



This Is Not Jihad!

Hassan Abdi

The word Jihad, in its broad sense, refers to “striving” of some sort and includes striving with one's soul, with one's heart, with one's body and one's wealth; and is applied to all arenas of life.

One of the special manifestations of “Jihād” is a just, conventional war which is waged in order to repel aggression or to combat and remove injustice. All nations assume the right to wage war for these reasons, and “Jihād” in this context is instituted islamically for that purpose. However, this "Jihād" is regulated and has strict conditions and cannot be announced and waged haphazardly by individuals, vigilantes or groups.

From its main conditions is that it is waged under a ruler, in the presence of clear military leadership (and not with chaos and disarray), except in the case of a sudden attack by an enemy where self-defense is sanctioned immediately without recourse to the ruler of the state; and this scenario also has guidelines and rulings with affairs ultimately being referred back to the ruler.

During the 20th century, this orthodox, classical understanding of “Jihād” was distorted through the ideas of numerous thinkers who wished to restore the Islamic Caliphate, wrongly treating it to be the ultimate goal of Islam. They all operated on the premise that all Muslims states are

apostate regimes, and will remain so until they establish a Caliphate.

From here arose the doctrines of Takfīr (excommunication) of Muslim nations, governments and the masses of Muslims, and “Jihād” was distorted to refer to a struggle against "apostate" rulers and governments and to the killing of innocent people with the overall aim being to establish a " Caliphate" through this alleged “Jihād”.

Those who make up the organization known as ISIS are from this orientation, and this is why their activity is focused primarily on Muslim lands - as is clear from many of their statements. They wish to conquer Iraq, then the Gulf-countries in the peninsula. All of this is not Jihād according to the Islamic legislation, but is corruption and tribulation.

In our time, the neo-Jihadist movements condone the murder and slaughter of innocent people under the guise of Jihad. So it is imperative that we do not allow fanatics to prey on the emotions of the youth and mislead them through the distortion of Islamic teachings and terminologies.

When groups or individuals appeared in the past calling to Jihad, the scholars would carefully scrutinize these claims, asking questions such as,

“Did they raise their sword and strike with it according to the teachings of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) or according to [a set of] heretical beliefs.”

This was stated by the Prophet's companion, Ibn Mas'ūd.
Al-Bida' Wa al-Nahy 'Anhā

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymīyah (may Allāh have mercy upon him) emphasized the need for investigation and caution when fringe elements start screaming Jihad. He stated:

“However, it is obligatory to differentiate between the legislated Jihad, which Allāh and His Messenger have commanded with, and the heretical Jihad which is the Jihad waged by misguided individuals who perform Jihad in obedience to the Devil, but they believe that they are performing Jihad in obedience to The Most Merciful (al-Raḥmān). This is like the Jihad of the people of innovation and misguidance such as the Khawārij and other than them...” *Al-Radd 'Alā al-Akhnā'ī* (p. 205)

The following is not considered to be Jihad:

1. Murdering non-combatants, whether Muslim or non-Muslim

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him said):

“The believer will not cease to remain within the vastness of his religion, as long as he does not shed blood that is unlawful.” Collected by al-Bukhārī.

Shaykh Ibn al-'Uthaymīn commented upon this hadith by saying,

“As long as he does not shed blood that is unlawful” means as long as he does not murder the believer, the non-Muslim who resides in the land of the Muslims, the non-Muslim who has a covenant with the Muslims and the non-Muslim who is granted permission to travel safely.”

2. Killing women and children, even at times of war

During one of the battles of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), a woman was found killed. Thus, the Messenger of Allāh (peace and blessings be upon him) forbade the killing of women and children. Collected by al-Bukharī

Ibn Taymīyah stated:

“It was never allowed to kill women, ever.” *Al-Şārim* (2/258)

3. Fanatical groups or leaders declaring an offensive Jihad against other nations

An offensive Jihad can only be called for by a leader of a Muslim nation, not by a terrorist organization, and this is according to the consensus of Muslim scholars and jurists.

“Have you not thought about the group of the Children of Israel after (the time of) Musa (Moses)? When they said to a Prophet of theirs, ‘Appoint for us a king and we will fight in Allāh’s Way.’” [Al-Baqarah: 246]

Another proof that offensive Jihad is at the discretion of the leader, is the saying of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him):

“The [Imam] ruler is a shield from behind whom they fight and by whom they are protected.” Bukharī and Muslim

Ibn Qudāmah stated:

“The affair of Jihad is under the jurisdiction of the ruler and his judgement. It is compulsory for those under his rule to obey him in what he decides in this matter.” *Al-Mughnī* (10/368)

4. Joining extremist groups such as ISIS

Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Fawzān was asked,

“What is the ruling on travelling to Syria and is this Jihād?”

He responded,

“This is turmoil and chaos; a person should not partake in this. Rather, he should stay far away from it, but he should supplicate for the Muslims. He should supplicate regularly for [Allāh to grant] the Muslims success and relief.

As for him travelling there, then this is not permissible because firstly he has a family and parents and secondly he has to have the consent of the Muslim leader. These

two [conditions] have to be met: the consent of the Muslim leader and parental consent.

This is turmoil and chaos and a person should stay far away from this.”

5. Cutting off heads and displaying these images on television as trophies

Imām al-Zuhrī [d. 741CE], a celebrated scholar of Islam, said:

“Never was a severed head of an enemy brought to the Messenger of Allāh.” *Sunan al-Kubra* (9/223)

The radical movements of today, such as ISIS and al-Qaeda, inherited this atrocious spectacle from anarchists and nihilists, as stated by a western academic:

“The al-Qaeda video footage of the execution of foreign hostages in Iraq is a one-to-one re-enactment of the execution of Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades [in Italy in 1978], with the organization's banner and logo in the background, with the hostage hand-cuffed and blind-folded, the mock trial with the reading of the sentence and the execution.”

In light of the above it should be clear that Jihad is an upright institution employed for just causes. When the rulings pertaining to jihad are violated - as they are by

extreme heretical sects such as ISIS – then it can never be considered Jihad but corruption, mischief and terrorism.

For this reason, Muslim scholars and rulers have always stood against sects like ISIS, and it is a duty upon all Muslims to show support against their corruption.

Hassan Abdi
9/23/2015