

Good News

'...And give good news to those who do good (to others)' – Holy Quran 22:37

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When is War Permissible in Islam and are 'Forced Conversions' Allowed According to the Holy Quran

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Fighting is enjoined on you, though it is disliked by you; and it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you love a thing while it is evil for you; and Allah knows while you know not. – 2:216

Reading this verse of the Holy Quran, many ask the question so why was fighting a necessity? Was it driven by greed for wealth and booty? If it was, why does the Holy Quran say they, the Muslims,

'disliked it'? So let those who think that the Muslims fought for plunder ponder over this verse and others referred to herein.

It is a well-known fact of history that the Muslims were too weak to carry on the struggle against the mighty forces that were bent upon their destruction, and they disliked the war. Only a diseased brain could come to the conclusion that the Prophet 'had now determined to resort to the sword to accomplish what his preaching had failed to do.' Where were the military forces with which the Prophet was going to convert the proud and warring Arabs who had not listened to his word? His first army at Badr¹, when the Quraish of Makkah were marching upon Madinah with a thousand of their most experienced warriors, was 313, including boys of thirteen years of age. Could any sensible man say that the Prophet was now going to convert the hundreds of thousands of Arab warriors with his 313 unequipped

¹ The place where the first battle against the Muslims took place

and inexperienced followers? And do not the very words of the verse give the lie to this most irrational conclusion? A picture of distresses and afflictions to which these early Muslims were subjected is drawn in just two verses before this one namely verse 2:214 which reads:

Or do you think that you will enter the Garden, while there has not yet befallen you the like of what befell those who have passed away before you. Distress and affliction befell them and they were shaken violently, so that the Messenger and those who believed with him said: When will the help of Allāh come? Now surely the help of Allāh is near!

They were few in numbers, poor, exiled, and distressed, yet it became inevitable that they should fight in self-defence or they would be destroyed. It was their utter weakness and the enormous disparity of numbers that made them dislike the fighting.

Even after a few years when the Muslim numbers grew and they marched onto Mecca with a strong army, the Holy Prophet gave complete amnesty to all his blood-thirsty enemies. Mecca was taken without raising the sword. Why? When the Prophet was in a position of dominant power over his enemies did he not massacre them once and for all? Because it

was not in his nature to do so – nay! he came as **‘a mercy to the nations.’ -21:107**

In the verse quoted at the beginning, the Holy Quran explains the philosophical contrast underlying the necessity of war. Whilst on the one hand it is an *‘an act that is undesirable’* it is, nevertheless, in certain extreme cases, the only *‘means to establish peace and order in the world’* which after all is the ultimate goal and desire of all ‘peace loving’ people on earth. In this context, any right minded person must agree that it would be totally naïve and short-sighted to assume that aggressive forces bent on creating disorder can be wished away by idle onlookers. We have seen too many examples that refute this assumption in this age already.

Islam is a religion of ‘peace’ not ‘pacifism’. Repelling such aggressive forces, Muslims are taught in the Holy Quran is vital in ensuring, justice, peace and order prevail on earth. Thus the Quran states:

And were it not for Allah’s repelling some men by others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder; but God is full of grace to the worlds - (2:251)

Hence, war is not glorified in any way; rather it is clearly stated as being a condition that is ***disliked*** and the permission to fight, it is explained, is an

illustration of Allah's grace in the quest of peace and justice.

Under which conditions is war permitted?

The Holy Quran does not leave mankind without guidance as to the conditions under which war is permissible or justified and thus it provides that:

Permission (to fight) is given to those **on whom war is made**, because they are *oppressed*. *And surely Allah is able to assist them -* (22:39)

This makes it quite clear that Islam permits Muslims to engage in war only in **self-defence** when under attack by aggressive war-mongers and thus oppressed by them. Lest it be asserted that *oppression* is a vague term, broad enough to include the most minor of circumstances, the very next verse in the Holy Quran clearly defines the parameters of 'oppression' as follows:

Those who are driven from their homes **without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is God**. And if God did not **repel** some people by others, cloisters, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which God's name is much remembered, would have been pulled down - (22:40)

Accordingly, the type of 'oppression' that justifies military conflict,

is when the rights to life and liberty are seized and freedom of religion of all faiths is threatened. Islam thus permits fighting in order to establish peace and order and halt unlawful deprivation of rights - in particular, religious freedom. Clearly, this is directly opposite to the understanding of the *jihadists* of today who claim Islam instructs Muslims to fight others in order to deprive them of their religious freedom and compel them to follow Islam.

War, in Islam, aside from being conditional, must be a **last resort**. All diplomatic attempts at agreeing to terms of resolution of conflicts must be first exhausted. Every student of the early history of Islam is well aware of the Holy Prophet Muhammad's practice of entering into peace treaties for the sake of justice, protection and securing the rights of others in particular the underdogs. It is only when such treaties were broken, repeatedly, and when it became clear that the opposing party was acting in bad faith, having no desire to honour the terms of the peace treaties that the Holy Prophet was forced into defensive combat as a last resort. As for those groups that **repeatedly breached the terms of the peace agreements and perpetuated the war**, the Holy Quran provides:

They respect neither ties of relationship nor covenant, in the case of a believer (i.e. the

Muslims). And these are they who **go beyond the limits** - (9:10)

And if they break their oaths **after their agreement** and revile your religion, then *fight the leaders of disbelief* – surely their oaths are nothing – **so that they may desist.** - (9:12)

Will you not fight a people **who broke their oaths** and **aimed at the expulsion** of the Messenger (i.e. Prophet Muhammad), **and they attacked you first?** - (9:13)

These verses show that there are limits to be established in societal / inter-communal relations, and war can be resorted to only when groups *go beyond the limits*. It is also clear that the objective is to bring the offenders to stop their wrongful conduct. Moreover, the breach must be accompanied by some actual harm such as the *expulsion* of or *attacking* those honouring the terms of the agreements.

It is when all peace efforts fail and the persecution and attacks on Muslims persist that the harsh realities of war have to be faced by Muslims although they might dislike it. – (2:216). It is within this context, **i.e. in the heat of war** that the Holy Quran directs the Muslims:

And kill them wherever you find them and drive them out from where they drove you out, and

persecution is worse than slaughter. – (2:191)

About the hostile idolaters who violated the peace treaties and killed Muslims pilgrims mercilessly, the Muslims are told to fight back:

So when the sacred months have passed, slay the idolaters, wherever you find them, and take them captive and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush. – (9:5)

Aggression NOT allowed in Islam

Whilst Islam recognizes the right to defend oneself against hostile, oppressive forces, it places limitations on the parameters of war. The offensive must be **proportional**, and never in excess of what is required to establish peace and order unlike the excesses we witness in ‘so called’ modern day conflict. The Holy Quran states:

And fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, **but be not aggressive. Surely Allah does not love the aggressors** - (2:190)

And if they incline to peace, you must also incline to it, and trust in Allah - (8:61)

Thus, once it is indicated that the opposing side is inclined to resume peaceful relations, it is mandatory to cease any offensive. How more clearly could it be

explained that the purpose of war in Islam **is simply to establish peace and never to be the basis of aggression against others?**

In Islam, the practice of war is not only limited in terms of when it may be commenced and when it must cease, but also by specific rules of conduct during war. The Holy Prophet Muhammad emphasized the humane treatment of members of the opposing group and forbade the killing of civilians or any non-combatant for that matter. It is reported that he said:

Do not kill any old person, any child or any woman - (Collection of reports by Abu Dawud).

Do not kill the monks in monasteries - (Collection of reports in the Musnad of Ibn Hanbal).

Do not kill the people who are sitting in places of worship - (Musnad of Ibn Hanbal).

This understanding of civilized-based treatment during war was an entrenched principle of the Holy Prophet and righteous Companions that succeeded him. Hazrat Abu Bakr, the much revered first successor to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, provided the following detailed set of rules of conduct to be adopted during war, much

of which have been adopted by the Geneva Convention and that is:

- *Do not commit treachery*
- *Do not 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”*

The foregoing principles and guidelines with respect to war provided in the Holy Quran was fashioned over 1400 years ago. Violation of these rules by Muslims, is NOT Islam it is perhaps nothing but a mimic of their Western counterparts whose large scale aggression over time and even as we speak is well-known in our history.

No compulsion in Religion

There is not a single instance recorded in the whole of the Prophet's history showing the conversion of an unbeliever under pressure of the sword or of an expedition undertaken with the purpose of converting others by force. Rather, if ever in the

world's history a people were compelled to fight in the defence of a great cause, no nobler instance of it could be given than that of the Prophet with his few faithful followers braving the whole of war-like Arabia for the survival of their small community and their mission of establishing peace, justice, morality and dignity for all.

If ever there was a just cause for war, there was never one more just than the combined cause for the protection and safe-guarding of Christian churches, of Jewish synagogues, of Sabian cloisters, and of Muslim mosques - (22:40). If Muslims were out to convert others by force, why would they, at great risk of losing their very lives, fight to protect the places of worship of other faiths? The injunction to fight was thus to put an end to persecution and to establish religious freedom, and to save the houses of worship of every religion from being ruined. Therefore allegations that Islam permits forceful conversions are baseless, figments of the 'dark' imaginations of those with no knowledge of Islam and its Holy Scripture. If they had made even the slightest honest attempt to find the truth on the matter they would have seen for themselves that the Holy Quran clearly forbids compulsion:

There is no compulsion in religion
-2:256

And if thy Lord had pleased, all those who are in the earth would have believed, all of them. **Will you then force people** till they are believers? -10:99

We know best what they say, and thou (Muhammad) **art not one to compel.** – 50:45

Islam invites to the truth peacefully

Call to way of the Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation and argue with them in the best manner. – 16:25

The Truth is from your Lord; so **let him who please believe and let him who please disbelieve.** – 18:29



We strongly condemn all acts of aggression and terror including all violations of basic human rights specifically those carried out in the name of Religion or State!

The Good News
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