

***Jihād* and War in Islam**

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Jihād means to exert oneself fully in an endeavour. Just as this term appears in the Qur'ān for a general struggle in the way of God, it also appears as a term for waging war in His way (*Qitāl fī sabīl-Allāh*). Two forms of this war have been described:

1. War against the denial of Islam
2. War against oppression and injustice

The first kind of war does not concern the *Sharī'ah* (Divine law); instead, it relates to the Divine principle of conclusive argument from God, which principle manifests itself in this world on the basis of God's direct decree and through those personalities whom He grants the status of *risālat*.¹ In human history, this status was given for the last time to the Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him). The battles that the Prophet and his companions fought under this principle against the defiance of Islam were not just battles; instead, they were Divine punishment which, exactly in accordance with God's ways and His Judgment, visited first the polytheists of Arabia and the Israelites and the Nazarenes there and then, after them, some peoples outside the Arabian Peninsula. The Divine scheme of sending prophets and messengers ended with Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him). Therefore, with the passing away of the Prophet and his companions, that Divine process has ended in which a certain people could be declared as infidels, battles and wars could be done against them, and the vanquished in such fighting could be killed or

1. Translator's note: When used as a specific term in the Qur'ān, *Risālat* in Ghāmidī's interpretation refers to the special position of a messenger and prophet of God sent to a people as His final judgement for or against them.

subjugated and made subservient through *Jizyah* (a tribute). No one until the Judgment Day has any right now to wage a war against any nation for this purpose or to subjugate a vanquished people by making them subservient through *Jizyah*.

The second form of war, however, does relate to the *Sharī'ah*. Therefore, the only possibility for Muslims to wage a war as *Jihād* is in a fight against oppression and injustice. In the *Sharī'ah*, this is the only reason for an armed *Jihād*. This *Jihād* is not done for self-interest, wealth, conquest, rule, fame, honour, affiliation, partisanship, or animosity. It is God's war that His servants fight in His way on His command and in accordance with His directives. They are only His instruments in this war. They have no personal objective; just the objectives of God, which they intend to achieve. Therefore, they are not supposed to deviate from this position to the slightest extent.

Important sections of the law given by the Qur'ān for this form of war are summarized below:

1. The directive of war and *Jihād* has been given to the Muslims as a collectivity. None of the pertinent verses in the Qur'ān addresses the Muslims in their individual capacity. As in the case of the verses related to *hudūd-o ta'zīrāt* (legal punishments in the *Sharī'ah* and Islamic law), the Muslims become addressees of these verses too as a collectivity. Therefore, in these matters also, only their collectivity has the right to take any steps. No individual or group from amongst their collectivity has the right to take any steps in this regard on their behalf.

2. In the Qur'ān, this directive is actually for ending religious persecution. Religious persecution means that, through oppression or torture, a person is coerced into renouncing his or her faith. All other violations of people's rights in relation to life, wealth, intellect and opinion fall under the same category. Therefore, this kind of *Jihād* can be done against any form of oppression and injustice.

3. *Jihād* does not become obligatory for the Muslims until their military strength against their enemy reaches a certain level. Therefore, it is imperative that, to fulfill this responsibility, they should strive for consolidation of their moral and ethical fabric and also do their best in the endeavour to augment their military strength to the extent that the Qur'ān requires in the directive that it gave when, in view of the situation the Muslims were facing in the times of the

Prophet, it specified 1:2 as the proportion between them and their enemies.

4. Shirking from *Jihād* becomes a crime only when a Muslim chooses to sit back even after the general call has been made. In this situation, aversion is indeed a crime similar to a great transgression. If such call has not been made, this *Jihād* is still a great privilege that every Muslim should try to have. However, in this case, it is just a privilege in its import. It is not the kind of obligation which, if left unfulfilled, makes a person a transgressor.

5. *Jihād* cannot be waged in disregard of ethical bounds. Basic ethical and moral imperatives remain effective in all situations and precede every directive. God has not permitted any person to violate these ethical and moral principles even in battle or war. In this regard, the most important guideline that the Qur'ān has given pertains to the sanctity of treaties and pacts. God has placed violation or breach of pact amongst the worst of sins. Therefore, help, in violation of a treaty, cannot be provided to Muslims even if they are persecuted by another nation with whom the treaty has been made. Similarly, no steps can be taken against people who are not involved in war or choose to remain neutral in that situation. This *Jihād* can be done only against the combatants.

(Translated by Asif Iftikhar)
