



The UK Branch of the World Association for Al-Azhar Graduates (WAAG UK)



THE CONCEPT OF JIHAD IN ISLAM



Shaykh Prof Dr Ahmad Muhammad al-Tayyeb

THE GRAND IMAM & SHAYKH OF AL-AZHAR

No one could argue about the exalted mission of al-Azhar since its inception over a millennium ago. In fact, propagating true Islam, strengthening moderation of Islam and preserving belief and identity of the Ummah are the fundamentals of this mission. Therefore, it deserves worthily to be the beacon of knowledge and the beacon of Islam. In the light of the consecutive events we witness nowadays, the World Association for al-Azhar Graduates prepared videos for our scholars, in which WAAG addresses features of the moderate Azhari approach. Today, we begin with an article of Prof. Ahmad al-Tayyeb, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar on the "Concept of Jihad in Islam".

Jihad has a great merit in Islam; it comprises all aspects of life. Opinions about Jihad in Islam differed and rumors increased. This paper answers the questions about jihad; it differentiates between killing and fighting, and explains the rule for both of them.

It clarifies also if Jihad is an individual duty or collective duty and when jihad is imposed on Muslims. What is the reason which makes fighting non-Muslims permissible, enmity or infidelity? Furthermore, the paper differentiates between Jihad and war and clears up some facts about Jihad.

Definition of Jihad

In terms of language: Jihad is trying in earnest to devote strength and ability of either word or deed. In terms of Shariah: The comprehensive definition of Jihad is mentioned by Ibn Taymiyyah; he said that Jihad is devoting all abilities to achieve what is loved by Allah Almighty. He said also that Jihad is essentially reaching what is loved by Allah of faith and good deeds, and reject what is detested by Allah in the term of disbelief, depravity and disobedience.

The above mentioned definition includes all kinds of Jihad carried out by a Muslim. It includes perseverance in obedience to Allah by obeying His commandments and avoiding His prohibitions, in addition to diligence in calling others, Muslims or disbelievers, to obedience to Allah as well as diligence in fighting disbelievers so that the word of Allah be exalted. This definition includes other types of Jihad. It is worth noting that Jihad is legitimate only when it is devoted "in the way of Allah" (al-jihad fi sabil Allah). Any Jihad will be denied if it is not devoted to Allah.

Merits of Jihad in the way of Allah

There are many merits of Jihad and its considerable reward, including, but not limited to:

1. Jihad in the way of Allah is a good bargain: Allah said: "God has bought from the believers their selves and their possessions against the gift of Paradise; they fight in the way of God; they kill, and are killed; that is a promise binding upon God in the Torah, and the Gospel, and the Koran; and who fulfills his covenant truer than God? So rejoice in the bargain you have made with Him; that is the mighty triumph." [Q. 9:111]
2. The considerable reward of mujahid" struggler" on the frontier in the way of Allah: It has been narrated on the authority of Salman (May Allah be pleased with him) who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (bpuh) saying: Keeping watch for a day and a night is better (in terms of reward) than fasting for a whole month and standing in prayer every night. If a person dies while performing this duty, he will go on receiving his reward for his meritorious deeds perpetually and will be saved from the torture of the grave.
3. Merit of guarding in the way of Allah: It has been narrated on the authority of Abu Raihanah (May Allah be pleased with him) who said: "I heard the Messenger of Allah (bpuh) saying: "Two eyes will never be touched by the fire of Hell, an eye which weeps out of fear of Allah and an eye which stays awake in the way of Allah." Ibn 'Abbas (May Allah be pleased with them) reported: "I heard the Messenger of Allah (bpuh) saying, "Two eyes will never be touched by the fire of Hell; an eye which weeps out of Fear of Allah and an eye which spends the night in guarding in the way of Allah ."
4. Nothing is equal to Jihad: Abu Hurairah said: "A man came to the Messenger of Allah (bpuh) and said: 'Tell me of an action that is equal to Jihad.' He said: 'I cannot. When the mujahid goes out, can you enter the Masjid and stand in prayer and never rest, and fast and never break your fast?' He said: 'Who can do that?'"

Classes of Jihad in the way of Allah

Jihad has four classes: Jihad against one's self, Jihad against Satan, Jihad against disbelievers and hypocrites, Jihad against heresiarchs.

First class: Jihad against one's self

It has four categories:

1. Jihad against one's self to learn teachings of Islam.
2. Jihad against one's self to act in accordance with what one has learned.
3. Jihad against one's self to call to Islam intentionally and to teach whoever does not know about it.
4. Jihad against one's self to bear patiently the difficulties involved in calling people to Allah and their insults for the sake of Allah.

Second class: Jihad against Satan

It has two categories:

1. Jihad against Satan to ward off the doubts and suspicions that Satan stirs up to undermine faith.
2. Jihad against Satan to defend from what is thrown into the heart of lusts and corrupt intentions.

The first category is followed by certainty in faith, and the second is followed by patience. Allah said:

"And We appointed from among them leaders guiding by Our command, when they endured patiently, and had sure faith in Our signs." [Q. 32:24] Satan is the most pernicious enemy, Allah said: "Surely Satan is an enemy to you; so take him for an enemy. He calls his party only that they may be among the inhabitants of the Blaze." [Q. 35:6]

Third class: Jihad against disbelievers and hypocrites

It has four categories: Jihad of heart, Jihad by tongue, Jihad by wealth and Jihad by hand. Jihad against disbelievers should be by the hand; Jihad against hypocrites should be by tongue.

Fourth class: Jihad against aggressors and heresiarchs

It has three categories:

1. Jihad by hand if one could do that.
2. If he is unable to do so, then by tongue.
3. If he is unable to do so, then with heart. On the authority of Abu Said (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: "Messenger of Allah (bpuh) said: "Whoever amongst you sees an evil, he must change it with his hand; if he is unable to do so, then with his tongue; and if he is unable to do so, then with his heart; and that is the least of faith."

These are the thirteen categories of Jihad, and whoever performs all these categories, is the best worshipper. Ranks of people vary according to variation in performing these categories of Jihad.

Jihad in Quran and Sunnah

The word "Jihad", along with its derivatives, has been mentioned in the Holy Quran thirty two times, whereas the word "War" has been mentioned four times only.

It is noted that the meaning of Jihad in Quran and the texts of Sunnah has a broader and much more general meaning and definition than that of fighting; indeed, the particular meaning of the word "Fight" is the armed confrontation in wars, which indicates that Jihad means exerting every possible effort in resisting the enemy, whether this enemy is an offensive person, or a devil whom a believer should struggle and resist, or even resisting the evil of One's self.

Jihad has several meanings as well as several methods; there is a Jihad by the soul, by money, and by arguing and supporting a point of view with proof and evidence from Quran, and this particular kind of Jihad is applied in the field of interpreting Islam and calling for it. All these kinds, methods and meanings of Jihad have been mentioned in Quran and Sunnah, as Allah tells Prophet Muhammad (bpuh): "So obey not the disbelievers, but strive against them (by preaching) with the utmost endeavor with it (the Quran)". {Q. 25:52} In fact, Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) had called the Jihad against one's self, Satan and earthly desires, as the greater Jihad, while the lesser Jihad is fighting in the battlefield; many Hadiths mentioned the distinction between the two kinds of Jihad:

"The best Jihad for a person is to struggle against himself and his desires".

"The mujahid is one who strives against his own self".

"Struggle your desires the same way you struggle your enemies".

We should know that Jihad with soul and money (such as fighting against the enemy or funding the army) is conditioned in Quran with being in the way of Allah, so that the word of Allah would have the upper hand. This makes us notice an original fundament in Islam, which is linking the legitimacy of Jihad with noble humanitarian purposes, which indicates that Jihad in the philosophy of Islam does not mean land occupation or expansion or dominating the resources of the others or subjugating other people and nations. In fact, Jihad in the philosophy of Islam does not promote the materialistic pur-

poses which usually motivate wars in the greatest civilizations, either in the ancient or the modern times.

Despite the several meanings of Jihad, however, as we mentioned, the most common and famous meaning of it used in the Islamic literature and writings is fighting the enemy in the way of Allah.

Jihad and War

Jihad, definitely, does not mean war, whatever its motivations, reasons and purposes; yet, Jihad means to approach war, only, in the way of Allah. If war abandons this framework, this cannot be deemed as Jihad; however, it becomes a dreadful action, rejected by Islam, its values and Shariah. Thus, we shall define Jihad as: fighting in the way of Allah, either engaging directly in a military action (war) or donating money or giving an opinion, or providing medical services, or exerting any possible effort in order to defend faith and homeland.

However, while defining the meaning of Jihad or fighting in the way of Allah, we should be aware of the broad difference between the meaning of "Fight" and "Kill". The word "killing" means that one person takes a weapon and kills another person, thus we have in this action a killer and a killed person. While the word "fighting" indicates that there should be two equal counterparts, whereas each of them is practicing the action of killing against each other. Thus, the word "Jihad" refers to the second meaning which is "fighting" one another, not someone "killing" another person. The conclusion of this analysis is that: the order of Jihad in Islam is not an order of killing someone; however, it is an order to fight, to confront and to repel the attack of the enemy in the battlefield. Hence, Jihad, in this context, is an ancient Islamic designation to what is known now as "Ministry of Defense", or the "Supreme Councils of War" and the "Ministries of Colonization" in the West. Despite the fact that these designations imply terror, fear and aggression, however, no one deprived the political systems and countries of the right of having a ministry of war or defense, whereas the Anglo-American media condemns the right of Jihad in Islam.

Consequently, the word "Jihad" carries more and broader humanitarian meanings than that of the ministry of defense, since the word "War" in the Islamic Shariah includes both the offensive and defensive war, while the meaning of Jihad in the Arabic language, implies only the defensive war. Thus, the duty of Jihad, which the West tries to deform its meanings and objectives, indicates defending oneself, faith, and homeland. No sane person can bring evidence and proof that falsify and deny this natural right, unless he/she is one of the new Sophists who abuse and play with the obviously logical facts and axioms.

Judgment of Jihad

If Jihad in Islam is a defensive war in the way of Allah (fi sabil Allah), then it is logical to be an obligation when conditions and circumstances require it. However, in our Islamic heritage, there are numerous and various viewpoints regarding whether Jihad is an obligation or not.

It could be concluded from this research paper that Jihad is an obligation and an imposition upon Muslims, although this does not mean, at all, that Muslims should carry their swords or weapons to fight others. It also had never taken place in the history of Islam and in the history of the spread of its civilization in the East and West that Muslims had dealt with others in this incredible falsified manner that many people propagate nowadays. However, this means that Muslims should practice Jihad in accordance with their conditions whether by their hearts, their tongues, their wealth or by Quran.

Regarding Jihad with one's self (fighting), it is not an individual duty. In other words, the army dep-

utilizes for Muslims in fulfilling this obligation. Hence, other Muslims are discharged of it and will not be asked about it before Allah almighty on the Day of Rising. In other words, Jihad with one's self (fighting) is not an individual duty like the duty of praying (salat) or fasting (sawm); however it is a collective duty when some fulfill it, others are discharged of it. In some cases, fighting could be an individual duty. When an enemy invades a Muslim country and the army requires the assistance of individuals, in such case every Muslim should struggle against this enemy with his own self, money or with other means. This is a logical matter; only those who deny the right of people to defend themselves and their countries dispute this fact.

When Jihad becomes an obligation?

When Jihad becomes an obligation on Muslims? By referring to the Holy Quran, to the Prophetic Sunnah and to Muslim imams in early Islamic ages, we find a candid answer stating that the Jihad imposed on the Islamic Ummah means: fighting against those who fight against the Ummah. Allah almighty says: "Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but aggress not, God loves not the aggressors" [Q. 2:190] Allah almighty also says: "And fight against them wherever you come upon them, and expel them from where they expelled you; persecution is more grievous than fighting. But fight them not by the Holy Mosque until they fight you there; then, if they fight you, fight against them, such is the recompense of unbelievers" [Q. 2:191] And "And fight the unbelievers totally even as they fight you totally" [Q. 9:36]

Then, Jihad is an individual duty with regards to the Armed Forces, since it is the entity in charge of rendering the country stable and secure against foreign attacks. It takes on this burden on behalf of the rest of Muslims. In other words, Jihad becomes an individual duty with regards to soldiers when they are ordered to practice it.

When was Jihad imposed?

Among historical and religious facts in Islam is that Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) and his Companions had spent 13 years in Makkah facing injustice and bearing harm and even torment being inflicted upon them by infidels of Quraysh. However, Muslims had never fought against them or drawn their swords in their faces. Many times, his Companions had asked for his permission to fight against them but he had not permitted them. However, he had allowed them to migrate from Makkah to Abyssinia (al-Habasha), a Christian country ruled at that that time by a Christian emperor (al-Najashi). It is worth noting that vulnerable Muslims had migrated twice to al-Habasha during the Meeccan era and had sought al-Najashi's refuge. Actually, he had protected and secured them from the injustice of pagans.

The conditions of Muslims had remained the same until Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) migrated to Madinah. During the second Hijri year, Allah almighty permitted Muslims to fight against and face their enemies. The first Quranic verses related to fighting are: "Sanction is given to those who have been fought because they have been wronged; and Allah is indeed able to give them victory. Those who have been driven from their homes unjustly only because they said: Our Lord is Allah - For had it not been for Allah's repelling some men by means of others, cloisters, churches, oratories and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is much mentioned, would assuredly have been pulled down. Assuredly God will help the one who helps Him -- surely God is All-strong, All-mighty" [Q. 22: 39 and 40] These two verses are crystal clear with regards to the lawfulness of fighting in Islam, as it is connected with bringing victory to the oppressed, fighting against injustice they are exposed to and empowering them to live a secure life like others; a right considered by fair people as undeniable and lawful. By reflecting on these two verses, we will reveal some aspects of Islam's justice, equity and respect as follows:

First: The first Quranic verse states that Muslims were not the ones who started with fighting against infidels. On the contrary, Muslims were given the sanction to restrain attack and fighting already befalling them. This is demonstrated by using the passive form (have been fought) which indicates that infidels were the ones who fought Muslims first.

Second: The second Quranic verse shows that Muslims were unjustly killed and were expelled from their homes without any guilt or crime that necessitate forcing them out of their countries. Thus, Jihad became lawful to Muslims for defense rather than for aggression; a matter approved by all religions, norms and laws.

Third: What is most surprising is that the legitimate Jihad stated in this verse is a Jihad to defend all divine religions and not only Islam. This is demonstrated by the Quranic verse: "For had it not been for Allah's repelling some men by means of others, cloisters, churches, oratories and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is much mentioned" [Q. 22:4] It was expected that Allah would allow Muslims to fight for the sake of securing worship in Mosques only; however the Quranic verse mentioned that Allah did not allow Muslims to fight for securing Mosques only but also for securing other places of worship for Jews, Christians and Majus (Magi). Does that mean that Muslims have to fight for securing freedom of worship in churches and temples in the like manner as they fight for securing it in Mosques? The answer is "yes" and it would be astonishing to discover that Islam urges Muslims to fight for the sake of their religion and that of others alike.

Abd Allah ibn Abbas (May Allah be Pleased with Him) interpreted this verse saying: "Allah defends ahl al-dīmmah by the religion of Islam and Muslims". Muslim Philosopher Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (Died in 606 H) referred the point of mentioning Churches and temples along with Mosques, in the Islamic defense plan stated in the Quran, to the fact that cloisters, churches and oratories are places where the name of Allah is glorified, since they are not at the level of pagan temples. In other words, when the Holy Verse allows Muslims to fight in defend of places of worship it does not take into consideration Mosques only but also shows due regard to other places of worship where the name of Allah is extolled.

Peace is the basis of the fundamental of relationship by Muslims

Therefore, Jihad was permissible as a means of defense not as initiating an attack. This is an inevitable result of the philosophy of Quran which declares diversity in religions, colors, languages and human races. We read in the Holy Quran that if Allah had wanted to create all people with one religion, one belief and one language, he would have done so. However, Allah wanted to create diversity. The Holy Quran told us that the enactment of Allah in diversity of religions and beliefs will continue until the Day of Rising, Allah said: "Had thy Lord willed, He would have made mankind one nation; but they continue in their differences" [Q. 11:118]

To us, Muslims, the Divine Will controls the diversity or difference in such matters. The Holy Quran draws our attention that getting to know each other is the true relation among people when they are different, which means co-habiting and integrating one another. Allah said: "O mankind, We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most godfearing of you. God is All-knowing, All-aware." [Q. 49:13]

Then the third truth which resulted logically from the above mentioned truths confirmed that: "No compulsion is there in religion." [Q. 2:256] The Prophet is just a reminder: "Then remind them! Thou art only a reminder; thou art not charged to oversee them." [Q. 88: 21, 22] "And if thy Lord had willed,

whoever is in the earth would have believed, all of them, all together. Wouldst thou then constrain the people, until they are believers?" [Q. 10:99] "We know very well what they say; thou art not a tyrant over them. Therefore remind by the Koran him who fears My threat." [Q. 50:45] "But if they turn away, We sent thee not to be a guardian over them. It is for thee only to deliver the Message. And when We let man taste mercy from Us, he rejoices in it; but if some evil befalls him for that his own hands have forwarded, then surely man is unthankful." [Q. 42:48]

Islamic knowledge has no probability for imposing beliefs on any human being, neither by moral compulsion nor by material one. Furthermore, Islamic philosophy does not use belief and faith to make interests or to take advantage of people's needs. Thus, Islam does not believe in missionary work which depends on exchanging beliefs for services. In addition, Islam does not recognize a belief which is proclaimed by force or money and interests. Both ways of embracing beliefs are mistaken.

What is the reason behind fighting against non-Muslims? Aggression or infidelity?

What is the reason which makes fighting non-Muslims permissible? Is it aggression or infidelity, i.e. denial of Islamic religion? Muslim scholars concur with one answer depending on the Holy Quran and the earlier experience of the Prophet with non-Muslims. This answer confirms that aggression is the major reason which makes fighting permissible. Thus, infidelity alone, without aggression, does not permit war. The Holy Quran endorsed freedom of people to believe in Allah or not. Allah said: "Say: 'The truth is from your Lord; so let whosoever will believe, and let whosoever will disbelieve.'" [Q. 18:29] It is impossible for Quran to permit fighting disbelievers so as to force them to convert to Islam, otherwise Quran would be inconsistent ;one verse invalidating the other. In this respect, enemies of Quran tried hard to search for such defects in Quran, but they did not find one. Thus, peace is the established relation between Muslims and non-Muslims; this was mentioned explicitly in the Holy Quran: "God 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." [Q. 60:8]

There are some, peculiar, juristic opinions which were misunderstood. Such opinions supposed that infidelity permits fighting and that Muslims shall fight non-Muslims to force them into converting to Islam or into paying Jizyah. These juristic opinions were strongly criticized by most of Muslim scholars according to many verses as well as the wars waged by the Prophet (bpuh) against his enemies. These were defensive wars as history recorded. Islam forbade killing of children, women, sheikhs, monks, blinds, disabled and employees on the enemy side, since they are unable to fight. Therefore, killing them was forbidden. If infidelity is the reason which permits fighting, then killing the feeble would be lawful.

Facts about Jihad

1. It is not true that Islam is a religion of sword and violence, as it is frequently repeated in the writings of some western writers, who are specialized in distorting the image of Islam and its culture. However, at this point, we will suffice to draw the attention of those writers to look upon the holy Qur'an which has determined the freedom of believe in plain and obvious Quranic verses. Thus, Qur'an cannot determine in the same time using the sword (war) or anything else rather than it to spread Islam, as the call for Islam is accomplished through conviction by proofs and evidences. However, the comparison between Qur'an and other divine books proves that the word "Sword" had never occurred in the Quranic texts. This is a surprising issue, especially if we take into consideration that the sword, at the time of the revelation of Qur'an, was a symbol of courage, chivalry for the individuals and the tribes. While in Book of Joshua, in the Hebrew Bible, the word "Sword" had occurred thirteen times. Additionally, there verses that order to burn everything the Children of Israel seize from the towns and the

territories they occupy, and kill whoever and whatever they may find alive with the sword, with a human being, an animal or a plant. Again, in the Gospel of Matthew, in the New Testament, there is a very direct and plain text that is attributed to Prophet Isa (Jesus) (bpuh) where he said: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword". I shall ask now: which of the two books brings peace and mercy to the world? Is it the book that the word "Sword", and phrases like "burning people with fire" and "killing animals and innocent livestock", or is it a book that its verses have been impeccable of mentioning such terms and sayings that excite terror and horror in the souls?

2. It is not true that Muslims are passionate for wars; on the contrary, Qur'an includes several verses that call for peace, and give every possible method to void the catastrophe of war. Prophet Muhammad himself (bpuh) told Muslims that: "Do not long for meeting your enemy, and ask Allah for safety (from all sorts of evil)." And: "Let the Abyssinians alone as long as they let you alone, and let the Turks alone as long as they leave you alone". We should pay the attention here that Muslims did not fight in Abyssinia, despite the fact that it is approximately close to the Arab Peninsula, and the Muslims knowledge with the conditions of the Abyssinians. However, they did not fight such Empire at its time of weakness and did not colonize it, yet, they fought Quraysh tribe, Persia and Rum, since these nations had launched areal aggression on Muslims, and were forming high risk on the presence on the nation of Islam, while Abyssinia was a peaceful and neutral nation.

3. Law in the Islamic law (Sahriah) is regulated with humane and moral principles that we still miss in the wars of the 2th century's nations. In fact, there several moral principles that regulated the Muslims in their wars with the other nations; however, we will suffice mentioning what Muslims know about Prophet Muhammad (bpuh). As a matter of fact, Prophet Muhammad ordered the army's commanders not to kill young boys, children, elderly people, women, or weak people appealing for help, as well as prohibiting the mutilation of the dead bodies. Indeed, the army's commanders memorized the rule and the law of war by heart, which is: "Do not commit treachery or deviate from the right path. You must not mutilate dead bodies. Neither kill a child, nor a woman, nor an aged man. Bring no harm to the trees, nor burn them with fire, especially those which are fruitful. Slay not any of the enemy's flock, save for your food. You are likely to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic services; leave them alone".

4. There is a certain fact about the quick spread of Islam, that some people conceal which is: Islam is a simple religion in its doctrine, an ethical religion in its orders, judgments and law (Shariah). The allegation that Islam had spread by sword and violence is a big lie, and the evidence is: Islam is now spreading among millions of Europeans and Americans, in a way that has disturbed both the political and the church circles; thus, where is that sword or violence that confessed and persuaded the Europeans and the Americans to convert into Islam? However, we should take into consideration that Islam does not recognize Proselytism that is adopted in the Western churches, and allocates billions of money to convert Muslims into Christianity. Islam only recognizes the conviction based on thinking, evidence and consideration, had it not been for the narrow space, we could have narrated some of the sayings and testimonies of the fair and unbiased Westerns that prove and confirm every word reported in this research.

*Translated from Arabic to English at WAAG International in Cairo
by Sorraya Aziz, Ayat Nabil and Muhammad Nasr.*

WAAG UK

Eaton Hall, Retford, Nottinghamshire, DN22 0PR, England, UK

Telephone: +44 (0) 1777 706 441

Email: info@waag-azhar.org.uk | Website: www.waag-azhar.org.uk