

## COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ON JIHAD

Islam permits fighting in self-defence, against oppression of one's religion or on the part of those whose homeland has been occupied by a foreign and oppressive regime and they have been expelled forcibly from their homes.

It lays down strict rules of combat, which include prohibitions against harming civilians and against destroying crops, trees and livestock.

As Muslims see it, injustice would be triumphant in the world if good men were not prepared to risk their lives in a righteous cause.

The Qur'an says: "Fight in the cause of God against those who fight you, but do not transgress limits. God does not love transgressors" (2:190).

"If they seek peace, then seek you peace. And trust in God for He is the One that hears and knows all things" (8:61).

"If anyone takes one life without justification it is as if he has taken the lives of all humanity and if anyone saves one life it is as if one has saved the whole of humanity" (5:35).

War, therefore, is the last resort, and is subject to the rigorous conditions laid down by the Qur'an and the guidelines set by the Prophet.

The term jihad literally means 'struggle' and Muslims believe that there are two kinds.

One form of jihad is the internal struggle against the self and the temptations of this world, the egotistic desires and the struggle against evil.

When faced with situations of anger, provocation, injustice or aggression the challenge is to deal with the situation patiently, peacefully and with humility- this is the Greater Jihad.

The other form of jihad is that which involves physical fighting as in war and is only to be waged in defence. Aggression is forbidden.

In Islam there is no terminology such as "holy war" as Islam does not segregate between the

religious and the secular.

They are one and the same. Therefore, an injustice is neither religious nor secular. One of the important conditions for engaging in jihad against an aggressor is that innocent lives should not be targeted. This means in particular women, children and the elderly. All those captured as prisoners of war must be treated humanely and be fed and clothed.

Muslims believe that if one follows these sincere and honourable conditions and is killed in battle then one is considered to have died a martyr or shahid.

Extremism and terrorism condemned by Islam

Islam does not preach nor condones any form of terrorism or any acts of violence.

Various terms are often used in the media which promote a negative image of Muslims in political conflicts around the world.

The terms fundamentalist and militant Islam are Western constructs which promote negative stereotypes and have no relevance to Islam.

The distinction must be made to be fair to the innocent pawns caught up in the crossfire, that these conflicts are politically motivated and usually involve organisations unrelated to Islam but linked to political factions within the society.

There are extremists in any society and this is where the violence has often stemmed from. Such activities cannot and must not be linked with any religion.

Islam stands for peace and harmony and, like most Australians, Muslim Australians are ordinary and peaceful people.

Islam advocates patience and moderation in difficult and trying situations. Allah exhorts Muslims:

"Help one another in noble actions and pious duty. Help not one another in sin and transgression" (5:2).

"Nay, seek (Allah's) help with patient perseverance and prayer: It is indeed hard, except to those who are humble. Who bear in mind the certainty that they are to meet their Lord, and that they are to return to Him" (2:145).

"For, Allah is with those who restrain themselves and those who do good" (16:128).

### Islam's respect for other Religions

Islam teaches Muslims to be kind and just in dealing with people of other religions.

"As for such as do not fight against you on account of (your) faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity: for, verily, God loves those who act equitably" (60-8).

"Because of this, then, summon [all mankind], and pursue the right course, as thou hast been bidden [by God]; and do not follow their likes and dislikes, but say: 'I believe whatever revelation God has bestowed from on high; I am bidden to bring about equity in your mutual views. God is our Sustainer as well as your Sustainer.

To us shall be accounted our deeds, and to you, your deeds. Let there be no contention between us and you: God will bring us all together - for with Him is all journey's end" (42:15).

Islamic law protects the privileged status of minorities and this is why non-Muslims' places of worship have flourished all over the Islamic world.

History provides many examples of Muslim tolerance towards other faiths: when the Caliph Omar entered Jerusalem in the year 634, Islam granted freedom of worship to all religious communities in the city and under 500 years of the Muslim Moors in Spain, Christian Churches and Jewish institutions flourished.

Also, during the 14th century in Anatolia the Christian Armenians preferred the rule of the just Muslim Ottomans rather than the harsh rule of the Byzantine empire.

There is a popular saying which exemplifies this; "Better the Sultan's Turban than the

Pontiff's Cap".

Islamic law also permits non-Muslim minorities to set up their own courts, which implement family laws drawn up by the minorities themselves.

<http://www.afic.com.au/api07.htm#Islam>