among its blessings:

Gardens of Eden that the All-Merciful promised His servants in the Unseen. His promise is always kept. There they shall hear no idle talk, but only 'Peace.' There they shall have their provision at dawn and evening (Maryam, 61-62).

Abu Hurayra related that Allah's Messenger said: "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should say that which is good or remain silent. And whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should show good behavior to his neighbor. And whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should show hospitality to his guest."(Bukhari, Muslim).

Faith calls upon Muslims to bring out the best in themselves and in others. Treating other people with integrity and respect is a sign of a believer. It is not permissible for a

Muslim to spread rumors, gossip, or engage in backbiting one another.

The Koran teaches that the believers must validate their sources, and not engage in conjecture. Repeatedly in the Koran, Muslims are warned about the sins of the tongue:

“And pursue not that thou hast not knowledge of; the hearing, the sight, the heart – all of those shall be questioned of (Al-Isra’, 36).

“Why when you heard it (a rumor), did the believing men and women not of their own account think good thoughts, and say, “This is a manifest calumny”? ... When you received it on your tongues, and were speaking with your mouths that whereof you had no knowledge, and reckoned it a light thing, and with Allah it was a mighty thing (Al-Nur 12-15).

Also we read in the Koran:

O believer, if an ungodly man comes to you with a tiding, make clear, lest you afflict a people unwittingly, and then repent of what you have done (Al-Hujurat, 6).

O believers, let not any people scoff at another people who may be better than they; neither let women scoff at women who may be better than themselves. And find not fault with one another, neither revile one another by nicknames. An evil name is ungodliness after belief. And whoso repents not, those -- they are the evildoers (Al-Hujurat, 11).

O believers, eschew much suspicion; some suspicion is a sin. And do not spy, neither backbite one another; would any of you like to eat the flesh of his brother dead? You would abominate it. And fear you Allah; assuredly Allah turns, and He is All-compassionate (Al-Hujurat, 12).

Oh you who believe! Avoid suspicion as much (as possible), for suspicion in some cases is a sin. And spy not on each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? No, you would abhor it...But fear Allah. For Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful" (Quran 49: 11-12).

Allah wants the believers to keep a civil tongue in their heads, for Satan is on the alert for an occasion to divide mankind and set them at variance and to stir up enmity among them.

And say to my servants, that they say words that are kinder. For surely Satan provokes strife between them, and Satan is ever a manifest foe to man (Al-Isra', 53).

In other words, faith coupled with humility in prayer, charity, abstinence from vanity and from indulgence in appetites, and strict probity, must lead to peace and love in the community, and to final success – Paradise.

Evil must be repelled by goodness and faith in Allah; for the future life is sure, and those who disbelieve will wish for another chance when it is too late.

Prophet Muhammad once asked his followers:

"Do you know what backbiting is?" They said, "Allah and His Messenger know best." He continued, "Saying something about your brother that he dislikes." Someone then asked, "What if what I say about my brother is true?" The Prophet Muhammad responded: "If what you say is true then you

have backbitten about him, and if it is not true, then you have slandered him."

Once a person asked Prophet Muhammad to teach him the good work which would admit him into Paradise and distance him from the Hell-fire. The Prophet Muhammad began to share with him a list of many good deeds. Then he said: "Shall I inform you of the foundation of all of that?" He took hold of his own tongue and said, "Restrain yourself from this." Surprised, the questioner exclaimed, "Oh, Prophet of Allah! Are we held to task for the things that we say?" The Prophet Muhammad replied: "Does anything topple people headlong into Hellfire, more than the harvests of their tongues?"

Sa'd bin 'Ubaadah once became ill, so Allah's Messenger visited him in his house. On seeing his faithful Companion in a pitiful state, he was moved to tears. Then, he said: "Allaah does not punish because of tears, or because of grief, but he punishes because of this."- and he pointed to his tongue. (Al-Bukhaari).

The parents who cherished us in childhood deserve our humble reverence and service. Next come the rights of kinsmen, those in want and wayfaring strangers, to each according to his need, not in spendthrift show. And gentleness is needed to those whom we cannot help. Allah will provide them from His bounty.

If the believer has to turn away from people for any reason, there is no need to speak harshly to them, his words should be those of easy kindness.

The believer must not bind his hand to his neck, as it were unwilling to give or spend anything, nor should he spread it in the "spread-eagle style" lest he becomes blameworthy destitute.

Muslims must not kill their children for fear of want. Killing them before Islam was a flagrant violation of Allah's system of faith and worship and a major sin. It is Allah who gives livelihood generously to whom He will and He also gives in restraint and by measure to whom He will.

As mentioned before, the believer must not commit adultery. It is a forbidden sexual union which had been regarded by Allah as an immoral act and a major sin. Nor should he deprive anyone of life which Allah has made sacred unless it be justified by a proved crime. And if someone has been killed wrongfully, then his next of kin is authorized by Allah to use the means of procuring redress of grievances through avenging his right or forgiveness then, and court of law now. But should he choose to avenge his right, he must not carry to excess, for the law is on his side.

Nor should the believer encroach upon the property of the orphan unless to improve it, until he reaches maturity and be able to take charge of it.

The believer must fulfill the solemn promise if he should make one and keeps the vow and meets his engagements and obligations. A vow is a great responsibility in Islam and those who break it shall have much to answer for in the Day of Judgment.

The believer must be honest in his dealings and gives full measure when he measures, and weighs a balance that is straight.

As mentioned above, the believer must not pursue a subject of which he has no knowledge nor charge anyone with a fault or a crime when he is not sure of his guilt, nor pursue vain things which will avail him nothing. Nor walk in the earth with insolence, for all the bad aspects of these are hateful to Allah.

In this connection the Koran says:

Set not up with Allah another god (Jesus, idol, pope, priest, tree, animal, etc.), or thou wilt sit condemned and forsaken. Thy Lord has decreed you shall not serve any but Him, and to be good to parents, whether one or both of them attains old age with thee; say not to them "Fie" neither chide them, but speak unto them words respectful, and lower to them the wing of humbleness out of mercy and say, 'My Lord, have mercy upon them, as they raised me up when I was little.'

And give the kinsman his right, and the needy, and the traveler; and never squander; the squanderers are brothers of Satan, and Satan is unthankful to his Lord.

But if thou turnest from them, seeking mercy from thy Lord that thou hopest for, then speak unto them gentle words. And keep not thy hand chained to thy neck, nor outspread it widespread altogether, or thou wilt sit reproached and denuded.

And slay not your children for fear of poverty; We will provide for you and them; surely the slaying of them is a grievous sin.

And approach not fornication; surely it is an indecency, and evil as a way.

And slay not the soul Allah has forbidden, except by right. Whosoever is slain unjustly, We have appointed to his next-of-kin authority; but let him not exceed in slaying; he shall be helped.

And do not approach the property of the orphan save in the fairest manner, until he is of age. And fulfill the covenant, surely the covenant shall be questioned of.

And fill up the measure when you measure, and weigh with the straight balance; that is better and fairer in the issue. And pursue not that thou hast no knowledge of; the hearing, the sight, the heart – all of those shall be questioned of. And walk not in the earth exultantly; certainly thou wilt never tear the earth open, nor attain the mountains in height.

All of that – the wickedness of it is hateful in the sight of thy Lord. (Al-Isra' 22-29, 31-38).

We also read in the Koran:

And give the kinsman his rights and the needy, and the traveler; that is better for those who desire Allah's Face; those – they are the prosperous (Al-Rûm, 38).

The commendable attributes of the believers if spread and diffused in the Muslim community would certainly make it lovable and peaceful. These commendable attributes have also been mentioned in several other Koranic verses:

Prosperous are the believers who in their prayers are humble and from idle talk turn away and at almsgiving are active, and guard their private parts save from their wives

and what their right hands own then being not blameworthy. But whosoever seeks after more than that, those are the transgressors. And who preserve their trusts and their covenant and who observe their prayers. Those are the inheritors who shall inherit Paradise therein dwelling forever (Al-Mu'Minun 1-11).

Likewise:

Surely man was created fretful, when evil visits him, impatient, when good visits him, grudging, save those that pray and continue at their prayers, those in whose wealth is a right known for the beggar and the outcast, who confirm the Day of Doom and go in fear of the chastisement of their Lord, from their Lord's chastisement none feel secure, and guard their private parts save from their wives and what their right hands own, then being not blameworthy, but whoso seeks after more than that, they are the transgressors, and who preserve their trusts and their covenant, and those who stand firm in their testimonies, and who observe their prayers. Those shall be in Gardens, high-honored (Al-MA'arej 19-35).

Allah has promised the believers in His oneness (Islamic monotheism) and who work righteous deeds that they will inherit power and authority on the land, nor for any selfish purposes of theirs by way of favoritism, but in order that they maintain Allah's Law; that the religion of Right which Allah has chosen for them. Will be openly established, and will suppress all wrong and oppression; that the righteous will live in security in a community based on love and peace.

Allah has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds that he will surely make you successors in the land, even as He made those who were before them successors, and that He will surely establish their religion for them that He has approved for them, and will give them in exchange, after their fear, security: 'They shall serve Me, not associating with Me anything.' Whoso disbelieves after that, those – they are the ungodly (Al-Nur, 55).

## **Justice**

Muslims must foil hatred with love. They must repel ignorance with knowledge, folly and wickedness with the friendly Message of revelation. The man who was in the bondage of sin, you not only liberate from sin, but make him your greatest friend and helper in the cause of Allah.

Not equal are the good deed and the evil deed. Repel with that which is fairer and behold, he between whom and thee there is enmity shall be as if he were a loyal friend (Fussilat, 34).

Just is Allah's attribute and to stand firm for justice is to be a witness to Allah, even if it is detrimental to our own interests or the interests of those who are near and dear to us. According to the Latin saying, 'Let justice be done though heaven should fall,' the Islamic justice is something higher than the former justice of Roman law or any other human law. It is more penetrative than the subtler justice in the speculations of the Greek philosophers. It searched out the innermost motives, because we are to act as in the presence of Allah, to whom all things acts and motives are known.

Some people may be inclined to favor the rich, because they expect something from them. Some people may be inclined to favor the poor because they are generally helpless.

Partiality in either case is wrong. The Koran teaches that Muslims must stand up for justice, even if it is against themselves or their families, and even if it is against those who are rich or powerful, because justice applies to everyone. The Muslim must be just without fear or favor. Both the rich and the poor are under Allah's protection as far as their legitimate interests are concerned, but they cannot be expected to be favored at the expense of others. Allah can protect their interests far better than any man.

Reference: The Meaning of the Holy Koran. Text, Translation and Commentary. Islamic Book Trust. Kuala Lumpur.

O believers, be you securers of justice, witnesses for Allah, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents and kinsmen, whether the man be rich or poor; Allah stands closest to either. Then follow not caprice, so as to swerve; for if you twist or turn, Allah is aware of the things you do (Al-Nisa', 135).

Allah commands Muslims to enjoin justice and deeds of wisdom and piety, and benevolence to kith and kin, and forbids all that is wrongful and obscene.

Surely Allah bids to justice and good-doing and giving to kinsmen; and He forbids indecency, dishonor, and insolence, admonishing you, so that haply you will remember (Al-Nahl, 90).

Allah reminds Muslims that if they are punished, that they may only respond with the same punishment and not to go over this limit. They must retrain themselves and be patient. The advantage is with the patient, the self-possessed, those who do not lose their temper or forget their own principles of conduct.

The Koran says:

And if you chastise, chastise even as you have been chastised; and yet assuredly if you are patient, better it is for those patient ye do punish them, punish them no worse than they punished you: but if ye show patience, that is indeed the best (course) for those who are patient. (Al-Nahl, 126).

The Prophet always taught his disciples that peace and justice are the principles every Muslim should live by. He stressed that principles should at all times take precedence over the personal interests whether dealing with Muslims or non-Muslims. During his life - before and after Islam was established - he constantly praised the "Confederacy of the Fudul." It was the decision of the leaders of the tribe of Quraysh in Makkah during the Pre-Islamic times to assemble in one house and to make a covenant binding themselves by a solemn agreement that if they found anyone, whether a Makkan or an outsider had been wronged, they would take his side against the aggressor and make sure that the stolen property was restored to him, or her.

Prophet Muhammad said:

"I witnessed in the house of Abdullah ibn Jud'aan a covenant, which I would not exchange for any number of fine camels. If I were invited to take part in it during Islam I should do so."

In conclusion, Islam pursues peace with everyone including past enemies, except when they fight the Muslims and refuse peace, then Muslims are allowed to fight in self-defense. Islam ensures that Muslims must always apply justice and never transgress against others even if they are their enemies. Muslims must repel evil actions with good actions, in order to replace hatred with an intimate friendship. They must respond to punishment with the same punishment, but that forgiveness and patience is even better than retaliation.

## **Sanctity of life**

One of the distinctive features of the present world is the overwhelming presence of violence in our societies. The nature of indiscriminate and senseless violence is considered one of the prime threats to the world peace and security. I must make it clear that Islam upholds sanctity of human life, as the Koran declares that killing one innocent human being is like killing the entire human race:

Therefore we prescribed for the Children of Israel that whoso slays a soul not to retaliate for a soul slain, nor for corruption done in the land, shall be as if he had slain mankind altogether; and whoso gives life to a soul, shall be as if he had given life to mankind altogether (Al-Maidah, 32).

We can also read in the Koran:

Say: 'Come, I will recite what your Lord has forbidden you:...and that you slay not the soul Allah has forbidden, except by right...(Al-An'am, 151).

...And slay not the soul Allah has forbidden, except by right...(Al-Isra', 33).

Islam considers all life forms as sacred. The first and foremost basic right of a human being given by Allah is the right to live in peace and security. However, taking a criminal's life by the state in order to administer justice is allowed in Islam as it upholds the rule of law, and helps maintains peace and security of the society. Only a proper and competent court can decide whether an individual has forfeited his right to life by disregarding the right to life and peace of other human beings. The accused must be given

full facilities under the law 'the right of defence'. Extra judicial killings are strictly prohibited in Islam.

### **Suicide killing**

So what about suicide bombing is this approved in Islam? Suicide bombing and killing one's own self is undoubtedly forbidden in Islam, as it is an abuse of the divine gift of life:

O believers, consume not your goods between you in vanity, except there be trading, by your agreeing together. And do not kill yourselves. Surely Allah is compassionate to you. But whosoever does that in transgression and wrongfully, him We shall certainly roast at a Fire; and that for Allah is an easy matter (Al-Nisa' 29, 30).

According to Islamic Law those who commit or try to commit suicide are committing a major sin and will be sent to the fire of hell. Even patients who are in severe pain are prohibited to wish death. The Holy Prophet said: "Do not harm yourself or injure others"; "Do not wish death even on the death bed" (Bukhari & Muslim).

The Koran says clearly:

...and cast not yourselves by your own hands into destruction... (Al-Baqarah, 195).

Suicide is a state of disbelief and loss of faith that is condemned by Allah in the Koran. Allah commands the believers never to despair or lose hope and instead work for a brighter future.

Certainly no one despairs of Allah's mercy, except the people who disbelieve (Yusuf, 87).

The Koran does not call on young volunteers to strap explosives to their bodies and set them off in crowded public areas. The Koran does not promise Paradise as these suicide bombers were taught, but rather warn of condemnation to Hell. No promises of paradise or of virgin wives for those suicide bombers can be found in the Qur'an.

The Prophet said: " Those who go to extremes are destroyed".

Unfortunately, today (some misguided) Muslims believe that such acts are paving the way for an Islamic revival and a return to the rule of Islam's glorious law. However, they fail to bear in mind that the Prophet said: " Do not be delighted by the action of anyone, until you see how he ends up". Misguided Muslims kill themselves through this insane act. Suicide is clearly forbidden in Islam.

The Messenger of Allah said: "He who kills himself, Allah will torment him with that in the fire of Hell". "Once when a man killed himself", the Prophet said: "He is a dweller of the Fire". The taking of one's life, which Allah has given as a trust, 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". Thus, all other types of extremities such as hostage taking, hijacking and planting bombs in public places, are clearly forbidden in Islam.

### **Living peacefully with all nations and peoples.**

The Koran informs us that we were created and made into various nations and tribes so that we may get to know each other, and not so that we may despise and hate each other. Then we are reminded of the fact that the best of us in Allah's sight are those who are most righteous and not those who are richer or more influential.

O mankind, We have created you male and a female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may know each other. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the most god-fearing of you. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware (Al-Hujurat, 13).

This wonderful principle of Islam makes it clear that there are no single people, race, or nation that is better than others. Allah created us all equal. In Allah's sight, the best of us are the most righteous and most kind.

Allah could have created mankind as one nation, with one language and one religion. However He created mankind in different nations and tribes so that we get to know each other. This tells us that we should celebrate our differences and not hate each other based on them. Islam also emphasizes that no single race or people have supremacy over others, and that we are judged solely based on our actions.

The above verse also teaches us that we should live peacefully with other nations and tribes and we should respect each other and our differences. We should learn to live together and to get to know each other, and to engage in dialogue amongst all nations and treat every human being as being equal.

### **There is no Compulsion in Religion**

Allah says in the Koran:

No compulsion is there in religion. Rectitude has become clear from error. So whosoever disbelieves in idols and believes in Allah, has laid of the most firm handle, unbreaking; Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing (Al-Baqarah, 256).

The Koran reminds us that there must not be compulsion in religion, for the truth stands out clear from error, and that

those who reject error and believe in Allah are the saved ones.

This shows clearly that Muslims are not allowed to force people to convert to Islam. Muslims should only seek to make the truth clear to others, and talk to them about Islam, then let them decide for themselves. In fact, most people who study Islam without having made a decision to hate it first come to love its Message and convert to Islam after learning about its values and principles.

Another verse that also states this principle:

"If any of the idolaters seeks of thee protection, grant him protection till he hears the words of Allah; then do thou convey him to his place of security – that, because they are a people who do not know (Al-Tawbah, 6).

The verse instructs Muslims to grant asylum to non-believers, and make them safe, and allow them to hear the Word of Allah. Then they are to be escorted to whatever place they will be safe and secure in.

Even among the enemies of Islam, actively fighting against Islam, there may be individuals who may be in a position to require protection. Full asylum is to be given to them, and opportunities provided for hearing the Word of Allah. If they accept the Word, they become Muslims and brethren, and no future question arises. If they do not see their way to accept Islam they will require double protection: (1) from the Islamic forces openly fighting against their people, and (2) from their own people, as they detached themselves from them. Both kinds of protection should be ensured for them, and they should be safely escorted to a place where they can be safe. Such persons only err through ignorance, and there may be much good in them.

Prophet Muhammad was instructed to use a friendly and polite approach to call people to Islam.

Allah says in the Koran:

Call thou to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and good admonition, and dispute with them in the better way (Al-Nahl, 125).

Despite the violent opposition of the Quraysh, the Prophet proceeded to summon people peacefully to Islam, and the Muslims were further commanded, for prudential reasons, not to respond to the violence of the Quraysh. Muslim pacifism during the Makkan period was a political tool to influence change and to protect Muslims from mass destruction. After the immigration to Madinah, the Muslims were permitted to fight against those who declared war against them.

The Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was the peacemaker of his time. He endured torture, hunger and the killing of his loved ones by his enemies, but he remained a merciful person. In his bloodless conquest of Makkah he forgave his enemies. In his 23 years of struggle for Islam, the total number of people who lost their lives from all sides was less than 700 in wars that were imposed upon him. Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance. Throughout the thirteen years of his mission in Makkah, the Prophet disallowed the use of force by his followers even though non-believers persecuted them.

In conclusion, the lovable and peaceful community is that which its inhabitants believe in Allah and worship Him alone and work deeds of righteousness, those shall be recipients of Allah's mercy, the Merciful shall overshadow them with His gracious wing and impart to them His loving care in the present life and Hereafter.

Surely those who believe and do deeds of righteousness – unto them the All-Merciful shall assign love (Maryam, 96).

## **To whom Allah's love is granted?**

The Koran says:

Surely those who believe and do deeds of righteousness – unto them the all-Merciful shall assign love (Maryam, 96).

The Prophet said, "If Allah loves a person, He calls Gabriel saying, 'Allah loves so and so; O Gabriel love him.' Gabriel would love him, and then Gabriel would make an announcement among the residents of the heaven, 'Allah loves so and so, therefore you should love him also.' So all the residents of the heaven would love him and then he is granted the pleasure of the people of the earth." (Sahih Al-Bukhari, vol. 8, Hadith no. 66).

Allah is Oft-Forgiving, full of love towards the pious who are real true believers in Islamic monotheism and do good deeds.

...and He is the All-Forgiving, the Al-Loving (Al-Buruj, 14).

Among people are those who equal with Allah deities and regard them with the same affection which is dutiful only to Allah. But those who believe love Allah more than anything else and consider Him the principle of their existence, the heart of their purpose and their ultimate end. If only the unrighteousness could visualize the torture that awaits them, they would realize that to Allah belongs all power, and that Omnipotence is asserted as His own, and that Allah is severe in punishment.

Yet there be men who take to themselves compeers apart from Allah, loving them as Allah is loved; but those that believe love Allah more ardently. O if the evildoers might see, when they see the chastisement, that the power altogether belongs to Allah, and that Allah is terrible in chastisement (Al-Baqarah, 165).

Allah grants His love to those who have faith. He rescues them from the depths of darkness and leads them forth into light. While those who deny Allah are under the tutelage of the false deities and false leaders that will lead them forth into the depths of darkness. Those astray will be companions of the Fire to dwell therein forever.

Allah is the protector of the believers; He brings them forth from the shadows into the light. And the unbelievers – their protectors are idols, that bring them forth from the light into the shadows; those are the inhabitants of the Fire, therein dwelling forever (Al-Baqarah, 257).

Those who believe in Allah's oneness and abstain from all kinds of sins and evil deeds which He has forbidden, and love Allah much by performing all kinds of good deeds which He has ordained, no fear shall come upon them nor shall they grieve.

Surely Allah's friends – no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow. Those who believe (in Islamic monotheism), and are god-fearing – for them is good tidings in the present life and in the world to come. There is no changing in the Words of Allah; that is the mighty triumph (Yunus, 62-64).

The love of Allah is also granted to those who love and obey the Messenger. The Messenger was sent to preach, guide, instruct and show the way – not to force people to embrace Islam. The Messenger's duty is only to convey the Message of Allah in all the ways of persuasion that are open to him. If men perversely disobey that Message, they are not disobeying the Messenger but they are disobeying Allah. In the same way those who accept the Message and obey the Messenger are obeying Allah and deserve His love and forgiveness.

Whosoever obeys the Messenger, thereby obeys Allah; and whosoever turns his back – We have not sent thee to be a watcher over them (Al-Nisa', 80).

The love of Allah is gained through loving His Messenger and following the path of salvation he brought them.

Say: "If you love Allah, follow me, and Allah will love you, and forgive you your sins; Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (Al-Imran, 31).

Those who deserve Allah's love are the believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and have never since doubted, but have struggled with their belongings and their persons in the cause of Allah.

The believers are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger, then have not doubted, and have struggled with their possessions and their selves in the way of Allah; those they are the truthful ones (Al-Hujurat, 15).

A man once came to the Prophet (puh) and asked him about the Hereafter. The Prophet asked him, "And what have you prepared for the Hereafter?" The man replied, "Nothing, except that I love Allah and I love you." The Prophet answered him, "You are with the ones you love."

In conclusion, those who deserve Allah's love and forgiveness are those who follow the teachings of the Koran and the Sunnah of the Prophet: they believe in Allah's oneness and worship Him alone without associating with Him any partners, patient in adversities, visit the sick, forgiving, clean and tidy, smile at people because smile is charity, respect the elders, truthful and honest, love their neighbors, nice to their parents, feed the poor and the needy, speak good or be quiet, do not waste food or water, fair, just in all dealings, love for their brothers and sisters what they love for themselves, remember Allah constantly, care for orphans and widows, good to their wives/husbands, gentle and

loving to their children, kind and gentle with plants and animals (4).

The root of Islam is love for Allah, intimacy with Him. All the revealed Books of Allah from the first to the last revolve around the commandment to love. All religions are founded on love.

The guidance of Islam is the guidance of love. Muslims strive to manifest Allah's love in their lives. Islam could not have taken root in the world without the love that filled the heart of the Prophet and was clearly manifest in his way of relating and interacting with people that brought out their own deep and profound love for him. Without this love Islam would not have been possible.

We can see the words of love in the Prophet's sermon he gave to his companions in Medina:

"Verily, the best discourse is the Book of Allah. One is truly successful whose heart Allah has adorned with the love of His Book, and whom, after living in denial, Allah has caused to enter into submission to Him, and caused him to prefer His Book above any human discourse. The Book of Allah is the most beautiful and eloquent of discourses.

Love that which Allah loves! Love Allah with all your hearts! Grow not weary of hearing the Word of Allah. Do not stop remembering Him. Do not let your hearts grow hard toward Him, for verily Allah has preferred His Book above all of Creation. Indeed, Allah has endowed it with guidance to the best of deeds, and made it an example for the elect of His servants, and filled it with righteous discourse, and has made clear in it what is lawful and unlawful for you.

So, serve Allah alone, and associate with Him no other. Be ever conscious of Him. Be truthful to Allah in what you utter from your mouths. Let the Spirit of Allah be the source of love between you.

Love is so central to Islam that without it there can be no real faith. In this connection Allah warns the people of faith that if they turn back from their religion the loss will be their own. Allah shall replace them by people whom He will love and they will love Him, they are humble and meek with the believers, mighty against the infidels; they strive in the cause of Allah not caring what people say.

O believers, whosoever of you turns from his religion, Allah will assuredly bring a people He loves, and who love Him, humble towards the believers, disdainful towards the unbelievers, men who struggle in the path of Allah, not fearing the reproach of any reproachers. That is Allah's bounty; He gives it unto who He will; and Allah is all-Embracing, All-Knowing (Al-Maidah, 54).

From the above mentioned verse we can understand that the believer is profoundly in love with Allah. It is this love that motivates him to give up his worldly attachments and return back to Allah. It is this love that gives him the power and strength to face the various trials of his faith throughout his life. It is this love that teaches him humility, compassion, trust, obedience and honesty. It is this love that enables him to sacrifice, to give of himself and of his possessions for the sake of God. It is this love that opens him to submission to Islam. The abandoning of religion is to turn away from Allah's love, and here Allah promises that He will replace the renegades with people who have this relationship of love with Him. And as mentioned before, the way to Allah's love is to follow the Prophet, to be in his footsteps, to strive to be like him in every aspect of life.

In a Sacred Tradition Allah says,

I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known so I created heaven and earth that I may be known.

Reflecting upon this divine saying we can see that Allah's love to be known through contemplating His miraculous creation is in fact the primary reason for creation. In this way we can come to a profound insight; Allah's love is the very cause of existence. The whole Universe is here because of His love.

Muslims gain Allah's love by adorning themselves with the qualities of the Prophet's noble characters. The noble characters of the Prophet has been best explained by his cousin, Jaffar Ibn Abu Talib, when he was asked by the King of Abbyssinia to explain the religion of Islam

Jaffar replied:

"We were a people lost in ignorance. We worshipped idols, we back-stabbed one another in gossip, we committed sins without shame, we severed the bonds of mercy among us, and we were unkind neighbors. The strong among us devoured the weak. Thus we were until Allah sent to us a Messenger from among ourselves, well-known to us in his nobility, honesty, trustworthiness, and tenderness. He called us to unity and to devoting our worship to Allah alone and to removing the idols from our hearts. He commanded us to be truthful when we spoke, and to fulfill our trust, and to preserve the bonds of mercy among us, and to be kind neighbors, and to desist from violating what is sacred. He called us to turn back from our sins, and from falsehood, and from devouring the wealth of orphans, and from defaming honorable women. So we believed in him and in his Message and we followed what he received from his Lord."

The Prophet used to say in his prayers:

"O my God, make me love You, make me love those who love You, make me love all things that bring me closer to loving You. O my God, makes me love you, and your angels,

and Your prophets, and all of Your creation. O my God, makes my love for You dearer to me than myself, and my family, and my wealth, and my children, and from cool, pure water to the thirsty."

How do we become among those who love Allah more than anything else? This could be attained through constant remembrance of Allah.

As we are guided in the Quran:

Those who believe, their hearts being at rest in Allah's remembrance – In Allah's remembrance are at rest the hearts of those who believe and do righteous deeds; theirs is blessedness and a fair resort (Al-Ra'd, 28).

In the Quran Allah promises us:

So remember Me, and I will remember you; and be thankful to Me; and be you not ungrateful towards Me (Al-Baqarah, 152).

In a Sacred Tradition, Allah says, "I am as my worshipper thinks I am. I am with him when he remembers Me, if he seeks closeness to Me by as little as an inch, I come closer to him by a yard. And if he seeks closeness to Me by a yard, I come closer to him by a mile. And if he comes to Me walking, I come to him running."

In another Sacred Tradition Allah says, "My worshipper can get close to me with nothing better than what I have made obligatory. And as he continues to get closer with selfless acts of giving I love him. And when I love him, I become his hearing, his sight, his hands, and his feet. And whatever he asks of Me, I shall give him and whatever aid he seeks of Me, I shall aid him."

So, Allah's grace multiplies with our sincere efforts and honest intention to come closer to Him. Whatever we give to

Him comes back manifold to us. In this way, little by little, our love for Allah grows and develops and transforms us into loving, noble human beings

The Prophet once told his close companion, Muazh Ibn Jabal, "Muazh, I do love you!" Muazh replied, "And I love you, Messenger of Allah, more dearly than my own father and mother!" The Prophet then instructed Muazh, "Do not end a prayer without asking Allah to help you remember Him, to be thankful to Him, and to serve Him in the best of ways."

As we continue to live our lives in remembrance of Allah our capacity for love will grow, our hearts will be filled with Allah's love.

Allah says in a Sacred Tradition, "I have prepared for my righteous servants what no eye has seen, nor ear has heard, nor been imagined by any human heart."

### **Justification of WAR in Islam**

Like Christianity, Islam permits fighting in self-defence, in defence of religion, or on the part of those who have been expelled forcibly from their homes. It lays down strict rules of combat that include prohibitions against harming civilians and against destroying crops, trees and livestock. For Muslims, injustice would be triumphant in the world if good people were not prepared to risk their lives in a righteous cause. Christianity made a complete prohibition of war. In the Gospel of Matthew, Christ says: "I tell you: Do not resist the wicked, and if one slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other." Similarly, those in favour of absolute prohibition of war rely on the words of Christ to Peter: "Return your sword to its sheath, for all those who grab the sword, shall by the sword be slain."

Some Christians sacrificed their lives in the cause of prohibiting war; rather say the prohibition of the military professions itself. Other Christians made tremendous efforts

to reconcile Biblical teachings and the necessities of the society, and their efforts resulted in a differentiation between permissible war and prohibited war. A war is fair and just, according to them, when the prince declares it or ruler, provided his motive is truthful without greed or cruelty. In the fourth century, which is after having established a State under the leadership of Constantine, the Roman Emperor had to use force in order to uproot paganism from the Roman Empire. This was declared as the "just war".

For Muslims the Qur'an declared: "Fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight you, but do not transgress limits. Allah does not love transgressors." (Al-Baqarah, 190).

And also:

Fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is for Allah. But if they desist, then let there be no hostility except against wrongdoers. (Albaqarah, 193).

If they seek peace, then you seek peace. And trust in Allah for He is the One that hears and knows all things. (Al-Anfal, 61)

War is therefore the last resort, and is subject to the rigorous conditions laid down by the sacred law of Shariah. The often misunderstood and overused term 'Jihad' literally means "struggle" and not "holy war"; a term not found anywhere in the Koran or Hadith or in anywhere in the Shariah law. Jihad, as an Islamic concept, can be on a personal level--inner struggle against evil within oneself; struggle for decency and goodness on the social level; and struggle on the battlefield, if and when necessary.

In conclusion, Islam does allow Muslims to go to war only in self-defense, and to remove aggression and injustice that has befallen people and to save them from their oppressors. The Holy Koran also allows Muslims to fight against injustice.

Leave is given to those who fight because they were wronged – surely Allah is able to help them – who were expelled from their habitations without right, except that they say, 'Our Lord is Allah.' Had Allah not driven back the people, some by the means of others, there had been destroyed cloisters and churches, oratories and mosques, wherein Allah's name is much mentioned. Assuredly Allah will help him who helps Him – Assuredly Allah is All-Strong, All-Mighty (Al-Hajj 39, 40).

This verse gives permission to those Muslims who fall under oppressive, unjust rule, and those Muslims who are being persecuted to fight to remove this oppression.

### **Does Islam Permit the Killing of Civilians?**

Brutal and barbaric atrocities are prohibited in Islam. Islam condemns barbaric killing of any human being. Therefore, Islam does not permit the mutilation of the bodies of the enemies.

Also, Islam prohibits the targeting and killing of all civilians, especially women, children, the elderly, and religious clergy. Enemies, even at time of war, must be treated justly. Prisoners of war have basic human rights, as stated in the Shariah (Islamic Law), and must be provided and cared for and not humiliated in any way.

As we read in the Koran:

O Prophet, say to the prisoners in your hands, 'If Allah knows of any good in your hearts He will give you better than what has been taken from you, and He will forgive you; surely Allah is all-Forgiven, All-Compassionate.'" (Al-Anfal, 70).

The righteous keep their vows and fear a Day whose evil is far reaching. For the love of Allah they feed the indigent, the orphan, and the captive, believers or unbelievers, thereby

setting a good example and excellent guide. Their true and hidden motive as expressed in words to those in need has always been: 'We feed you for the sake of Allah; we expect nothing in return, not even your gratitude.

They fulfill their vows, and fear a Day whose evil is upon the wing; they give food, for the love of Him, to the needy, the orphan, the captive: 'We feed you only for the Face of Allah; we desire no recompense from you, no thankfulness; for we fear from our Lord a frowning Day, inauspicious (Al-Insan 7-10).

In addition, the following were the instructions of Prophet Mohammad to Muslims who are forced to fight a war:

"Do not kill women or children or non-combatants and do not kill old people or religious people," and he mentioned priests, nuns and rabbis. And he said, "Do not cut down fruit-bearing trees and do not poison the wells of your enemies."

Islam promotes peace and justice, and stands against aggression and violence. Islam prohibits control over the sources of the wealth of other nations or people, or the establishment of colonial regimes. Justice and freedom must be established. Tolerance towards cultures and peoples is to be respected at all times(5).

### **Peace even in war**

Peace is the general principle even in war. Allah says in the Qur'an:

And if they (the enemy) incline to peace, do thou incline to it; and put thou trust in Allah; He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing (Al-Anfal, 61).

The Koran teaches that while Muslims must always be ready to fight for a just cause, even in the midst of the fight they

must always be ready for peace if there is any inclination towards it by the other side. In Islam there is no merit in a fight by itself, but to establish peace, justice, and righteousness.

But if they cease (fighting you), Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Al-Baqarah, 192).

If someone transgresses against Muslims, they should respond to him likewise, but they must not exceed the limits and transgresses more.

The Koran says:

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, and do not transgress; for Allah loveth not transgressors. (Surah Al-Baqarah, 190).

There are four sacred months in Islam: the month of Pilgrimage (Dhu al Hijja); the month preceding (Dhu-al-Qa'dah) and the month following (Muharram), and the month of Ragab. War-fare is prohibited in these months. If the pagan enemies of Islam broke the sanctity of these months and made war with Muslims, the Muslims were free to answer back but only to the same extent as the others broke it. Similarly the territory of Makkah was sacred in which war was prohibited. If the enemies of Islam broke the sanctity of Makkah and launched war against Muslim, Muslims are free to answer back to that extent.

At the same time Muslims are commanded to exercise self-restraint as much as possible for force is a dangerous weapon. It may have to be used for self-defense or self-preservation, but we must always remember that self-restraint is pleasing in the eyes of Allah. Even when Muslims are fighting, it should be for a principle, not out of passion.

The Koran says:

The sacred month is for the sacred month, and so for all things prohibited, there is the law of equality. If then any one transgresses the prohibition against you, transgress ye likewise against him. But fear Allah, and know that Allah is with those who restrain themselves." (Al-Baqarah, 194).

Allah reminds Muslims not to let hatred of some people for past reasons to lead them to transgress against those people or be hostile towards them. Allah also instructs Muslims to help each other in good and righteous actions, and not to cooperate in aggression and sin, and He reminds them of His strict punishment if they do not abide by these principles.

Let not detestation for a people who barred you from the Holy Mosque move you to commit aggression. Help one another to piety and god-fearing; do not help each other to sin and enmity. And fear Allah; surely Allah is terrible in retribution (Al-Maidah, 2).

Even when Muslims won wars and battles, they didn't execute and torture the captives, nor rape their women and molest their children, as happens today during wars. Muslims were required to be peaceful towards prisoners of war and treat them in a humanitarian manner, granting them rights ordained in the Islamic law. History witnesses that Muslims under genuine Islamic leadership always treated their prisoners and captive kindly. Muslims adopted this principle thousands of years before the famous Geneva Convention act was established in 1949.

Allah says in the Qur'an,

O Prophet, say to the prisoners in your hands: 'If Allah knows of any good in your hearts He will give you better than what has been taken from you, and He will forgive you; surely Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate" ( Al-Anfal, 70).

This is a consolation to the prisoners of war. In spite of their previous hostility, Allah will forgive them if there were any good in their hearts, and confer upon them a far higher gift than anything they have ever lost. This gift in the highest sense would be the blessing of Islam.

Though any motive of worldly gain, which may have been in the minds of some among the victorious Muslim army, is condemned as worthy of a severe penalty, what actually happened is ascribed to the plan of Allah which was pre-ordained. Among the prisoners taken were the Prophet's uncle Al-Abbas and Ali's brother, Aqil, who afterwards became Muslims. Abbas was ancestor of the celebrated Abbasite dynasty which played such a noble part in Islamic history. Thus does Allah's plan work in a marvelous way, and evolve good out of seeming evil (6).

### **Muhammad, a mercy sent to all being**

The Messenger's compassion towards the believers was remarkable. The Koran describes his compassion in the following verse:

Now there has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves; Grievous to him is your suffering; anxious is he over you, gentle to the believers, compassionate (Al-Tawbah, 128).

#### 1- A Mercy Towards his Enemies

The prisoners of war taken captive at the battle of Badr were amongst his bitterest enemies. Nevertheless, he made sure that they were given the best of treatment. Among them was Suhayl bin 'Amr who was a fiery speaker and was denouncing the Prophet. Umar one the Prophet's closest companions, suggested that two of his lower teeth be pulled out so that he might not be so vile in his speeches. The Prophet replied: "Were I to do this, Allah would disfigure me on the Day of Judgment, despite the fact that I am His messenger."

In Makkah, his people inflicted him with every kind of suffering, eventually forcing him to emigrate to Madinah, and then waged war on him for five years. However, when he conquered Makkah without bloodshed in the twenty-first year of his Prophet hood, he asked the Makkan unbelievers who were awaiting his decision about them: "How do you expect me to treat you?" They responded unanimously: "You are a noble one, the son of a noble one." He announced to them his decision:

"You may go free! No reproach this day shall be on you; may God forgive you."

Anas ibn Malêc, a close Companion of Prophet Muhammad reported:

"A Jewish woman brought a poisoned lamb to the Prophet, and he ate of it. When the woman was brought to him, people suggested, 'Shall we kill her?' The Prophet said, 'No.' Anas continued: 'I have recognized the effect of that poisoning in the Prophet's throat ever since.'" (Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood, Ahmad, and others).

Perhaps the description "a personal enemy" cannot be attached more appropriately than to one who tries to kill someone. When the attempt is the result of careful plotting, then the hostility is deeply rooted. During his life, the Prophet had many enemies who plotted against his life. One such attempt took place soon after the Prophet won the battle of Khaibar that he fought against the Jews of Madinah, resulting in the destruction of the Jewish military power in Arabia. Khaibar fell to the Prophet after a long

siege culminating in a fierce fighting to win several of the many forts of which this Jewish stronghold consisted.

In order to appreciate the significance of the story quoted in the hadith at hand, we have to remember that the Prophet was the head of the Islamic state, in addition to his being a Prophet and a Messenger from Allah to all humankind. In any state, an attempt on the life of the president or monarch is always viewed very seriously. Anyone caught making or preparing to make such an attempt is normally charged with high treason and with making an aggression on the state and its entire people. Such a person hardly ever escapes the death penalty. Yet the immediate reaction of the Prophet was that the woman must not be killed. Moreover, there was no question about the identity of the perpetrator of that ghastly attempt on the life of the Prophet. The woman (Zeinab bint Al-Harith) herself brought the lamb and told the Prophet that she had prepared it as a present to him.

When the woman was brought before the Prophet, he asked her about her motives. She did not deny having poisoned the lamb. She said, "I thought that if you were truly a Prophet, you would not be harmed. If you were a king (meaning that if his claim to prophet -hood was false), then I would have rid people of you."

When that woman contemplated her attempt, she must have realized that if she were to be successful, she would have avenged the defeat of her people. She was certain that the Prophet accepted any gift given to him and always tried to please the person who gave him a gift by eating from it. Moreover, she realized that the Prophet would not be the only one to eat of that lamb. Any of his Companions who would be attending with him would be invited to join him in his meal. Quite a number of them, probably some of the leading figures, would die with him. That could very well have been the outcome of her attempt. Indeed one of them, Bishr ibn Al-Baraa' was the first to eat. The Prophet himself ate one or two bites, but he immediately signaled his Companions to stop. He told them, "Do not touch it. One of its organs is telling me that it is poisoned." Bishr ibn Al-Baraa' soon died.

The Prophet himself complained of the effects of the poison for the rest of his blessed life. Anas ibn Malêk, who continued in the Prophet's service for 10 years until he passed away, was able to recognize the change that affected the Prophet as a result of this poisoned lamb. She must have used a very powerful poison to produce such a lasting effect. It is indeed reported that the Prophet said during his illness, just before passing away, that he continued to complain from the poisoned food he ate at Khaibar. For this

reason, a number of scholars have argued that the Prophet was also a martyr. That means that Allah has given him the honor of being a martyr in addition to the honor of being a Prophet and a Messenger.

In the light of the foregoing, the Prophet's tendency to forgive that woman is highly significant. He always forgave even the most hardened of his enemies, if the choice to forgive was his. In this case, it was his own life that was the immediate target of that woman. Allah foiled her attempt and the Prophet was inclined to forgive her.

The Prophet first pardoned her for making an attempt on his life. Her attempt failed and he survived. He himself was the only one who had the authority to forgive her, since the attempt was made on him personally.

When the Prophet's companion Bishr ibn Al-Baraa' died after a few days from eating the poisoned meat, the Prophet ordered the woman be executed. Her punishment was for killing an innocent soul - one of his Companions, and not his (7).

## 2- A Mercy for Women

Prophet Muhammad was also very kind and affectionate towards women. Women were very badly treated in those times. The Noble Prophet gave them honor and dignity at par with men in the community. Umar reported: "We did not

have much regard for women while we were at Makkah, but they were better treated in Madinah. Allaah's Messenger established women's rights through his sayings and commandments, which improved their position and status."

### 3- A Mercy for Children

Allah's Messenger was particularly compassionate towards children. When he saw a child crying, he sat beside him or her and shared his or her feelings. He felt the pain of a mother for her child more than the mother herself. Once he said: "I stand in prayer and wish to prolong it. However, I hear the cry of a child and cut the prayer short for the anxiety which the mother is feeling." (Al-Bukhaari).

He would take children in his arms and embrace them. He was once hugging his beloved grandsons, Hasan and Husayn, when Aqrah bin Haabis told him, 'I have got ten children. So far, I have not kissed any of them.' Allah's Messenger responded: "The one with no pity for others is not pitied." (Al-Bukhaari and Muslim).

According to another Hadith, he said: "What can I do for you if Allah has removed from you the feeling of compassion?" (At-Tirmithi).

### 4- A Mercy for Slaves

The Prophet strongly enjoined the duty of kind and generous treatment upon slaves, servants and laborers engaged in manual work. Jaabir related the Apostle of Allah as saying: "Feed them with the food which you eat, clothe them with such clothing as you wear, and do not cause trouble to Allah's creatures."

The Apostle also said: "Those whom Allah has made your dependents are your brothers, servants and helpmates. Anybody whose brother has been made subservient to him ought to feed him with the food he eats and clothe him with

the clothes he wears; command him not to do that which he is unable to do and if it becomes necessary to do so then he should help him in doing the job."

#### 5- A Mercy for Animals

His compassion encompassed not only human beings, but also animals. The Prophet forbade his companions to keep their animals hungry or thirsty, to disturb or to overburden them. He commended that kindness and putting them at ease were meritorious acts tending to bring man nearer to Allah. Abu Hurayrah reported the Prophet as saying: "A traveler who was thirsty saw a well in the way. He got inside the well and when he came out he saw a dog licking mud due to thirst. The man realized that the dog was as thirsty as him, so he got into the well again, filled his leather sock with water and carried it out holding it with his teeth. Thus, he quenched the thirst of the dog. Allah was pleased with this act of kindness and pardoned his sins." The Companions asked: "O Messenger of Allah, is there recompense in the matter of beasts and wild animals also?" The Prophet replied: "There is recompense in regard to every creature that has a living heart."

'Abdullaah bin 'Umar related that the Prophet said: "A woman was cast away to hell only because she had withheld food and water from her cat and refused to set it free so that the cat might satisfy its hunger by eating worms and insects."

Once on return from a military campaign, a few Companions took away the chicks of a bird from their nest to stroke them. The mother bird came back and when it could not find its chicks in the nest, it began to fly around screeching. When informed of the matter, Allah's Messenger became angry and ordered the chicks to be put back in the nest. (Abu Daawood).

The love and compassion of Allah's Messenger for all kinds of creatures was not of the kind claimed by today's 'humanists'. He was sincere and balanced in his love and compassion. He was a Prophet raised by Allah for the guidance and happiness of mankind and jinn altogether. He lived not for himself but for others; he was a mercy for all the worlds (8).

Surely in this (the Koran) is a Message delivered unto a people who serve. We have not sent thee, save as a mercy unto all beings (Al-Anbiya' 106, 107).

## **Rules governing international relations in peace time**

### **Basic principles**

It is well known that Islamic preaching, including Islamic values and ethics, law and doctrine, has a universal tendency, for it aspires to see welfare prevail and Muslim principles spread throughout the entire world. It does so not for economic, material, racial, imperialist or nationalistic interests, but in order to achieve salvation, happiness, welfare, justice and prosperity for humanity as a whole, both in this life and the hereafter. The Islamic doctrine is based on recognition and confirmation of the absolute oneness of Allah both in Divinity and Lordship, without any blemish of atheism or paganism. Thus belief in Allah alone, belief in His angels, belief in His revealed books to His messengers, the hereafter and the commandments of Allah are the pillars of this religion.

There is no coercion in the Islamic religion and no compulsion at all in the dissemination of its doctrine. Freedom, persuasion, dialogue and tolerance are the foundation of the Islamic preachers calling to Allah.

People are equal in terms of humanity, respect for human rights and

human dignity, and no category or individual is better than others except in piety and good deeds. Cooperation is a principle that all people are required to observe.

Allah says:

“Mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware (Al-Hujurat, 13).

Allah also says:

No compulsion is there in religion. Rectitude has become clear from error. So whosoever disbelieves in idols and believes in Allah, has laid hold of the most firm handle, unbreaking; Allah is all-Hearing, All-Knowing (Al-Baqarah, 256).

This is the principle of freedom of religion. During dissemination of the Islamic Message, the principle and slogan are: put the mind and logic into gear, and enforce justice.

Allah mentions this in many verses, such as:

Say: 'People of the Book! Come now to a word common between us and you, that we serve none but God, and that we associate not aught with Him, and do not some of us take others as Lords, apart from God.' And if they turn their backs, say: 'Bear witness that we are Muslims.' (Al-Imran, 64).

And also:

And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): But say, 'We believe in the Revelation which has come down to

us and in that which came down to you, our God and your God is One, and it is to Him we bow (in Islam) (Al-Ankabut, 46).

The principle of peace and security is a firmly established rule that must not be violated in any way, except in the case of aggression by others and when the enemy resorts to arms.

Allah says:

O believers, enter the peace, all of you, and follow not the steps of Satan; he is a manifest foe to you (Al-Baqarah, 208).

The rule governing the relationship between Muslims and the People of the Book (Jews, Christians and others) is the ideal, most rational and unmistakable methodology, expressed in two verses of the Koran:

Allah forbids you not, as regards those who have not fought you in religion's cause, nor expelled you from your habitations, that you should be kindly to them, and act justly towards them; surely God loves the just (Al-Mumtahanah, 8).

In their long history since the days of the Prophet, Muslims have been committed to following this path. Thus the Prophet's Message and that of his companions and followers was a faithful expression of the one and only message, addressed to the world's monarchs, princes and leaders:

“Join Islam and you will be unharmed; otherwise you would have committed the same sin as the common people (farmers, workers, traders and others).

Say: 'People of the Book! Come now to a word common between us and you, that we serve none but Allah, and that we associate not aught with Him, and do not some of us take others as Lords, apart from Allah.' And if they turn their backs, say: 'Bear witness that we are Muslims.' (Al-Imran, 64).

In their diverse wars with Arabs, Persians or Romans, Muslims resorted to combat only in defence of their existence, to repel aggression, to empower themselves in order to raise the banner of freedom among all nations on an equal footing, to declare the absolute truth, namely servitude and submission to Allah alone, without any influence from an oppressive sultan, an unjust ruler or a despotic leader.

The State of Islam (the Caliphate) was the only system based on the emancipation of the individual and society from the phenomenon of “domination and subordination” that prevailed in human society. For “domination and subordination”, Islam substituted justice, consultation (*shura*), equality, mercy, freedom and brotherhood, which are the most noble Islamic foundations in the politics of government.

In light of those fundamental values and premises, we can identify the rules of peace and security according to the Islamic doctrine and legislation and Muslim practices.

### **Rules in the Islamic system that relate to the international order**

To establish the landmarks for external or international relations, the Islamic system provides for manifold rules. The most important of them can be summed up as follows:

#### ***1- Human brotherhood***

Muslims are committed to Allah’s guidance, as expressed in the Koran, when He confirms the unity between creatures and the Creator, the unity of the human race, and fully fledged human brotherhood. Allah Almighty is the Creator and people are His creation, and His will and wisdom require that people be disparate in their intellectual faculty, opinions, ideas, beliefs and doctrines.

## 2- People

People are free to choose what is in their best interest, in light of the divine revelation and the messages of reformist prophets and messengers from ancient times to the era of the Seal (the last) of the Prophets, Mohammed Ibn Abdullah, Allah's blessings and peace be upon them all. After having made their choice and put their freedom into practice, people are responsible for the soundness of their choice. Their obligation is to choose what is to their real benefit, in such a way as to achieve their salvation and happiness in this life and the Hereafter.

Specifying the path to salvation, which consists in following the Messages of Prophets and Messengers, peace be upon them, Allah says:

The people were one nation; then Allah sent forth the Prophets, good tidings to bear and warning, and He sent down with them the Book with the truth, that He might decide between the people touching their differences; and only those who had been given it were at variance upon it, after the clear signs had come to them, being insolent one to another; then Allah guided those who believed to the truth, touching which they were at variance, by His leave; and Allah guides whomsoever He will to a straight path (Al-BAqarah, 213).

Warfare is only for defence, to prevent injustice and fend off aggression. Persons should not be maimed, nor should they be starved, made to suffer thirst, tortured, severely abused, assaulted or their property plundered, in violation of the sanctity of human brotherhood, except when necessity so requires and to ward off aggression.

### *3- Honoring the human being and preserving human rights*

To honor the human being, to protect each person's existence and to preserve their rights, regardless of their attitude or behaviour, are considered

by the Holy Koran as basic elements in the perception of humankind. Allah says:

We have honoured the Children of Adam and carried them on land and sea, and provided them with good things, and preferred them greatly over many of those We created (Al-Isra', 70).

The rights of the human being, whom Allah created and for whom He ensured a basic and permanent livelihood, namely the right to life, freedom, equality, justice, consultation and ethical conduct, are the essential and fundamental principles that should be preserved. Relations with other human being should be governed by those principles, under all circumstances, in dialogue and debate, in peaceful coexistence, in peace and in war. Thus, in Allah's legislation and religion it is prohibited to harm or inflict injury on any human being because of their religion. Nor should they be coerced into changing their religion. Their dignity should be inviolable; they should not be tortured in a way that offends their dignity. Their honor should not be attacked, nor should their modesty be violated. They should not be oppressed, nor should they be subjected to any practices that contravene morality and codes of ethics. These are the fundamental principles to which Muslims or pious people of any religion are committed.

#### *4- Commitment to the rules of ethics and morality*

Ethics are the container of religion, the pillar of civilization, setting the basis and standards for dealings and relations between individuals and States alike: no human being, nation or State should be treated in a way that transgresses the values of ethics and morals, especially the criteria of virtue and nobility of spirit. It follows that enslavement, degradation, oppression and coercion for any reason whatsoever are prohibited. Demolition, destruction, the expulsion of human beings from their homes, houses or land are also forbidden, as is violation of the sanctity of honor and cherished values, even if the enemy's behaviour is deemed excessive, base or dishonorable. He should not be treated in like manner, on the basis of

reciprocity, because honor is one of Allah's sacrosanct values on earth. It is inviolable and untouchable, regardless of whether the person is an ally or an enemy, and irrespective of that person's sex, religion, belief or doctrine. Any offence or sin is a prohibited act and incurs guilt, whether it is committed by friend or foe.

In one of his messages to the leader of his armies, Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqas, Omar Ibn Al-Khattab the second caliph said: "I order you and those accompanying you to be most careful about committing offences against your enemies, as the sins of the army are more fearful than their enemy. Muslims win because of their foe's disobedience to Allah, had it not been for this, we wouldn't have power over them, because their numbers surpass ours, they are better equipped than we are. Hence, if we are equal in wrongdoing, they would be superior to us. Unless we prevail because of our values and good deeds, we will never overcome them with our force. ... Never say: Our enemies are worse than us, thus they will never empower us even if we commit an offence, for many a people have been targeted and subjugated by people worse than they are."

### *5- Justice and equality in rights and duties*

Justice in dealing with others is a natural right; it is also the basis for the survival of the governmental system. Oppression is a harbinger of the destruction of civilizations and prosperity, and of the collapse of the system.

Allah says:

Surely God bids to justice and good-doing and giving to kinsmen; and He forbids indecency, dishonor, and insolence, admonishing you, so that haply you will remember (Al-Nahl, 90).

The doing of good is added to justice in order to eradicate any rancour from people's minds and foster friendship among them.

Allah also says:

God commands you to deliver trusts back to their owners; and when you judge between the people, that you judge with justice. Good is the admonition Allah gives you; Allah is All-hearing, All-seeing (Al- Nisa', 58).

The Divine Saying related by the Prophet enjoins:

“O My subjects! I forbade injustice to Myself, and forbade it among yourselves. Do not do others injustice”.

There is also a very famous and timeless saying by Caliph Omar:

“Since when did you enslave people who were born free?”

The right to equality in rights and duties and to litigation are natural rights, and the latter is complementary to and expressive of the right to justice. Hence no group or person, not even a monarch, should be treated with favouritism, with discrimination over others.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“People are equal like the teeth of a comb”.

And in another saying:

“If Fatima, daughter of Muhammad stole, I would cut off her hand.”

One of the rare examples of justice in dealing with other nations is the story of the Samarkand people, who complained to the Omayyad Caliph Omar Ibn Abdul Aziz (717-720) about the Muslim commander Qutayba's injustice and discrimination when he conquered their country without any prior warning. Omar sent his judge to settle the matter. His decision was that Arabs had to withdraw from the conquered territory and to go back to their

camps, unless a new conciliation pact was concluded or the conquest had taken place after due warning.

#### *6- Mercy in peace and war*

The ethics and main principles of Islam prescribe tolerance, mercy and the granting of amnesty when dealing with harsh situations, and demand that strictness, intransigence or cruelty in excess of the normal limits be avoided, in accordance with the nature of the Islamic Message as described by Allah addressing the Prophet in these words:

“We sent thee not, but as a mercy for all creatures (Al-Anbiiya’. 107).

In other words, human beings, animals, jinn and inanimate beings, and indeed all things, must be treated as thus prescribed. After the conquest of Mecca, the Prophet, was tolerant towards the Quraysh, the former ruling tribe there, who had excessively injured him. He told them:

“Today, there is no blame on you, go, you are set free.”

#### *7- Honoring covenants and commitments, as long as the other party is faithful to its own pledges (pacta sunt servanda).*

This is the basis for building up trust, esteem and respect. Islam therefore prohibited perfidy and treason in all circumstances. Many Koranic verses made the fulfilment of covenants, contractual obligations or promises mandatory.

Allah says:

And those who break the covenant of God after His compact, and who snap what God has commanded to be joined, and who work corruption in the earth -- theirs shall be the curse, and theirs the Evil Abode (Ar-Ra’d, 25).

It is forbidden to assist depressed groups seeking aid from the Muslim community, if to do so would contravene agreements.

Allah says:

...excepting those of the idolaters with whom you made covenant, then they failed you naught neither lent support to any man against you. With them fulfill your covenant till their term; surely Allah loves the god-fearing (Al-Tawbah, 4).

### ***8- Reciprocity, unless contrary to the fundamental principles of virtue and ethics***

Although the principle of reciprocity is an ancient one, Islam embraced it in dealing with others in time of peace and war alike to make justice reign, establish standards of fairness and impartiality, and ensure that the enemy would not overstep limits in its deeds and conduct. However, if the fundamental ethical and moral principles are breached, Muslims should not do the same. For instance, Islam proscribes the mutilation of bodies in war, or disfigurement by amputating the nose, cutting off the ear or lips, or slicing the belly open, even if the enemy practises such acts.

In a clear and brief *hadith*, the Prophet said: “do not mutilate”.

### **9- Recognition of the international identity of other States**

The rise of the concept of statehood went hand in hand with recognition of the international identity of states, which was consolidated by the principle of “equal sovereignty among all members of the international community.” This is in harmony with the Islamic point of view, for its purpose is to enable every state to live in freedom, security and peace, and be dedicated to fulfilling its obligations toward its people.

No state has the right to infringe upon the sovereignty of another State, nor is it entitled to invade it or control its destiny and its wealth. No State is entitled to interfere in the affairs of other states. The evidence that Islam respects this principle lies in its recognition of the principle of international peace and security for all states.

The long history of Islam shows that the Muslim states have been faithful to a policy of peace with other nations and peoples.

The Koran unequivocally stated that other states and peoples should be recognized:

And be not as a woman who breaks her thread after it is firmly spun into fibres, by taking your oaths as mere mutual deceit, one nation being more numerous than another nation. Allah only tries you thereby; and certainly He will make clear to you upon the Day of Resurrection that whereon you were at variance (Al-Nahl, 92).

In other words, beware of breaking your oaths like the unwise woman who broke her yarn after having spun it with precision and perfection, thus letting it unravel into strands. When you use your oaths or pledges to deceive others and expose them to danger, you pretend to respect the oath while concealing your intention to break it and incline toward others, who are more powerful and wealthier. The words “*more numerous than another*”, are an unambiguous recognition of the diversity and multiplicity of nations, peoples and States.

It is also prohibited to interfere in other nations’ affairs or attempt to Weaken the structure of another state, as Muslims have no right to act in this manner. Consequently, this is a recognition or acknowledgement of the existence of other nations and a prohibition of any attempts to eradicate them or the standards they have set for their guidance.

Precedence given to the principles of peace, human brotherhood

and international cooperation Islam is keen to reach solutions with other nations on the basis of peace and security, the recognition of partnership in shared interests, and respect for the bond of human brotherhood, since all creatures exist by divine order and divine will.

Hence, it is prohibited to kill any human being except for a legal reason, otherwise it would be considered an aggression against the Creator's own creation.

Muslim scholars have decided that the general rule of the relationship between Muslims and others is peace and not war, for Allah mentioned this in many verses, including:

Wherewith Allah guideth all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leadeth them out of darkness, by His will, unto the light,- guideth them to a path that is straight (Al-Maidah, 16).

But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah for He is One that heareth and knoweth (all things) (Al-Anfal, 61).

O you who have attained to faith, when you go forth [to war] in Allah's cause, use your discernment, and do not - out of a desire for the fleeting gains of this worldly life - say unto anyone who offers you the greeting of peace, "Thou art not a believer" for with Allah there are gains abundant. You, too, were once in the same condition but Allah has been gracious unto you. Use, therefore, your discernment: verily, Allah is always aware of what you do (Al-Nisa', 94).

you who have attained to faith! Surrender yourselves wholly unto Allah, and follow not Satan's footsteps, for, verily, he is your open foe (Albaqarah, 208).

Accordingly, the scholars decided that the reason for combat

in Islam is to fight those who are outside the law or to fend off aggression, and not atheism or religious difference. The evidence is that the killing of civilians or non-combatants is prohibited, and covenant agreements are concluded with non-Muslims who live in the abode of Islam in peace and without complaints. Furthermore, Islam encourages new venues for interaction and trade with other nations, in order to establish good relations between Muslims and others.

The scholar ibn as-Salah says: “the original opinion is to keep the atheists and settle them down, because Allah does not wish to exterminate the creatures, nor did He create them to be killed. However, they may be killed because they inflict injury and not as a punishment for their atheism. Life on earth is not for punishment, but punishment is in the hereafter ... If the matter is as such, then it is not allowed to say: killing them is the rule.”

Advocates of the opposing view hold that the rule in the relationship between Muslims and others is war, not peace. This is a confirmation, or rather a description, of bad relations that prevailed in the past because of continuous attacks on Muslims and recurrent wars between Muslims and others. The aim of that counter-trend was perhaps to boost the morale of combatants so that they would not lay down their arms, relax and rest, but would be ready for combat, determined to persevere against adversaries who were surrounding Muslims on all sides. Its supporters argue that in campaigns of which 27 were campaigns against Arabs at the time of the Prophet, Muslims were victims of aggression. The same applies to wars against other adversaries such as the Crusaders, Tartars or Mongols. Unfortunately wars of aggression are not confined to those examples, but are frequent in the history of nations in both ancient and modern times.

#### 10- **International relations in the event of war**

War obviously has an impact on relations between the belligerents. Each party or group perceives the other as the adversary, is keen to defeat him and to achieve victory and supremacy. The desire to win and defeat the enemy might induce the parties to commit even the gravest offences and crimes. It

was therefore necessary to impose restrictions on warfare to regulate the manner of hostilities.

Four main points are emphasized below.

**a) The purpose of the classical jurisprudential division of the world into two or three abodes**

It is common among Muslim scholars to divide the world into two abodes: the *abode of Islam* (*dar al-islam*) and that of *war* (*dar al-harb*); some scholars add a third one, the *abode of covenant* (*dar al-`ahd* or *dar as-sulh*). The abode of Islam consists of countries where the power lies with Muslims, where the rules of Islam are implemented and Islamic rituals are performed. People of that abode are Muslims and people of the covenant (non-Muslims who live in Islamic territory according to a covenant). The abode of war comprises countries which are outside the scope of Islamic sovereignty and where the religious and political rules of Islam are consequently not implemented; its people are belligerents. The abode of covenant consists of those regions that have concluded peaceful trade pacts, a conciliation agreement or a long-term truce with Muslims. In addition, Islamic history gives examples of neutrals such as the Abyssinians, the Nubians and the Cypriots. In fact, this division has no textual support, for no provision is made for it either in the Koran or in the Hadith. It is instead a transient description of what happens when war flares up between Muslims and others. It is a narration of facts, similar to those confirmed by scholars of international law, namely that war splits the international community into two parties: belligerents, in particular the states involved in war; and non-belligerents and neutrals, which comprises the remaining members of the international community. In reality, in Islamic jurisprudence, as asserted by Imam Al-Shafi'i (767-820), and in contemporary international law, the world is one abode. If there is no security and war prevails instead of peace, there will be two zones: one peaceful and the other belligerent.

The opinion advocated by some orientalists and other writers, who claim that the abode of war is waged in permanent antagonism against the abode of Islam, is not acceptable. We consider that the antagonism is temporary and limited to the actual areas of combat or armed conflict.

### **b) War as a necessity in Islamic *Shari'a***

In international law, war is an armed conflict between two or more states; relations between the belligerents and between belligerents and neutrals are determined by international law. There are numerous, renewed and complex causes of war.

In the Arabic language, war, *jihad* and conquest can have the same meaning, namely to fight against the enemy. However, the term “*jihad*” has become widespread in Islamic jurisprudence. Al Raghīb al-Asfahani said in his *Mufradat al-Koran* that “*jihad* and *mujahada*, or militant struggle, mean exerting the utmost effort in fending off the enemy”. One of the classical Sunni jurists of the Maliki school, Ibn ‘Arafa, also defined *jihad* as “warfare waged by a Muslim against a disbeliever, with whom he has no oath, to raise the word of Allah Almighty, or against his presence in or penetration into the Muslim territory.

*Jihad* is lawful in Islam as a necessity to suppress aggression. It was prescribed in the second year of the Hegira, after Muslims had patiently borne for fourteen years the harm done to them by the pagans. The proof can be found in Allah’s words:

To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged, and verily, Allah is Most Powerful for their aid. (They are) those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right, (for no cause) except that they say, ‘Our Lord is Allah (Al-Hajj, 40).

The divine words, “they were wronged”, and “those who have been expelled from their homes” illustrate the reason for the legality of war, namely that Muslims are oppressed by others (the unbelievers).

Whereas Allah had forbidden warfare in more than seventy verses, this was the first verse that prescribed it, as confirmed by another verse:

“Fighting is prescribed for you, and ye dislike it. But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you, and that ye love a thing which is bad for you. But Allah knoweth. And ye know not (Al-Baqarah, 216).

Nevertheless, religion was not the motive for warfare in *jihad*, nor was its purpose to subordinate others and compel them to convert to Islam. *Islam* was intended instead to ward off injustice, champion the cause of the weak and drive back the enemy. As pointed out by Thomas Arnold, “those great conquests that laid the foundation of the Arab Empire were not the outcome of a religious war to spread Islam. On the contrary, they were followed by a widespread apostasy movement away from Christianity, so much so that Christianity itself was thought to be the Arabs’ target. From then on, Christians perceived the sword as a tool of Islamic preaching.”

Islam did not acknowledge war as a national policy, a method of conflict resolution or a means to satisfy a desire for hegemony or to gain spoils.

As already explained above, war is not deemed lawful except when an absolute necessity calls for it. Muslims do not desire it, nor do they thirst to shed the blood of other human beings. Thus, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Do not wish to meet the enemy. Ask Allah for protection from evil. But if you meet the enemy, be firm and mention Allah a lot.”

Before the declaration of either war or *jihad*, the enemy should be made to choose one of three options: Islam, as a token of peacefulness; reconciliation or a peace treaty with Muslims; or finally war, if the enemy insists on waging

war. It is evident that giving the choice between three options excludes the character of compulsion.

There is conclusive evidence that Islam was not spread by the sword, and that there is a clear difference between propagating Islam through wisdom and good advice and declaring *jihad* to confront aggression. This evidence and other arguments show that compulsory conversion to Islam did not occur in the history of Islamic preaching, as underscored by Allah's words "Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from error... (Al-Baqarah, 256).

### **c) The Islamic perception of the motive for warfare**

The motive for warfare in Islam is not the difference in religion or an attempt to impose the Islamic doctrine or a racist, social class on others, nor does it stem from a nationalistic tendency or material or economic interests. Omayyad Caliph Omar Ibn Abdul Aziz said to one of the rulers in the Caliphate who complained about the shortage of *kharaj* (land tax) resources because of the conversion of many people to Islam, "God sent Muhammad with the Truth as a guide and not as a tax collector."

According to the majority of Muslim jurists, the motive for warfare is to respond to an attack and aggression. No human being is to be killed for merely contravening Islam, but to ward off aggression by him. Because they are not engaged in warfare, civilians or non-combatants clearly may not be either killed or attacked. The Prophet (peace be upon him) prohibited the killing of women children and priests. If non-Muslims choose to conclude peace and conciliation pacts, they may do so. They are not compelled to do anything else.

Allah says:

And if they (the enemy) incline to peace, do thou incline to it; and put thy trust in Allah; He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing (Al-Anfal, 61).

There are three kinds of circumstances that legitimize warfare in Islam, namely:

- a) Aggression against Muslims, either individually or collectively, as preachers for Islam, or attempts to make Muslims apostates or the launching of war against Muslims.

Allah says:

Leave is given to those who fight because they were wronged -- surely God is able to help them --(Al-Hajj, 39).

Also:

And slay them wherever you come upon them, and expel them from where they expelled you; persecution is more grievous than slaying. But fight them not by the Holy Mosque until they should fight you there; then, if they fight you, slay them -- such is the recompense of unbelievers (Al-Baqarah, 191).

- b) Assistance for the victims of injustice, whether individuals or groups.

How is it with you, that you do not fight in the way of Allah, and for the men, women, and children who, being abased, say, 'Our Lord, bring us forth from this city whose people are evildoers, and appoint to us a protector from Thee, and appoint to us from Thee a helper'? (Al-Nisa', 75).

- c) Self-defence and to ward off attacks on one's homeland.

Allah says in the Koran:

And fight in the way of God with those; who fight with you, but aggress not: God loves not the aggressors (Al-Baqarah, 190).

Some verses urge Muslims to fight only when battles have already started, not before. Preparation for warfare is necessary to prevent the adversaries of Muslims from gaining the advantage over them.

Allah says:

Make ready for them whatever force and strings of horses you can, to terrify thereby the enemy of Allah and your enemy, and others besides them that you know not; Allah knows them. And whatsoever you expend in the way of Allah shall be repaid you in full; you will not be wronged (Al-Anfal, 60).

Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) said that “the Prophet’s conduct was that he did not wage war against any disbelievers who made truce with him. He never began the fighting against any of the disbelievers.

He also said that “permission of warfare for Muslims is based on the fact that the others have the permission of warfare.” Ibn Taymiyya’s disciple, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350) said that “the prescription of warfare for Muslims is against those who wage war against them, not those who do not”.

To sum up, legitimate war in Islam is fair war - those who wage war against Muslims are to be fought.

#### d) Legal restrictions in war

If war does take place, it is subject to clear regulations under Islamic *Shari’a*. Religious teachings had an evident effect on the emergence of the rules of war, which attained the status of legal rules based on three fundamental requirements: 1) necessity, 2) humanity and 3) chivalry.

The following principles have accordingly been prescribed since the early days of Islam:

- a non-combatant who is not taking part in warfare, either by action, opinion, planning or supplies, must not be attacked;
- the destruction of property is prohibited, except when it is a military necessity to do so, for example for the army to penetrate barricades, or when that property makes a direct contribution to war, such as castles and fortresses;
- principles of humanity and virtue should be respected during and after war;
- it is permitted to guarantee public or private safety on the battlefield, to prevent as far as possible the continuation of warfare.

The conduct of hostilities is strictly regulated by the Holy Koran, the words of the Prophet, and the commands of Abu Bakr as-Siddiq (632-634), the First Caliph of Islam, as well as those of other Muslim commanders, as can be seen from the basic texts.

One of the best known *hadiths* is “Move forward in the Name of Allah, by Allah, and on the religion of Allah’s Prophet. Do not kill an elderly, or a child, or a woman, do not misappropriate booty, gather your spoils, do good for Allah loves good doers.”

Abu Bakr reiterated several commandments, inspired by Prophetic guidance, to his commander Yazid Ibn Abi Sufyan.

This is the text of his famous decree:

“I prescribe ten commandments to you: do not kill a woman, a child, or an old man, do not cut down fruitful trees, do not destroy inhabited areas, do not slaughter any sheep, cow or camel except for food, do not burn date palms, nor inundate them, do not embezzle nor be guilty of cowardliness.”

Omayyad Caliph Omar Ibn Abdul Aziz wrote to one of the rulers in the Caliphate:

“We have been informed that when the Prophet of Allah, sent any military company, he used to tell them: ‘Proceed with your expedition in the Name of Allah, and for the sake of Allah, wage war against the disbelievers. Do not be deserters, nor commit perfidy, nor mutilate (your enemy). Do not kill a newborn. Repeat this to your armies and companies, it’s Allah’s will, Peace be upon you”.

Those two sets of instructions and similar codes of conduct constitute both mandatory injunctions and prohibitions. No Muslim is allowed to overstep or violate them unless absolute military necessity so requires, for instance by uprooting a tree or demolishing a wall used by the enemy to prevent the Muslim army from advancing. Yet let us compare these nascent religious commitments and their nobility of spirit with what is being done today, unnecessarily and unjustifiably, in many armed conflicts and situations of military occupation.

Islam recommends that prisoners of war (captives) be treated kindly, as Allah the Almighty says:

“And they give food for the love of Allah, the indigent, the orphan and the captive.” (Al-Insan, 8).

The Prophet said:

“I command you to treat captives well.”

The captives are often released through grace bestowed on them without any return, or are exchanged for money or in return for other captives. The sick and the wounded should be given medical treatment, and the dead should be buried to preserve their dignity.

In international law, there is a set of well-established rules concerning the obligations of nations towards each other in times of war and peace. The first of these is that a country should base its relations with other countries on terms of peace so that it may exchange benefit and cooperate with others in order to promote humanity to utmost perfection. Peaceful ties like these, they say, should not be broken except in extreme urgencies that necessitate war, provided that all peaceful steps have failed in terminating the cause of dispute.

This is what Islam has always been working for, and the relations of Muslims with others are primarily based on peace. Muslims refuse to fight merely because others do not embrace a faith, nor Islam allows Muslims to fight against those who disagree with them on any religious basis. Islam urges its followers to treat such people kindly:

Allah forbids you not, as regards those who have not fought you in religion's cause, nor expelled you from your habitations, that you should be kindly to them, and acts justly towards them; surely Allah loves the just (Al-Mumtahinah, 8).

In another place Allah says:

And if they incline to peace, do thou incline to it; and put thy trust in Allah; He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing (Al-Anfal, 61).

Instructions like these pave the way for the establishment of peace, and helps to set down principles that call for the abolishment of war (9).

Reviewing the early Muslim era and reflecting on the experience of the early Muslim generations, one can clearly see that peace was always the original position of Muslims, and that war was either a punitive measure to annihilate tyranny and oppression, or a defensive measure to stop aggression. From the very beginning

## **ISLAM and the International Law concerning war**

Based on the above, Islam permits war but keeps it within the strict rules and limits. Islam has set down certain rules, the most merciful and considerate to people, and required Muslims to observe them. Such rules go in line with the principles of international law in many ways. The principle of international law lacks divine authority that ensures putting them into practical effect. The Muslim rules, though they aim at justice and mercy, have the faith of Muslims as an authority to ensure them being carried out.

A. International law determines that the citizens who are not regular members of an army are not considered as fighters, and hence should not be inflicted with harm; only regular soldiers (or armed men engaged in a war) are considered as fighters. For the Qur'an says: "Permission to fight in the cause of God against those who attack you, but do not aggress as God does not like aggressors". (Al-Baqarah,190). It is an act of transgression if the believers fight those who do not fight them, people like their enemy's children and wives, as well as their sick, old and clergy.

B. International law forbids killing the wounded, torturing the enemy, destroying them by treachery or deception, or using bombs, missiles or weapons which add to their torture. It also prohibits the poisoning of wells, rivers and foods; it recommends that the corpses of the dead be respected, and prohibits any severity or mayhem be inflicted on them, regardless of the nationality of dead people. Islam applies the same principles, for when the Prophet appointed an army or troop leader he instructed him to follow the Koranic laws closely, not to be the aggressor or transgress the limits.

C. International law prescribes a number of principles regarding the proper treatment of captives. They should not be killed, injured, ill- treated or humiliated if they surrender or if they are deprived of their freedom. Islam

also urges the polite treatment of captives in general, and Allah commends the righteous who treat such people hospitably, saying: "They donate their favourite food to the poor, the orphan, and the captive by saying that we feed you for the sake of Allah; we expect no reward from you, nor thanks". (Al-Insan 8,9).

The aim of war according to the Koran is not to propagate or spread Islam, nor is it to expand the territory of the Islamic State or dominate, politically or militarily, non-Muslim regions. Rather, the aim of war is to establish and assure justice, and to annihilate oppression and abolish tyranny. It is true that the right to communicate the message of Islam is protected under Islamic law, and the Islamic society must, therefore, respect and defend this right. But the obligation to protect the right of Muslims, and for this matter all religious communities, to promote their belief and values should be carried out through peaceful means and in a friendly manner. The assurance of justice and destruction of tyranny are therefore the underlying objectives of war.

In Islamic history one may find an outlook of a different nature. When the Romans conquered any country, the first thing they would do is mass massacre. When the Muslims entered any country, they would give guarantees of life, property and honour to all the non-belligerents. Even in war a Muslims are not allowed to kill an old person, a woman, and a child, those who are crippled or disabled. Not only that, even trees are not to be cut and crops are not to be burnt. The entire Islamic history does not know of the concept of mass killing or massacre of enemies. One cannot find one single example of any Inquisition or ethnic cleansing on the name of Islam.

When the Holy Prophet entered Makkah victoriously, everyone was offered complete amnesty. When Caliph Umar entered Jerusalem he was not even prepared to pray in a Church for fear that those who came after him may treat the place as a mosque and take it away from the Christians. But when the Crusaders took the city of Jerusalem they slaughtered the whole population. In Spain not a single Muslim or Jew was left unexecuted or unexiled. It was the same in Sicily where all the mosques were demolished.

Even in the last century the same practice was adopted in Bosnia, Kosovo and Chechnya and many other parts of the world.

### **Ends cannot justify means**

Islam is very unique and firm in asserting that the ends cannot justify the means. The Koran states:

Not equal are the good deed and the evil deed. Repel with that which is fairer... (Fussilat, 34).

If you fight falsehood with falsehood it is falsehood that prevails. If you replace vice with vice, it is vice which triumphs. If you change evil by evil, it is evil which is victorious. Islam says that evil is to be eliminated by good. If you pursue this technique then only you would be able to fill the earth with goodness, and justice, and peace. As far as the wrong is concerned, Muslims are permitted to eliminate it. But as far as the truth and virtue is concerned, it is not to be enforced by power.

These are the ethics Islam gave to mankind to those who were at war with each other. The world has not been able to produce similar equitable laws as those of Islam that were given 1500 years ago (10).

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