

President's Message

TOP TEN REASONS WHY ISLAM CONDEMNS TERRORISM:

A Guide for our Youth

Assalaamu alaikum, brothers and sisters:

In our last newsletter, I wrote about why there is nothing Islamic about the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria ("ISIS"). I asked that, if you are confused or lack the background to evaluate who and what ISIS is and what it is not, you please talk to someone in Islamic Society of Milwaukee leadership or to another educated adult Muslim that you trust in our community. I warned you not to take your guidance from social media.

Since I last wrote, we have witnessed more killings by ISIS, Boko Haram, the targeting and massacre of children in Pakistan and another story about youth from Chicago being recruited to ISIS. I thought I would offer you some short concrete responses to why terrorism is forbidden in Islam, which you might find useful in educating your families, your friends and others about what Islam has to say about terrorism.

1. Islam Forbids Murder. Terrorism most frequently takes the form of murder. Murder is strictly forbidden in the Qur'an. Qur'an 6:151 says, "and do not take any human being's life-[the life] which God has declared to be sacred-otherwise than in [the pursuit of] justice". The exception "otherwise than in [the pursuit of] justice" refers to a government's ability to impose capital punishment for certain crimes after due process of law. The murder of a single human being is compared in the Qur'an as being as grave and weighty as the murder of all mankind (5:32)

2. Islam Forbids Compulsion in Religion. If the motive for terrorism is religious (e.g. Boko Haram), it is forbidden in the Qur'an to attempt to impose Islam on other people: "There shall be no coercion in matters of faith. Distinct has now become the right way from [the way of] error..." (2:256).

3. Islam Forbids Aggressive Warfare. The Quran says, "But if (those who have broken their treaty with you and have aggressed against you) incline to peace, incline thou to it as well, and place thy trust in God: verily, He alone is all-hearing, all-knowing!" (8:61) Quran 2:190 also says, "And fight in God's cause against those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression-for, verily, God does not love aggressors."

4. Islam Forbids Surprise Initiation of War. As a further inhibition to aggressive war, Muslim leaders must give the enemy fair warning that war is imminent. In one incident, the Qur'an imposed a 4-month notice (9:1-15).

5. War Cannot Be Declared Except by a Government After Mutual Consultation. According to Islamic law, not just any one person or any group can declare or launch a war. This is the prerogative of the duly constituted leadership of the Muslim government

in mutual consultation with Islamically knowledgeable representatives.

6. Islam Forbids the Killing of Innocent Non-combatants. Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, included these instructions to his armies: "I instruct you in ten matters: Do not kill women, children, the old, or the infirm; ... do not destroy any town . . ." (Malik's Muwatta', "Kitab al-Jihad."). All of the heinous acts that we have read about in the past few months involve murder of non-combatants.



7. Terrorism is hirabah, not jihad. Terrorism is not to be confused with nor can it be called jihad. Jihad, when discussed in the form of communal armed fighting (as opposed to the individual struggle to resist evil and do good), is subject to the conditions laid out above regarding forbidding aggression, declaration by a government and forbidding killing of innocents. Terrorism under Islamic law is called hirabah, which is any illicit use of fear and coercion in public spaces for money or power, and is forbidden. Islamic law equates hirabah with brigandage and highway robbery and it is potentially a capital crime under Islamic law.

8. Islam Forbids Returning Evil With Evil. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) counseled doing good to those who harm you and commanded, "Do not be people without minds of your own, saying that if others treat you well you will treat them well, and that if they do wrong you will do wrong to them. Instead, accustom yourselves to do good if people do good and not to do wrong (even) if they do evil." (Al-Tirmidhi) In other words, there is no Islamic justification for a Muslim to commit an act of terrorism or any other evil act in return for a real or perceived act of evil done against him or her or others.

9. Islam Warns Against Acting Out of Hatred. The Qur'an demands of believers that they exercise justice toward people even where they have reason to be angry with them: "And do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness." (5:8)

10. Islam Requires Protection of the People of the Book. The Quran does not preach violence against Jews and Christians. In fact, the Jewish prophets and John and Jesus, son of Mary, (peace be upon all of them) are honored in the Qur'an. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in his charter of rights to St. Catherine's Monastery in Egypt in 628 C.E. made eternal and universal promises to protect Christians and their rights. In another saying the Prophet (pbuh) said, "He (i.e., a Muslim) who wrongs a Jew or a Christian will have myself as his accuser on the Day of Judgment." (Al-Bukhari)

May Allah (SWT) guide and protect us, our families and our communities. Ameen.

Ahmed J. Quereshi, President, Islamic Society of Milwaukee