

TRAINING MANUAL FOR CAPACITY BUILDING OF MUSLIM RELIGIOUS ACTORS



JOINT INITIATIVE FOR STRATEGIC
INTERRELIGIOUS ACTION (JISRA)

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We hope and pray that this manual achieves its objective of building the capacity of leaders and actors in different strata of the society towards building peaceful and just societies where all enjoy Freedom of Religion and Belief (FORB).

ABOUT JISRA

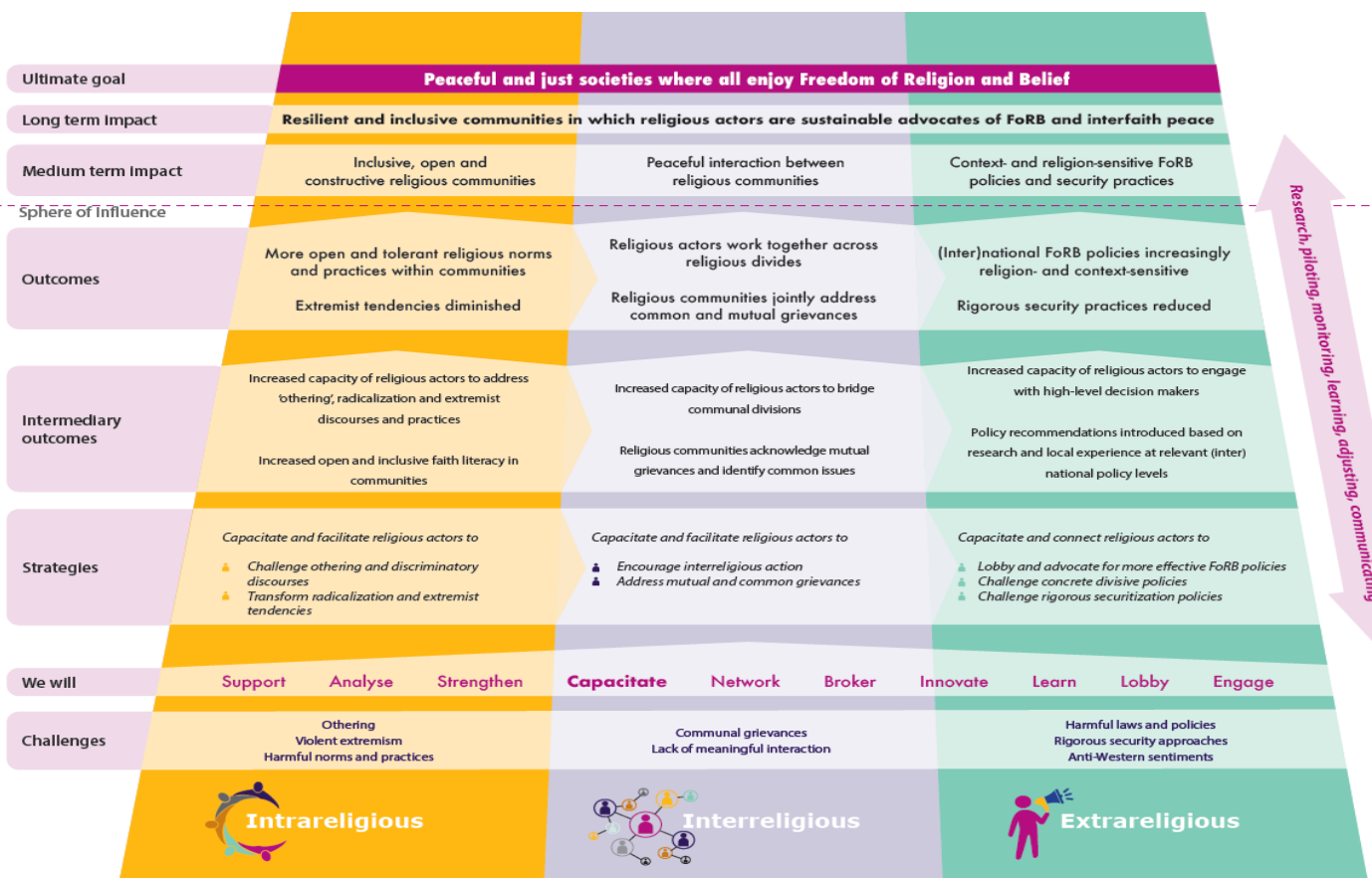
The Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA) is a product of the Alliance that was formed by Mensen met een Missie (Lead), Tearfund Netherlands/ Tearfund UK, Search for Common Ground and Faith to Action Network; under the name Power of Voices (PoV), who applied and got approval for a Strategic Partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) for the period 2021-2025. The JISRA program is therefore currently being implemented in seven (7) countries, namely: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Mali, Kenya, Uganda, Indonesia, and Iraq.

JISRA in Nigeria is a consortium of four international NGOs, namely Tearfund, Search for Common Ground and Mensen met een Missie; and seven (7) local implementing partners, namely Dialogue, Reconciliation and Peace (DREP) Centre, Development Initiative of West Africa (DIWA), Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), RURCON, Scripture Union of West Africa (SUWA), Justice Peace and Reconciliation Movement (JPRM) & Women Interfaith Council (WIC).

The JISRA program aims to address and transform “intra”-, “inter”-, and “extra-religious” dynamics in Nigeria to promote Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB). The activities under the three pathways are interrelated and designed to connect to significantly reduce FoRBS and FoRBs-related conflicts in target locations and foster peaceful co-existence in the ten Local Government Areas (LGAs) situated in Kaduna and Plateau states of Nigeria. These are Barkin Ladi, Bokkos, Bassa, and Jos North LGAs in Plateau State; and Jama'a, Zagon Kataf, Kaura, Kaduna North, Kaduna South, and Kajuru LGAs in Kaduna.

The program will leverage the role of a variety of actors, including religious leaders, young women and men from different religious and ethnic backgrounds, and civil society, to identify, reflect, and build upon specific entry points for intra-religious, inter-religious, and extra-religious engagement and promote an inclusive, tolerant, flourishing and peaceful society in Nigeria.

The goal of JISRA project in Nigeria is to promote mutual understanding, respect and trust among and between communities as well as among faith and community leaders towards improved tolerance, social cohesion for peaceful coexistence –using FoRB as a vehicle.



THE MANUAL

The manual is meant to facilitate the comprehensive implementation of JISRA Nigeria's training and capacity-building processes to equip stakeholders with knowledge and skills to cope with the challenges that the JISRA Nigeria program has identified. It intends to utilize the positive power that religion and religious actors have in fostering peace and just societies and thereby contribute to the prevention and resolution of the intra-religious, inter-religious, and extra-religious challenges in the Nigerian society.

The modules and sessions have been carefully chosen such that the theory and practice of FoRB is integrated enabling participants to demonstrate knowledge and skills in promoting FoRB at the end of the training workshop. Each session in a module follows a participatory approach, and is provided with objectives, suggested duration, materials, and preparations to be made before the session. However, adaptations of the modules could be done such that selected sessions can be presented over a shorter period.

Pedagogical Methodologies

The following are a few of the adult learning pedagogical tools that can enhance learning during training with this manual:

- 1) **Buzz or Brainstorming:** This is a technique used when one wants to get quick responses or involve everyone in a topic. A question is asked where two or three participants are asked to buzz and give answers or their views on a certain topic. It may gauge where the participants are on a certain issue and hence lead the facilitator on the depth or angle from which to handle the topic. Responses from Buzz or brainstorms may not be written down.
- 2) **Group Work:** - These are used when the objective is to get in-depth knowledge from the participants on a given topic. The product of these groups is used to consolidate the group knowledge base. This is then strengthened by an input for new information if necessary.
- 3) **Plenary Presentation:** - This is used to discuss the participants' ideas to agree or reach a consensus on a point or the grain of the topic. These are then synthesized as learning points into a whole to bring together the different ideas.
- 4) **Role Plays:** - These are used to depict an idea in the form of a playlet. A role-play is intended to bring the message out and is stopped when the message is passed on. It is analyzed based on five key stages: -

- a) Description – What did you see happening?
- b) Real-life – Does it happen in real life/your situation)? (Give examples)
- c) Analysis – Why does it happen (root causes)?
- d) Results – What are the consequences?
- e) Action – What can we do about it?

The third and fourth stages are very important as they show the issues (root causes) and galvanize the participants to action. However, the planning for action has to be thorough to ensure that the issues are dealt with practically. Role-plays are safe to bring out even the most sensitive issues without being threatening. Role-plays can be used also as discussion starters.

- 5) **Case Studies:** - These, like role plays, are written with the reality of the situation in mind. Otherwise, they may backfire when the participants refuse to identify with them. Case studies need to be written in simple and clear language for the participants to grasp the message fast.
- 6) **Case Stories:** - These are live case studies but are told orally. The narrator needs to be able to catch the attention of participants and pass the message. Like the role play, case stories and case studies are analyzed too, with identification of causes, consequences, and action plans to make the exercise worthwhile.
- 7) **Audio-Visual Aids-** The use of audio and visual aids to enhance learning is highly recommended. Sometimes ideas can only best be shared using films (video), through music (audio & video), or projectors. However, if the venue does not allow for the use of the above, facilitators need to be creative to present ideas in the best way possible.

❖ **Materials**

The list of materials gives you an idea of the teaching aids or equipment you might need to facilitate the learning process. It is advised that you go through the list during your preparation and make necessary provisions or improvisation for each item where necessary.

❖ **Duration**

The suggested duration of each lesson is between 90 minutes and 120 minutes. You should make adequate arrangements for more time in case of post-session counselling or other psychosocial services.

❖ **Evaluation Questions:**

You are to administer the evaluation questions at the end of each session to assess the level of achievement of the session's objectives.

LESSON 1: SANCTITY OF EVERY HUMAN LIFE¹

Objectives	By the end of the training session, participants should be able to explain the meaning and importance of the sanctity of all human life. Participants should be able to acknowledge that all human life is sacred and must not be taken unjustly.
Duration	2hours
Materials Needed	Flip Charts or White Board, Markers, Power Point Presentation, Projector, Files, Jotters, Sticky Notes, Pens.
Methodology	Participatory learning approach, plenary presentations, group work, and discussion, short role-plays, question.
Evaluation Questions	1) What is the Sanctity of Life? 2) Why should we appreciate, respect, and preserve life? 3) State three ways you protect life in your community. 4) In three sentences state the teachings of Islam on the sanctity of ALL human life.

The Qur'an teaches that every human being has a special place in Allah's creation irrespective of what faith or belief an individual chooses to profess. Allah says: "*And we have certainly honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of our creation.*" (Qur'an 17:70)

Not only are all human beings' children of Adam to whom Allah commanded the Angels to bow (Qur'an 2:34), but each human has a spirit Allah breathed into him or her. Allah says "...and then He forms him in accordance with what he is meant to be, and breathes into him of His spirit." (Qur'an 32:7-9). Thus, every human is a spiritual being living in a physical or earthly body.

¹ The content of this section has been copied with permission from Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, *Muslim Relations with Christians, Jews and Others*, Islamic Education Trust, 2018, p.137 – 144.

While repeating in the Qur'an what was revealed in earlier revelations, Allah clearly describes the importance and sacredness of the life of every human being, and says,

“...if anyone slays a human being – unless it be (in punishment) for murder or for spreading corruption on earth – it shall be as though he had slain all mankind; whereas, if anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he had saved the lives of all mankind. ...”
(Qur'an 5:32)

Every human irrespective of their faith, social standing or gender is a spiritual being whose life is sacred; thus, harming or taking it unjustly is a great sin and crime that is punishable by death, irrespective of the murdered person's religious identity.

The equality of human life irrespective of faith, ethnicity, race or gender, etc. is clear from the equal regard the Qur'an and authentic Sunnah give to the punishment or “equitable retribution” (*qisas*) and recompense (*diyyah*) for taking of innocent life, whether murder or manslaughter, etc.

Allah says in Qur'an 5:45,

*“We have prescribed therein for them (the Children of Israel); a **life for a life**, an eye for an eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth ...”* To prevent any confusion about the implication to Muslims of this Qur'anic verse, the respected Companion of the Prophet (p) Ibn Al-Musayyab is reported as having said regarding this particular verse, that *“this verse is for us (Muslims) and for them (Jews).”*² In other words, this verse applies to Muslims, and it does not make any distinction regarding the value of one life over another based on religion.

In another verse, Qur'an 2:178 we read,

*“O you who have attained to faith! **Just retribution (qisas) is ordained for you in cases of killing: the free for the free, and the slave for the slave, and the woman for the woman.** And if something [of his guilt] is remitted to a guilty person by his brother, this [remission] shall be adhered to with fairness, and restitution to his fellow-man shall be made in a goodly manner.”* (Qur'an 2:178)

² Badr al-Din al-'Ayni, *Umdat al-Qari*, vol.2, p.161; Abu Bakr Abd al-Razzak bn Hummam al-San'ani, *Musanaf Abd al-Razak*, al-Maktab al-Islami, Beirut, 1403AH, hadith no.18134.

In his commentary on this verse, Muhammad Asad says,

“As for the term *qisas* occurring at the beginning of the above passage, it must be pointed out that - according to all the classical commentators - it is almost synonymous with *musawah*, i.e., "making a thing equal [to another thing]": in this instance, making the punishment equal (or appropriate) to the crime - a meaning which is best rendered as "just retribution" and not (as has been often, and erroneously, done) as "retaliation". Seeing that the Qur'an speaks here of "cases of killing" (*fi'l-qatla*, lit., "in the matter of the killed") in general, and taking into account that this expression covers all possible cases of homicide - premeditated murder, murder under extreme provocation, culpable homicide, accidental manslaughter, and so forth - it is obvious that the taking of a life for a life (implied in the term "retaliation") would not in every case correspond to the demands of equity. (This has been made clear, for instance, in Qur'an 4:92, where legal restitution for unintentional homicide is dealt with.) Read in conjunction with the term "just retribution" which introduces this passage, it is clear that the stipulation "the free for the free, the slave for the slave, the woman for the woman" cannot - and has not been intended to - be taken in its literal, restrictive sense: for this would preclude its application to many cases of homicide, e.g., the killing of a free man by a slave, or of a woman by a man, or vice-versa. Thus, the above stipulation must be regarded as an example of the elliptical mode of expression (*ijaz*) so frequently employed in the Qur'an, and can have but one meaning, namely: "if a free man has committed the crime, the free man must be punished; if a slave has committed the crime...", etc. - in other words, whatever the status of the guilty person, he or she (and he or she alone) is to be punished in a manner appropriate to the crime.”³

This verse is therefore general in its import and makes no distinction regarding the value of the lives of people based on religion.

In the Qur'an 17:33, Allah says,

*“And take not the life which Allah has made sacred, unless it be in the cause of justice. **Whoever is killed unjustly**, We have appointed to his next-of-kin authority; but let him not exceed in slaying. He (the near kin) will certainly be helped (to seek*

³ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, The Book Foundation, England, 2003, p.47, n.147 to Qur'an 2:178.

redress).” This verse again makes no distinction regarding the value of one person’s life over another based on religion, class or gender, etc.

In Qur’an 4:92 it says,

*“And it is not conceivable that a believer should slay another believer, unless it be by mistake. And **upon him who has slain a believer by mistake there is the duty of freeing a believing soul from bondage and paying an indemnity (diyya) to the victim's relations**, unless they forgo it by way of charity. Now if the slain, while himself a believer, belonged to a people who are at war with you, [the penance shall be confined to] the freeing of a believing soul from bondage; whereas, **if he (the victim) belonged to a people to whom you are bound by a covenant**, [it shall consist of] **an indemnity (diyya) to be paid to his relations in addition to the freeing of a believing soul from bondage**. And he who does not have the wherewithal shall fast [instead] for two consecutive months. (This is) the atonement ordained by God: and God is indeed all-knowing, wise.”*

This verse treats 3 distinct cases. The first and earlier part of the verse that reads, “...upon him who has slain a believer by mistake...” refers to the case of a Muslim victim and what the prescribed punishment or atonement is for such manslaughter.

The second case mentioned in the middle of the verse – “*the slain, while himself a believer, belonged to a people who are at war with you*” - deals with a Muslim victim who was living among those non-Muslims who are hostile or at war with the Muslim community.

The third case in the latter part of the verse reads, “...*if he (the victim) belonged to a people to whom you are bound by a covenant ...*”, and refers to a non-Muslim victim who is a member of a community that has a peace treaty or covenant with Muslims. According to Asad, “*This relates to cases where the victim is a non-Muslim belonging to a people with whom the Muslims have normal, peaceful relations; in such cases, the penalty is the same as that imposed for the killing, under similar circumstances, of a fellow-believer.*”⁴

⁴ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur’an*, The Book Foundation, England, 2003, p.141, n. 117 to Qur’an 4:92

In other words, in both the first case of the accidental killing of a Muslim and the third case of the accidental killing of a non-Muslim citizen, the same amount of “blood money” (*diyyah*) as indemnity is to be paid to the family or next-of-kin of the victim, irrespective of the faith of the victim or that of the killer.

All these verses are very clear and general in their import, making no distinction between human beings based on gender, religion, age, ethnicity, class, or social status. No verse in the Qur’an regards the life of any innocent citizen as more sacred or valuable in the consideration of Islamic law than another based on religious difference.

In the hadith of the Prophet (p), he is reliably reported to have made some general statements regarding the sin and punishment for murder without discrimination based on the religion of the victim.

The Messenger of Allah was asked about the gravest of all sins (*al-kaba’ir*), and he said, “*To join partners in worship with Allah, to slay a soul (which Allah has forbidden), and to be unkind to one’s parents...*”⁵

In another hadith, Aisha, the wife of the Prophet (p) is reported to have said that the Prophet (p) said, “The blood of a Muslim who confesses that there is no god but Allah and that I am the messenger of Allah, cannot be shed except in three cases: a married person who commits illegal sexual intercourse, for he shall be stoned to death, and a man who leaves Islam and engages in fighting against Allah and His Prophet, for he shall be executed, crucified or exiled, or **one who kills, for which he shall be killed (too).**”⁶

In another version of the same hadith, Abdullah bin Mas’ud said: “The Prophet (p) said, “The blood of a Muslim who confesses that there is no god but Allah and that I am the Messenger of Allah, cannot be shed except in three cases: **a life for life**, a married person who commits illegal sexual intercourse, and the one who turns renegade from Islam (i.e., one who apostatizes) and leaves the community of Muslims.”⁷

⁵ Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Dar bin Kathir, Beirut, 1407AH, hadith no. 5632

⁶ Abu Dawud, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, hadith no. 4355, vol. 4, p. 223, Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut, n.d. the hadith was authenticated by al-Albani; Al-Shawkani, Muhammad bin ‘Ali bin Muhammad, *Nayl al-Awtar*, vol.7, p.5-6, Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, Beirut n.d. - All cited in Abdullah Saeed and Hassan Saeed, *Freedom of Religion, Apostasy and Islam*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd., England, 2004, p. 59. See also al-Suyuti, *al-Durr*, vol II, p. 306 and al-al-Jassas, *Ahkam al-Qur’an*, vol. II, p. 409 cited in Khaled Abou El-Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2001, (See footnote 83), p. 51.

⁷ Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Dar bn Kathir, Beirut, 1407AH, hadith no. 6484; For a slightly different version, see: al-Bayhaqi, *Kitab al-Sunnah al-Kubra*, hadith no. 16700

In both these hadiths, scholars have concluded that a Muslim may be killed if he commits murder (or adultery), and these hadiths make no distinction regarding the religion of the victim (or partner in the case of adultery). They make it explicitly clear as do all the related verses of the Qur'an on this issue, that the Muslim killer is also liable to be killed in just retribution (*qisas*).⁸

Similarly, the criteria for a decision on the punishment in Islamic law in the case of theft, robbery, injury, etc., do not regard as relevant the religion, class, or gender of the victim of the crime in deciding the punishment to the guilty Muslim.⁹ A Muslim, therefore, does not get a lesser punishment because he/she stole or injured a fellow non-Muslim citizen. It, therefore, stands to reason that taking the life of a non-Muslim would not incur a lesser punishment when compared to taking the life of a fellow Muslim citizen.

From the clear and explicit texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah, the life of every human being is sacred and should be equal in the eyes of the law, irrespective of a difference in religion and gender, etc.¹⁰

⁸ Ahmad bin Ali al-Razi al-al-Jassas, *Ahkam al-Qur'an*, edited by Muhammad al-Sadiq Qamhawi, Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, Beirut, 1405AH, vol.1, p.173

⁹ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Siyasah al-Shar'iyyah*, p.143; Zuhayli, *Al-Fiqh al-Islami*, vol.6, p.218; Musaylihi, *Huquq al-Insan*, p.327; Wafi, *Himayat al-Islam*, p.26. Cited in Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *The Right to Life, Security, Privacy and Ownership in Islam*, Ilmiah Publishers, IIAIS Malaysia, 2013, p.15.

¹⁰ Some hadiths that have generated controversy and divergent opinions among scholars include one where the Prophet (p) is reported to have said, "... that no Muslim should be killed (in retaliation - *qisas*) for killing a disbeliever (*kafir*).” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.9, hadith no. 50 in Alim 6.0 and vol.4, p.326-327). Another hadith states, "The blood money of an unbeliever (*kafir*) is half that of a Muslim" (Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad*, vol.2, p.180). Scholars have differed on whether the term "*kafir*" (disbeliever) in the context of both hadiths refers to all non-Muslims including citizens under covenant and state protection (*Ahl al-Dhimma*), or only to hostile and warring (*kafir haribi*) people of other faiths. This controversy is discussed later in this material along with some other commonly misinterpreted hadiths and verses of the Qur'an associated with interfaith relations and *jihad*.

LESSON 2: HUMANITY AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN BEINGS

Objectives	By the end of the training session, participants should be able to discuss the importance of humanity and respect for all human beings with evidence from the Qur'an and examples from the <i>Sirah</i> (Biography of the Prophet pbuh).
Duration	2 hours
Materials Needed	Flip Charts or White Board, Markers, Power Point Presentation, Projector, Files, Jotters, Sticky Notes, Pens.
Methodology	Lecture, Case studies, Buzz groups, Role plays/Exercises, Audio-visual aids, Questions, and answers.
Evaluation Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Give the additional applications of respect in your community. 2) Do you know any other religious text that supports humanity and respect for all irrespective of faith? 3) Explain why we must respect the basic human rights of all people. 4) Discuss how the principle of respect for authorities is changing in Nigeria. 5) List ways we can show respect to the elderly, parents, government, and religious authorities.

It is narrated on the authority of Jabir bin 'Abdullah: *“There passed a bier (funeral procession) and the Prophet (p) stood up for it and we also stood up along with him. We said: Messenger of Allah (p), that was the bier of a Jewish lady. Upon this, he remarked: Verily, death is a matter of bewilderment, so whenever you come across a bier, stand up!”*¹¹ Also, the Prophet (p) was reported to have stood up when a funeral procession of a Jewish man went by. *When asked by his companions why he would stand up for a dead Jewish man, he answered with a rhetorical question, “But is he not a soul?”*¹²

¹¹ *Sahih Muslim*, vol.4, hadith no. 2095.

¹² *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.2, hadith no.399, in *Alim* 6.0; also recorded in Al- Tirmidhi, an-Nasa'i, hadith no.1924 & 1928; See other similar instances cited in Ali Mohiuddin Al-Qaradaghi, *We and the Other: Substantiating the*

The Prophet's response, 'But is he not a soul?' calls attention to the fact that that this unknown person of another faith was worthy of a respectful gesture from God's last and noble Prophet (p) simply because he was a human being.

Also, Allah says, “And We have certainly honoured the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference.” (Qur'an17:70)

In another verse of the Qur'an, Allah acknowledges that all of humankind come from the same source – Adam. Hence, irrespective of the differences in colour, language, or creed, everyone still belongs to the human family with the same forefather. Allah says, “*O people! Be careful of (your duty to) your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind) and spread from these two, many men and women...*” (Qur'an 4:1)

These imply that everybody deserves a certain level of respect, at least for being a human. Thus, irrespective of a person's religion, and whether the person is alive or dead, everyone is worthy of a respectful gesture.¹³

basis of the Ideal Relation between Muslims and Non-Muslims in Light of the Islamic Jurisprudence, (Transl. Syed Bashir Ahmad Kashmiri), Kuala Lumpur, 2015, p.197-168.

¹³ The content of this section has been copied with permission from Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, *Al-Ameen:40+ Lessons for Building Bridges and Breaking Barriers to Peace from the Life of Prophet Muhammad*, Islamic Education Trust, Minna: Nigeria, 2019, pp. 2-4.

LESSON 3: GOOD NEIGHBOURLINESS AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Objectives	By the end of the training session, participants should be able to discuss the Islamic teachings of good neighbourliness and peaceful coexistence with one's neighbour.
Duration	2 hours
Materials Needed	Flip Charts or White Board, Markers, Handouts Power Point Presentation, Projector, Files, Jotters, Sticky Notes, Pens.
Methodology	Lecture, Case studies, Buzz groups, Role plays/Exercises, Audio-visual aids, Questions, and answers.
Evaluation Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Briefly discuss what it means to love your neighbour. 2) How do we promote peace in our communities as Muslims? 3) What are the implications of the religious teachings on neighbourliness in our daily lives?

Allah the Most High says: “Worship Allah and join none with Him (in worship) and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, the needy, the neighbour who is near of kin, the neighbour who is a stranger, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (you meet) and those (slaves) whom your right hands possess. Verily, Allah does not like such as are proud and boastful” (An-Nisa: 36).

We understand from the explanations of the ayah above that there are three types of neighbours: a neighbour who has one right, the one with two, and the one with three. The neighbour who has three rights is the Muslim neighbour who is our relative for he has the rights of Islam, kinship, and neighbourhood. The neighbour who has two rights is the Muslim neighbour for he has the rights of Islam and neighbourhood. The neighbour who has one right is the non-Muslim neighbour.¹⁴

¹⁴ Haleemah Oladamade Ahmad, *Rights from the Roots*, SISTERS Magazine, London: UK, Issue 62, p. 49.

The Messenger of Allah (p) is reported to have said, “*Whoever believes in Allah and the Hereafter should take care of his neighbour,*”¹⁵ and “*Jibril continued to remind me of the neighbour’s rights till I thought he would tell me that the neighbour inherits from his neighbour.*”¹⁶ It is reported on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah (p) said, “*He who believes in Allah and the Last Day should either utter good words or better keep silent, and he who believes in Allah and the Last Day should treat his neighbour with kindness and he who believes in Allah and the Last Day should show hospitality to his guest.*”¹⁷

We also have numerous examples from the life of the Prophet (p) and his Companions about how they related with their non-hostile neighbours who belonged to other faiths. Anas ibn Malik narrated that, “Allah’s Messenger (p) had a neighbour who was Persian [a Zoroastrian], and he was an expert in the preparation of soup. He prepared (soup) for Allah’s Messenger (p) and then came to him to invite him (to a meal) ... Then he accepted his invitation, and both of them (the Prophet (p) and Aisha) set out and went to his house.”¹⁸ Similarly, Mujahid narrated that Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-‘As slaughtered a sheep and said, “Have you presented a gift from it to my neighbour, the Jew, for I heard the Apostle of Allah (p) say, ‘*Jibril kept on commending the neighbour to me such that I thought he would make him an heir*’?”¹⁹

Similarly, the Prophet (pbuh) taught against harming one’s neighbour. Abu Hurayra reported that the Messenger of God (p) said, “*He who believes in God and the Last Day, let him abstain from harming his neighbour; he who believes in God and the Last Day, let him honour his guest; and he who believes in God and the Last Day, let him say that which is good, or remain silent.*”²⁰ Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal narrated in his *Musnad* from ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Amr bin al-‘As who reported that a man said, ‘*O Messenger of God (p)! What [person’s] Islam is best?*’ The Prophet (p) replied, “*The one from whose tongue and hand all people are safe.*”²¹ Abu Hurayra similarly reported that the Messenger of God (p) said, “*The Muslim is he from whose tongue and hand all people are safe...*”²²

¹⁵ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.8, hadith no. 29 in *Alim 6.0*

¹⁶ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.8, hadith no. 27; See also hadith no. 28 in *Alim 6.0*

¹⁷ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no.6018; *Sahih Muslim*, hadith no.182; *Musnad Imam Ahmad*, hadith no.9967; *Sunan Abu Dawud*, hadith no.5156.

¹⁸ *Sahih Muslim*, hadith no.958, in *Alim 6.0*

¹⁹ *Abu Dawud*, hadith no. 2446 in *Alim 6.0*

²⁰ *Al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 5672; *Muslim*, hadith no. 74

²¹ Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad Ahmad*, hadith no.7086

²² *Al-Nasa’i*, hadith no. 4996; *Musnad Ahmad*, hadith no.7086

Thus, Muslims have ample teachings from Islam on the importance of living peacefully with neighbours irrespective of their faith.

LESSON 4: FORGIVENESS FOR ALL

LESSON 4: FORGIVENESS FOR ALL

Objectives	By the end of the training session, participants should be able to discuss the teachings of Islam on forgiveness.
Duration	2 hours
Materials Needed	Flip Charts or White Board, Markers, Handouts Power Point Presentation, Projector, Files, Jotters, Sticky Notes, Pens.
Methodology	Lecture, Case studies, Buzz groups, Role plays/Exercises, Audio-visual aids, Questions and answers.
Evaluation Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Define forgiveness and outline 3 obstacles to forgiveness. 2) Mention 3 reasons why forgiveness is so important.

All the teachings of Islam related to seeking peace, arbitration, forgiveness, charity, social justice, and the objectives of Shari’ah (*Maqasid al-Shari’ah*), etc. are all directed towards greater peace in the society.

Allah says, *“The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah: for (Allah) loves not those who do wrong.”* (Qur’an 42:40) and *“...whoever then (injures or) acts aggressively against you, (it is permissible to) inflict injury on him proportionate (or similar) to the injury he has inflicted on you, and be careful (of your duty) to Allah, and know that Allah is with those who guard (against evil).”* (Qur’an 2:194)

Thus, when a person is wronged, seeking justice or equitable retribution for grievous wrongdoing is permissible. Where the pursuit of justice or retribution may be the most sensible and appropriate course of action, the Qur’an makes it categorically clear that such retribution or punishment must be proportionate to the wrong done. It is therefore

prohibited for a Muslim to exact punishment in the name of justice that is worse or more severe than the offence committed.²³

The Prophet (p) was reported to have said, “*The strong is not the one who overcomes people by his strength, but the strong is the one who controls himself while angry.*”²⁴ In fact, his wife Aishah said that “The Prophet (p) never retaliated for a wrong done to him (personally). He only would allow retaliation for the breaking of Allah’s law.”²⁵ This shows that whenever the Prophet was the only victim of the wrong done, he preferred forgiveness over justice. However, whenever Allah’s law is broken or the wrong done is to someone else (or the community), he would stand for justice and allow the victim the choice of justice, forgiveness alone, or forgiveness with additional goodness (*ihsan*).²⁶

The Qur’an and examples from the Prophet’s (p) life emphasize the preference for forgiveness and magnanimity where possible. “... *Let them pardon and forgive. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*” (Qur’an 24:22) He also enjoined, “*Show forgiveness, enjoin what is good, and turn away from the foolish (i.e., don't punish them).*” (Qur’an 7:199)

Allah encourages forgiveness and returning evil with good when He says: “*Repel by (means of) what is best, (their) evils. We are most knowing of what you describe.*” (Qur’an 23:96) Following this Qur’anic injunction, forgiveness was exemplified by Prophet Muhammad (p) in many difficult situations such as forgiveness of war crimes by the *Quraish* after the conquest of Mecca;²⁷ and the forgiveness of the people of *Ta’if* when he went there to preach the message of Islam but instead of appreciating him, they stoned him.²⁸ He also overlooked the ill behaviour of Jews (i.e., Banu Qaynuqa and Banu Nadir) in Medina, before he expelled them after their betrayal.²⁹

²³ Da’wah Institute of Nigeria, *Al-Ameen:40+ Lessons for Building Bridges and Breaking Barriers to Peace from the Life of Prophet Muhammad*, Islamic Education Trust, Minna: Nigeria, 2019, pp. 46 - 47.

²⁴ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.8, hadith no.135.

²⁵ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no.3560; Abu Dawud, *Sunan Abi Dawud*, hadith no.4787.

²⁶ Da’wah Institute of Nigeria, *Al-Ameen:40+ Lessons for Building Bridges and Breaking Barriers to Peace from the Life of Prophet Muhammad*, Islamic Education Trust, Minna: Nigeria, 2019, pp. 49 – 50.

²⁷ Al-Baihaqi, *Ma’rifah al-Sunan wa al-Athar*, vol.14, p.417; Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal*, Muassasah al-Qurtubah, Cairo, vol.2, p.538; Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah*, vol.4, p.307

²⁸ Safy al-Rahman Mubarakfuri, *Al-Rahiq Al-Makhtum (The Sealed Nectar: Biography of the Noble Prophet)*, Dar al-Salam Publishers, Riyadh, 1996, p.137

²⁹ Safy al-Rahman Mubarakfuri, *Al-Rahiq Al-Makhtum (The Sealed Nectar: Biography of the Noble Prophet)*, Dar al-Salam Publishers, Riyadh, 1996, p.239; Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Fiqh al-Sirah*, International Islamic Federation of Student Organisations, Riyadh, 1997, p.292, Ahmad ‘Ali al-Majdub, *al-Mustawtanat al-Yahudiyyah ‘Ala ‘Ahd al-Rasul*, al-Dar al-Misriyyah al-Lubnaniyyah, Cairo, 1992, p.77-89

Thus, Muslims are encouraged to be forgiving and magnanimous to those who wrong them even if they belong to a different faith.

LESSON 5: HONESTY AND TRUTHFULNESS

LESSON 5: HONESTY AND TRUTHFULNESS

Objectives	By the end of the training session, participants should be able to discuss the Islamic virtues of honesty and truthfulness
Duration	2 hours
Materials Needed	Flip Charts or White Board, Markers, Handouts Power Point Presentation, Projector, Files, Jotters, Sticky Notes, Pens.
Methodology	Lecture, Group Work, Story Telling, Case Study, Experiential Learning.
Evaluation Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Define Honesty and Truth. 2) Explain why Honesty and Truth are so important. 3) Mention the benefits of honesty to the individual and society. 4) Mention three probable challenges with being honest and truthful.

Allah enjoins all Muslims, *“O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in upholding equity, bearing witness to the truth for the sake of God, even though it be against your own selves, or your parents and kinsfolk. Whether the person concerned be rich or poor, God’s claim takes precedence over (the claims of) either of them. Do not, then, follow your own desires, lest you swerve from justice; for if you distort (the truth), behold, God is indeed aware of all that you do!”* (Qur’an 4:135)

Prophet Muhammad (p), who is the most important role model (*uswatun hasanah*)³⁰ for all Muslims, was so well known for his truthfulness, integrity, honesty, and fairness in his business dealings and other interactions with the polytheists of Mecca, that they even

³⁰ Qur’an 33:21.

nicknamed him “*Al-Ameen*” (meaning the “Trustworthy” or “Honest one”). This began even before his call to prophethood and remained till the end.³¹

Muslims are enjoined to be honest at all times as Abdullah bin Mas’ud reported that Muhammad (p) said, “*A person tells the truth until he is recorded as truthful, and a person tells a lie until he is recorded as a liar.*”³² The Prophet (pbuh) said, “*A man utters a word pleasing to Almighty Allah without considering it of any significance for which Allah exalts his ranks (in Jannah); another one speaks a word displeasing to Allah without considering it of any importance, and for this reason, he will sink into Hell deeper than the distance between the east and the west.*”³³

Consequently, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) educates Muslims with good manners saying: “*Whosoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should either say what is good or keep quiet*”.³⁴

³¹ Da’wah Institute of Nigeria, *Al-Ameen:40+ Lessons for Building Bridges and Breaking Barriers to Peace from the Life of Prophet Muhammad*, Islamic Education Trust, Minna: Nigeria, 2019, pp. 18 – 19.

³²*Sahih Muslim*, hadith no.6306.

³³ *Al-Bukhari*

³⁴ *Al-Bukhari*

LESSON 6: JUSTICE AND PEACE

Objectives	By the end of the training session, participants should be able to discuss their understanding of the importance of justice and peace.
Duration	1.5 hours
Materials Needed	Flip Charts or White Board, Markers, Handouts Power Point Presentation, Projector, Files, Jotters, Sticky Notes, Pens.
Methodology	Lecture, Case studies, Buzz groups, Role plays/exercises, Audio-visual-aids, Questions and answers.
Evaluation Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How do we define “Justice” and “Peace”? 2) What is the goal of “Justice” and “Peace”? 3) What are the roles of Muslims in promoting Justice and Peace in the context of FoRB?

Justice is such a central value in Islam that Allah says, *“Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives, and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded.”* (Qur’an 16:90)

Muslims are enjoined to be just even if it is against them or their loved ones. Allah says, *“O you who believe! Be ever steadfast in upholding equity, bearing witness to the truth for the sake of God, even though it be against your own selves, or your parents and kinsfolk. Whether the person concerned be rich or poor, God’s claim takes precedence over (the claims of) either of them. Do not, then, follow your own desires, lest you swerve from justice; for if you distort (the truth), behold, God is indeed aware of all that you do!”* (Qur’an 4:135).

And when acting in the position of a judge, Muslims are expected to be just and fair to all parties irrespective of the diversity of the parties involved, as Allah enjoins thus, *“If you judge between mankind, judge with justice”* (Qur’an 4:58)

Allah encourages justice (*‘adl* and *qist*) – even to an enemy. He says: *“O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in*

all equity; and never let hatred of anyone lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just; this is closest to being God-conscious. And remain conscious of God; verily, God is aware of all that you do.” (Qur’an 5:8)

A society cannot have peace without justice. According to the great medieval jurist Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah,

“The foundation of the Shari’ah is wisdom and the safeguarding of people’s welfare in this life and the next. In its entirety, it is about justice, mercy, wisdom, and good. Every rule which replaces justice with injustice, mercy with its opposite, the common good with mischief, and wisdom with folly, is a ruling that does not belong to the shari’ah, even though it might have been claimed to be according to some interpretation...”³⁵

According to Ibn Taymiyyah, *“In this life, people’s situations uphold when justice prevails in their society even if they fall into various kinds of sins. However, people’s situations do not uphold when injustice and lack of rights prevail in their society. That is why the saying goes: God upholds a state established on justice, even if it were a nation of disbelievers, and would not uphold a state established on injustice, even if it were a nation of Muslims. The other saying goes: ‘This world lives with justice and disbelief, and does not live with injustice and Islam’. The Prophet (p) said: ‘No sin has a faster divine punishment than the sin of injustice...’. Thus, people of injustice fail in this life, even if they were to be forgiven in the Hereafter. This is because justice is the universal law of things.”³⁶*

Thus, Muslims need to uphold peace and justice in their individual and communal lives.

³⁵ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *I’lam al-Muwaqqi’in ‘an Rabb al-‘Alamin*, Maktabah al-Kulliyat al-Azhariyyah, Cairo, Egypt, 1968, vol.3, p.2

³⁶ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Kutub wa Rasa’il*, vol.28, p.146.

LESSON 7: IMPARTIALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATORY BEHAVIOUR

Objectives	By the end of the training course, participants should be able to discuss the Islamic teachings on impartiality and non-discriminatory behaviour.
Duration	2 hours
Materials Needed	Flip Charts or White Board, Markers, Handouts, Power Point Presentation, Projector, Files, Jotters, Sticky Notes, Pens.
Methodology	Lecture, Group Work, Story Telling, Case Study, Experiential Learning.
Evaluation Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What are impartiality and non-discriminatory behaviour. 2) Give two effects of partiality and discrimination. 3) Mention three roles of Christians in combating partiality and discrimination.

The Qur'an and the Sunnah teach Muslims to be fair and just in all their dealings with everyone, irrespective of differences in language, skin colour, race, socio-economic or creed. Discriminatory behaviour and unfair treatment of other people is a form of oppression and the companion Abu Dharr reported that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "Allah the Exalted said: *O my servants, I have forbidden oppression for Myself, and I have made it forbidden among you, so do not oppress one another.*"³⁷ This hadith and several other texts prohibit oppression generally, not just oppression against Muslims.

Specifically, regarding the vast majority of peaceful and non-hostile people of other faiths, Muslims have been enjoined by Allah:

³⁷*Sahih Muslim*, hadith no.2577.

*“As for those (unbelievers) who do not fight against you on account of (your) faith, nor drive you out of your homelands, **God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to deal with them with fairness and equity...**”* (Qur’an 60:8).

There is no denying however that there are some non-Muslims who are hostile or aggressive towards Muslims. In dealing with this set of non-Muslims, Allah says:

*“O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity; **and never let hatred of anyone lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just; this is closest to being God-conscious.** And remain conscious of God; verily, God is aware of all that you do.”* (Qur’an 5:8)

This verse, al-Qurtubi maintains, indicates that the disbelief of the disbeliever should not prevent you from ensuring justice in dealings with them. Al-Tabari maintains that Muslims should not cross the boundaries set by Allah on account of their hatred with their enemies and they should refrain from crossing the boundaries set for them in respect of His commandments.³⁸ Al-Mawardi believes that Allah’s enjoinder is clear: ‘Believers! Deal justly with mankind whether the person is your enemy or friend.’³⁹ Ibn Kathir instructs: ‘Administer justice with all, friends or foe’.⁴⁰

According to al-Razi, the verse provides two shades of meaning. First, it is general, which means it is likely that your hatred of a particular set of people leads you towards exercising oppression on them and prompts you to cross boundaries. But it also means: be just with them even if they deal badly with you and be kind to them even if they do their best to harm you. This is the general address and its meaning is that Allah enjoins that every person should be treated with justice and equity avoiding partiality, discrimination, prejudice, and oppression.

A particular incident that occurred during the time of the Prophet is instructive in this regard. Muslims were in a state of war and a poor Muslim who was eager to join the battle stole a shield and accused a Jew of being the thief when things escalated. The case was brought to the Prophet (pbuh) and he was asked to defend the Muslim. In response, the Qur’anic

³⁸ Al-Tabari, Muhammad bin Jarir, *Jami’ al-Bayan ‘an Ta’wil al-Qur’an*, vol. 6, p.141.

³⁹ Ali bin Muhammad bin Habib, Al-Mawardi, *al-Nukat wa al-Uyun*, vol. 2, p.19.

⁴⁰ Ibn Kathir, Abu al-Fida’ Isma’il bin ‘Umar, *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim*, vol. 3, p.62.

revelation was decisive and unequivocal. The Qur'an responded, "We have sent to you the Book containing the truth so that you will judge among the people as God has shown you, and do not be an advocate for the deceivers... And he who commits a mistake or iniquity and then ascribes it to one who is innocent is guilty of calumny and brazen sin." (Qur'an 4:105-112) The Qur'an thus vindicated the Jewish merchant, condemned Tu'ma, and clearly commanded the Prophet (p) to stand by justice and not defend deceivers, even if the culprit is a Muslim.⁴¹

Studying this incident, one would be struck by the Qur'an's insistence on justice, its rejection of chauvinistic tribalism, and its rejection of political functionalism and opportunism. Even the state of war and the Muslim's patriotic motivations could not be used to sacrifice an outsider (a Jew in this case), because doing so would be a brazen sin. Thus, the Prophet (p) did not rule unjustly. Rather, he stood for justice, irrespective of the religion of the plaintiff and defendant. The action of the Prophet (p) in this narration shows the importance of justice and fairness when dealing with people, irrespective of their faith.

⁴¹See Abu Hasan 'Ali bin Ahmad al-Wahidi, *Asbab Nuzul al-Qur'an*, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, Beirut, 2001, p.124; Muhammad bin Jarir al-Tabari, *Tafsir al-Tabari: Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ay al-Qur'an*, (ed. Mahmud Muhammad Shakir), Maktabat Ibn Taymiyya, Cairo, n.d., vol.9, pp.175-199; Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Mawardi, *Al-Nukatu wa al-Uyun: Tafsir al-Mawardi*, (ed. Al-Sayyid bin 'Abd al-Maqsud bin 'Abd al-Rahim), Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, Beirut, n.d., vol.1, p.527-28; Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *al-Tafsir al-Kabir (a.k.a Mafatih al-Ghayb)*, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, Beirut, 1990, vol. 6, pt. 11:26 – 31.

LESSON 8: CIVIC RESPONSIBILITIES AND RELIGION

Objectives	By the end of the training session, participants should be able to discuss the Islamic teachings on civic responsibilities.
Duration	2 hours
Materials Needed	Flip Charts or White Board, Markers, Handouts Power Point Presentation, Projector, Files, Jotters, Sticky Notes, Pens.
Methodology	Lecture, Group Work, Story Telling, Case Study, Experiential Learning.
Evaluation Questions	1) What is your understanding of the concept of civic responsibilities? 2) Mention five civic responsibilities you have as a Nigerian. 3) Discuss some of the Islamic perspectives on civic responsibilities.

Civic responsibility refers to active participation in the public life of a community in an informed, committed, and constructive manner, with a focus on the common good. Civic values include respect for the rule of law, personal sense of responsibility, solidarity, standing for justice, participating in the governance process, etc.

During the Pre-Islamic (*Jahiliyyah*) Period in Mecca, and within the legal and administrative system of the “*Jahiliyyah* society” of Mecca, the Prophet (p) joined a group known as the *Hilf al-Fudul* (“League of the Virtuous”). This was a group of upright individuals from various clans who took it upon themselves to protect the rights of any victim of oppression in Mecca.⁴²

Even after Islam was well-established, the Prophet (p) recounted his involvement with the *Hilf al-Fudul*, and according to Talha ibn Abdullah, he said that “if he was to be invited again to join such a group now in the time of Islam, he would respond and join them.”⁴³ According to Ibn Hisham, “They (members of *Hilf al-Fudul*) promised and pledged that they would not find any oppressed person among their people or among anyone else who entered Mecca

⁴² Adil Salahi, *Muhammad, Man and Prophet: A Complete Study of the Life of the Prophet of Islam*, The Islamic Foundation, Markfield, UK, 2002, pp.40-41, pp. 495-530; Tariq Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007, pp. 20-22

⁴³ *Sunan Al-Kubra*, hadith no. 12114; *Al-Dala'il fi Gharib al-Hadith*, 243

without supporting him. They would stand against whoever oppressed him until the rights of the oppressed were returned.”⁴⁴

The Prophet (p) was reported by Ibn Abbas to have said, “*Every pact (or treaty) from the Time of Ignorance (Jahiliyyah) is only further strengthened and affirmed by Islam.*”⁴⁵

Scholars have concluded from this that Muslims, even where they do not control the government or laws of the land, are expected to enjoin right and forbid wrong (as instructed by the Qur’an 3:104) to the best of their abilities (Qur’an 64:16) within the existing societal restrictions. In the Qur’an, Allah instructs Muslims to “*Cooperate in righteousness and piety, and do not cooperate in sin and aggression*” (Qur’an 5:2).

Muslims must always have those amongst them who defend the legal rights of others irrespective of their faith. This is a “collective social obligation” (*fard kifayah*) required of Muslims. They should protect and assist victims of abuse and injustice even in societies where Islamic law has no jurisdiction or legal recognition. This has been done successfully through advocacy and activism, using existing legal systems to make or support reforms, in many countries such as South Africa, the UK, Germany, and the USA, etc.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Ibn Hisham, *Sirat an-Nabawiyah*, vol.1, p.123; *Al-Dala'il fi Gharib al-Hadith*, 243

⁴⁵*Musnad Ahmad*, hadith no. 2904. Literally, the hadith reads, “*Every pact from the Time of Ignorance (Jahiliyyah) is not increased by Islam except in strength and affirmation*”

⁴⁶ Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, *Muslim Relations with Christians, Jews and Others*, Islamic Education Trust, 2018, p.132 - 134

LESSON 9: SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Objectives	At the end of the training session, participants should be able to discuss the concept of servant leadership from an Islamic perspective.
Duration	2 hours
Materials Needed	Flip Charts or White Board, Markers, Handouts Power Point Presentation, Projector, Files, Jotters, Sticky Notes, Pens.
Methodology	Lecture, Group Work, Story Telling, Case Study, Experiential Learning.
Evaluation Questions	1) How do we define the concept of servant leadership? 2) What are some leadership styles that we know? 3) What are the qualities of effective leaders?

Servant leadership is a leadership philosophy in which the main goal and responsibility of the leader is to serve the people. It focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. Servant leadership requires skills such as listening, empathy, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community.⁴⁷

Abdullah ibn Umar reported that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, “*Every one of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock. The leader of the people is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects. A man is the guardian of his family and he is responsible for them. A woman is the guardian of her husband’s home and his children and she is responsible for them. The servant of a man is a guardian of the property of his master and he is responsible for it. No doubt, every one of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock.*”⁴⁸ Thus, every individual is a leader in one way or the other.

⁴⁷ <https://www.greenleaf.org/what-is-servant-leadership/>

⁴⁸ Sahih al-Bukhari, hadith no. 7138; Sahih Muslim, hadith no. 1829

The Prophet (pbuh) himself was a servant-leader exemplar and a glance into his biography shows that he was a servant to God first and to his people second. Throughout his prophethood, Muhammad (PBUH) talked to people, listened to men, women, children, rich, poor, slaves, leaders. He heard his people's concerns, their needs, their pains. He empathized with people, prayed with them and for them, and healed them. He (pbuh) also knew that leading meant going beyond listening, but also meant taking advice. So, he sought counsel from his followers- men, women, children, rich, poor, slaves, leaders, following the counsel of Allah, "*...and consult them in the matter ...*" (Quran 3:159).⁴⁹

The Prophet (pbuh) served his people with kindness, a smiling face, a generous hand, and a listening ear as an example to his people of how best to be in this world. He was gentle to show people how to be gentle, and when a companion said he had never kissed any of his 10 sons, he rebuked him for that. Allah testifies to his kind nature saying, "*O Messenger of Allah! It is a great Mercy of God that you are gentle and kind towards them; for, had you been harsh and hard-hearted, they would all have broken away from you*" (Quran 3:159). He was so merciful and compassionate to his companions that Allah said, "*Now there has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves: it grieves him that you should fall into distress: ardently anxious is he over you: to the believers, he is compassionate, merciful.*" (Quran 9:128)

As exemplified by the Prophet (pbuh), Muslims learn that a leader is not the one who everyone else serves, but the one who serves and betters others. A leader is not someone who bosses others around, but one committed to leading by example. The Prophet (pbuh) himself said: "*The best of leaders among you are those whom you love and who love you in return. They pray for you and you pray for them.*"⁵⁰

⁴⁹ <https://aboutislam.net/reading-islam/about-muhammad/muhammad-pbuh-prophet-leader-servant/>
⁵⁰ Muslim

LESSON 10: HARMFUL CULTURAL PRACTICES AGAINST WOMEN⁵¹

Objectives	By the end of the session, participants should be able to discuss the relationship between Islam and culture, and the perspective of Islam on harmful cultural practices especially with regards to women.
Duration	2 hours
Materials Needed	Name Tags, Flip Chart, White Board, Markers, Masking tape, Post-it notes, Handout.
Methodology	Lecture, Group Work, Story Telling, Case Study, Experiential Learning.
Evaluation Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Mention 3 other harmful cultural practices in your community. 2) Mention 3 effects of harmful cultural practices. 3) Mention 2 roles you can play to tackle these harmful cultural practices.

Culture is an umbrella term that encompasses the social behaviour and norms found in human societies, as well as the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities, and habits of the individuals in these groups. It is the patterns of learned and shared behaviour and beliefs of a particular social, ethnic, or age group. Culture in its broadest sense is cultivated behavior; that is the totality of a person's learned, accumulated experience which is socially transmitted, or more briefly, behavior through social learning. Hence, culture is often subconscious. It is usually just a way of life of a group of people--the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next. That's why when you

⁵¹ The content of this section has been copied with permission from Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, *Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls (PVAWG) Training Manual for Religious Leaders*, Unpublished Manuscript.

ask people why they do certain things, they do not have any concrete explanation for it as they have never even given it any critical thought. They just do it because, 'well, it's the culture'.

Islam recognizes the place of culture in the sociological make-up of individuals and groups so much that it recognizes it as a secondary source of law. Cultural norms and customs, referred to as '*Urf* and *Aadat* constitute a valid legal reference and source of law in all Sunni Schools. In fact, one of the earliest theories and principles of Islam was that the religion should interfere as little as possible with pre-existing practice. The prominence given to regional culture and local custom (as a source of Islamic law) reflects the attention to the general good (*maslahah*), since sound custom, as a rule, have strong links with the aspirations, identity, needs, and necessities of people in the regions where they live.⁵² According to Imam Al-Shatibi, this approach to local or regional custom is based on Prophetic precedent, because much of the Prophet's legislation was an affirmation of the sound or good customary practices of pre-Islamic Arabia. The Arabs, like human societies in general, developed many good customs before the advent of Prophetic guidance. Such customs were especially well-suited to their environment and circumstances. The Prophet (pbuh) affirmed and perfected them, only abolishing those pre-Islamic customs that were unsound or detrimental.

However, Islam also recognizes that there are good cultural practices and there are harmful cultural practices that must be abolished. After all, before the 19th Century, the killing of twin babies was a cultural practice in some parts of Nigeria. Thus, good cultural practices should be followed and harmful practices should be eradicated. As the Prophet (pbuh) taught, *harm must be eliminated (ad-darar yuzal)*.

There are several prevalent cultural practices particularly regarding women today that are harmful, not only to the women themselves but to the entire society. Here, we shall consider two of such harmful cultural practices against women

FORCED MARRIAGE

A forced marriage is a marriage without the free and personal consent of either or both parties. In many areas, it is seen as a cultural practice with some people viewing it as acceptable in Islam, even though this contradicts the intent of Islam on marriage. The wife of

⁵² Abu Zahra, Malik, 420-421 – cited in Umar F. Abd-Allah Waymann-Langraf, *Malik and Medina: Islamic Legal Reasoning in the Formative Period*, Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands, 2013, p.137.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), Aisha, reported: I said, “O Messenger of Allah, should women be asked for their consent before marriage?” The Prophet (pbuh) said, “Yes.” I said, “Indeed, sometimes a virgin is too shy to speak when asked.” The Prophet said, “Her silence is her consent.”⁵³ (Bukhari and Muslim)

Allah in Quran 30:21 has ordained that marriage should be contracted based on the principles of tranquillity (*sakinah*), love (*mawaddah*), and mercy (*rahmah*). A marriage based on force will not be able to achieve this objective. The Prophet (pbuh) also said: “Take my advice concerning women; act kindly towards women”.⁵⁴ (Sahih Bukhari)

More often than not, forced marriage leads to depression on the part of the woman. This is as a result of the harm or injury that usually attends such a marriage. This violates the principle of prevention of harm in Islam – “Do not cause or reciprocate harm” (*La darar wa la dirar*). The Shari’ah is concerned about the preservation of intellect (*‘aql*), mental health, dignity, amongst others. Forced marriages put these at risk. The Qur’an states that “And do not throw yourselves into destruction” (Quran 2:195). Also, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said, “Do not cause harm or reciprocate harm.”⁵⁵ (Ibn Majah), and “Whoever harms others, then Allah will harm him.”⁵⁶ (Sunan al-Tirmidhi). A legal Islamic maxim (*qa’idah*) states that “the basic rule regarding harmful things is prohibition” (*al-asl fil madar al-haram*).

Also, another negative effect of forced marriage is that it brings about broken homes in which the couple becomes separated or in some cases, the husband or the wife abandons the home. Children from such broken homes suffer seriously from a lack of proper parenting, lack of access to education, and psychological problems. Such children become a burden and threat to society. Hence, parents should avoid forcing their daughters into marriage with partners they are not willing to marry. It is also important for religious leaders to condemn this practice in all its forms and admonish their followers and congregants to stop the practice of forced marriages to avoid bringing untold harm to them.

⁵³ *Sahih Bukhari*, 6547; *Sahih Muslim*, 1420

⁵⁴ *Sahih Bukhari*, 3331

⁵⁵ *Sunan Ibn Majah*, 2340

⁵⁶ *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, 1940

EARLY MARRIAGE

Early marriage, which is the marriage of minors, lingers in our societies especially with the misconception from parents due to a locally concocted and fabricated hadith claimed to be from the Prophet (pbuh) which states that *“if a girl sees three menstrual flows and she is not married off, her father will share the responsibility for any illicit sexual act committed by her while his prayers will not be accepted”*. This statement is not only fabricated but also in clear contradiction to the principle of Islam on personal responsibility, which is that *“nobody takes the sins of others”*. Allah says: *“...and no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another”*. (Quran 35:18)

Furthermore, the Prophet (saw) said: *“Whoever supports two girls till they attain maturity, he and I will come on the Day of Resurrection (close to each other) like this (the messenger of Allah joined his fingers to illustrate closeness)”*⁵⁷ (Muslim)

Studies have shown that when girls are made to marry and have children too early, they run the risk of complications with regards to their reproductive health. Such effects include VVF and protracted labour that could claim their lives due to little or no knowledge of their biological makeup and needs. This is a harmful cultural practice that should not be entertained in society. It is thus important for parents to ensure that their sons and daughters are not denied further education and life skills that will empower them to meet the challenges of contemporary family and social life. Islam encourages the equal right to opportunities for both males and females, even from childhood. The Prophet said: *“Act equally between your children; act equally between your sons.”*⁵⁸ (Abu Dawud) Thus, parents should fear Allah while treating their girl-child and give her the best of training on spiritual, economic, social, and political matters. Religious leaders also need to intensify teachings/preaching on the need to delay marriages until such an age where the couple is both psychologically and emotionally mature, more educated, and responsible in their behaviour towards each other and family responsibilities.

⁵⁷ Riyadh al-Saliheen, 267

⁵⁸ Abu Dawud, 3544

LESSON 11: YOUTH, PEACE, AND SECURITY⁵⁹

Objectives	By the end of the session, participants should be able to identify the roles that youth can play, and the importance of engaging the youth in peacebuilding.
Duration	2 hours
Materials Needed	Name Tags, Flip Chart, White Board, Markers, Masking tape, Post-it notes, Handout
Methodology	Lecture, Group Work, Story Telling, Case Study, Experiential Learning.
Evaluation Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Mention 2 reasons why youth should be involved in peacebuilding initiatives.2) Identify 2 other barriers to youth engagement.3) Highlight 3 ways by which you can engage the youths in your community for peacebuilding and other beneficial initiatives.

The youthful period is one of high energy and great enthusiasm, sometimes coupled with an air of invincibility and perpetuity. It is such an important stage of life that the Prophet counselled Muslims to value five things: “Youth before old age, health before sickness, wealth before poverty, free time before preoccupation, and life before death.” (Narrated by Ibn Abbas and reported by Al Hakim)

The Prophet (pbuh), a model for all Muslim leaders, recognized the values and capacities of the youth amongst his *sahabahs* (companions) and maximized these potentials. He treated the young people as if they had something to offer the community, giving them roles that their elders earlier thought involved more responsibility than they were capable of handling. They were never pushed aside or made to feel either useless or unwanted. Rather, they were assigned different responsibilities within the fledgling community and contributed their

⁵⁹ ⁵⁹ The content of this section has been copied with permission from Da’wah Institute of Nigeria, *Training Manual for Religious Leaders*, Unpublished Manuscript.

quota to the development of the Ummah. Amongst many other instances, we have the examples of Mus'ab bn Umayr who became the first ambassador of Islam at a young age, as well as Usamah bn Zayd who at the age of 17 was given the command of an army which included Abubakar and Umar.

Unfortunately, in many Muslim communities today, the role of youth in community building is often overlooked. Rather than being engaged, youth are either treated as children with little to nothing to offer or accused of being incompetent without being given the requisite mentorship.

Youth engagement is essentially making the youth part and parcel of the fabric of the community in a meaningful way. It is to have them not only be included in programs but to be leading programs as well. It is to build up their confidence, self-esteem, and self-motivation. It means to treat them as young adults who are capable of making moral, intellectual, and even spiritual decisions. Youth engagement is not to remove the adults from the picture, but to have the adults tap into their own mentorship wisdom and apply it in ways that will empower the youth and make the Muslim community stronger, moving from not only adult-as-mentor to adult-as-partner.

When it comes to peacebuilding, and promotion of freedom of religion and belief, just as in many other spheres of life, Muslim youth have a huge role to play. Mentoring youths by involving them in community programs would help imbue in them requisite knowledge and skills for future endeavours and help them develop a deeper commitment to the Muslim community. Amongst other benefits, youth engagement would lead to:

- **Personal Competency** - being able to make personal decisions, solve one's problems, help others solve problems, as well as be thoughtful about their values, and how they apply them to their living conditions.
- **Political Competency** - an increased understanding of the values of institutions (like Masjids and schools) and confidence to effectively interact with and positively influence public and private institutions. They get to learn how society functions, how they can demand their rights in nonviolent ways, and how they can have civic participation in society.
- **Cognitive Competency** - improvement in analytical, literacy, communication, strategizing, and organizing skills, among others.

- **Social Competency** - increased understanding of teamwork in terms of conflict resolution, team-building, and respect for diversity. This allows young people to build stronger and better relationships with everyone in their lives.

Despite these numerous benefits, youths are often not properly engaged within our communities due to several reasons including:

- Lack of mentors & role models
- Absence of professional counselling for youth
- Irrelevant and unwelcoming Khutbas, programs, and structures in Masjids and Islamic centers
- Lack of unity and networking among Muslims
- Being treated like a child, without respect
- Youth getting carried away by distractions such as social media, football, and movies
- Youth not knowing how to get involved, and not being asked to get involved
- Generational and cultural gaps

The positioning of youth in society has a bearing on their leadership potential and their possible role in peacebuilding. The tension between young and old has been one of the key features of inter-generational shifts about the control over power, resources, and people. The tension lies in the palpable impatience of youth, their desire to strive for more, their willingness to be seen as responsible and capable.

To overcome these barriers and maximize the potentials of the Muslim youth, it is important for religious actors and parents to provide youths with training opportunities to take an active part in peacebuilding. With their youthful energy and capabilities, and ability to adapt to new technological trends, for example, youths could act as mediators, community mobilizers, humanitarian workers, and peace brokers. The innovativeness and creativeness of young people in those areas could be mobilized effectively by connecting them with wider peacebuilding objectives such as building bridges between divided communities and ensuring a viable process of reconciliation.

Allah says:

“We are narrating their story to You in truth. Indeed, they were a group of youths who believed in their Lord. So, We increased them in guidance 14 And We made firm their hearts when they stood and said, “Our Lord is the Lord of the Heavens and the Earth! We will not call upon any god other than Him. If we were to do that, we would surely have said a transgressive word” Quran 18: 13 – 15.

Allah praised a group of youth as above in Surat al-Kahf. Even today, there are a lot of Muslim youth in our communities who would be able to bring a lot of benefits to the community if only they are properly engaged.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES⁶⁰

The following are recommended discussions that help to counter bridge-burning and right-denying narratives that are quite prevalent within the community.

1. Introduction to *Al-Wala'* (loyalty) and *Al-Bara'* (dissociation)

Some Muslims understand interfaith relations as summarized and restricted by the notions of either one of “loyalty and allegiance” (*al-wala'*) or of “dissociation and disavowal” (*al-bara'*), with little or no regard to other Islamic concepts such as kindness, compassion, fairness, and justice. What actually is the correct meaning of *Al-Wala'* (loyalty) and *Al-Bara'* (dissociation)?

Al-Wala' literarily means loyalty, love, support, help, and follow; while *al-Bara'* means to despise, desert and keep innocent of.

The terms “*al-Hub fi Allah* (loving for Allah’s sake) and *al-Bughd fi Allah* (hating for Allah’s sake)” and “*al-Muwalat* (loyalty) *wa al-Mu’adat* (enmity)” are sometimes used instead of *al-Wala' wa al-Bara'*.

Ibn Abbas was reported to have said: “Whoever loves for the sake of Allah and hates for the sake of Allah and gives for His sake and holds for His sake has completed his faith.”⁶¹

Basically, the concept refers to liking and desiring what Allah likes and dislikes or forsaking what Allah dislikes.

The concept of *Al-Wala'*:

The technical meaning of *al-Wala'* is to totally agree with the sayings, deeds, and beliefs which please Allah and the persons whom He likes.⁶² It is to love what Allah loves and to be loyal to what Allah approves of. The concept of *al-Wala'* therefore does not contradict or go

⁶⁰ This section has been extracted from Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, *Muslim Relations with Christians, Jews and Others*, Islamic Education Trust, 2018.

⁶¹ Sulaiman bin Ahmad al-Tabarani, *al-Mu'jam al-Awsat*, Dar al-Haramayn, Cairo, 1415AH, hadith no. 9083

⁶² http://www.muslimtents.com/aminahsworld/Al_wala.html (accessed on 05/06/2017)

against justice (*qist*), kindness (*birr*), mercy (*rahmah*), and excellence (*ihsan*) towards others irrespective of religious affiliation.

The concept of *Al-Bara'*:

Al-Bara' is to disavow, dislike and disagree with everything that Allah hates and condemns.⁶³ The concept of *al-Bara'* however does not imply injustice, cruelty, or any other unethical or inhumane behaviours which are not acceptable even towards an enemy of Allah or something that Allah hates. It also does not imply that Muslims cannot forgive their enemies and those who do wrong to them from among non-Muslims, as can be seen from the Sunnah of the Prophet (p) towards his enemies and the enemies of Allah.

Interfaith relations are not defined by only *Wala'* (loyalty) and *Bara'* (disassociation), but also by *Birr* (kindness), *Qist* (justice), and *Ihsan* (goodness). Allah says:

“As for such (of the unbelievers) who 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 (birr) and to behave towards them with full equity (qist): for verily, God loves those who act equitably. God only forbids you to turn in friendship towards such as fight against you because of (your) faith, and drive you forth from your homelands, or aid (others) in driving you forth: and as for those (from among you) who turn toward them in friendship (wala'), it is they, they who are truly wrongdoers!” (Qur'an 60: 8-9)

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah says, “This verse permits association with those who have not declared war against the Muslims and allows kindness towards them, even though they may not be allies.”⁶⁴

In his *Tafsir* (commentary) on Qur'an 60:8, Imam Al-Qurtubi said:

“The majority of commentators have agreed that this verse has not been abrogated. They cited the story reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim about Asmā' bint Abubakr when she asked the Prophet (p) if she could receive and be kind to her non-Muslim mother who visited her in Madina and the Prophet (p) said 'Yes'. It was said that

⁶³ For further reading see: Muhammad Sa'id al-Qahtani, *al-Wala' wa al-Bara' fi al-Islam*, Al-Maktabah al-Shamilah 3.13; See also www.kalamullah.com

⁶⁴ *Zad al-Masir*, vol.8, p.39, cited in Taha Jabir al-Alwani, *Towards a Fiqh for Minorities: Some Basic Reflections*, International Institute of Islamic Thought, London, 2003, p.26

this verse was revealed in this specific incident. Al-Mawardi and Abu Dawood reported that Amir ibn Abdullah ibn Al-Zubair narrated that his father told him that, before accepting Islam, Abubakr divorced his wife Qatila, the mother of Asmā'. When the truce was held between the Prophet (p) and the polytheists of the Quraish, the mother visited her daughter in Madina and brought her a pair of earrings and other gifts. Asmā' was reluctant to accept the gifts before asking the Prophet (p). In answer to her question, Allah revealed this verse [i.e. Qur'an 60:8].⁶⁵

Similarly, Allah encourages justice (*‘adl* and *qist*) – even to an enemy. He says: “Do not let the hatred of any people cause you to swerve from justice. Be just: this is nearest to being God-conscious” (Qur'an 5:8). Also, “O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in upholding equity, bearing witness to the truth for the sake of God, even though it be against your own selves, or your parents and kinsfolk. Whether the person concerned be rich or poor, God's claim takes precedence over (the claims of) either of them. Do not, then, follow your own desires, lest you swerve from justice; for if you distort (the truth), behold, God is indeed aware of all that you do!” (Qur'an 4:135).

Also, Allah encourages forgiveness and returning evil with good. He says: “Repel by (means of) what is best, (their) evils. We are most knowing of what you describe.” (Qur'an 23:96) Following this Qur'anic injunction, forgiveness was exemplified by Prophet Muhammad (p) in many difficult situations such as forgiveness of war crimes by the *Quraish* after the conquest of Mecca;⁶⁶ and the forgiveness of the people of *Ta'if* when he went there to preach the message of Islam but instead of appreciating him, they stoned him.⁶⁷ He also overlooked the ill behaviour of Jews (i.e. Banu Qaynuqa and Banu Nadir) in Medina, before he expelled them after their betrayal.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Al-Qurtubi, quoted by Shaykh Abdul Fattah Abu Ghudda, *Islamic Manners*. Trans. by Muhammad Zahid Abu Ghudda, Edited by S.M. Hassan Al-Banna, Awakening Publications, 2001, pp.76-77; See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.3, hadith no. 789 for the hadith.

⁶⁶ Al-Baihaqi, *Ma'rifah al-Sunan wa al-Athar*, vol.14, p.417; Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal*, Muassasah al-Qurtubah, Cairo, vol.2, p.538; Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah*, vol.4, p.307

⁶⁷ Safy al-Rahman Mubarakfuri, *Al-Rahiq Al-Makhtum (The Sealed Nectar: Biography of the Noble Prophet)*, Dar al-Salam Publishers, Riyadh, 1996, p.137

⁶⁸ Safy al-Rahman Mubarakfuri, *Al-Rahiq Al-Makhtum (The Sealed Nectar: Biography of the Noble Prophet)*, Dar al-Salam Publishers, Riyadh, 1996, p.239; Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Fiqh al-Sirah*, International Islamic Federation of Student Organisations, Riyadh, 1997, p.292, Ahmad 'Ali al-Majdub, *al-Mustawtanat al-Yahudiyyah 'Ala 'Ahd al-Rasul*, al-Dar al-Misriyyah al-Lubnaniyyah, Cairo, 1992, p.77-89

More textual evidence showing what the concept of ‘*al-Bara*’ is not:

- A young Jewish boy used to serve the Prophet (p) and he became sick. So the Prophet (p) went to visit him. He sat near his head and asked him to embrace Islam. The boy looked at his father, who was sitting there; the latter told him to obey Abu al-Qasim and the boy embraced Islam. The Prophet (p) came out saying: "Praises be to Allah Who saved the boy from the Hell-fire."⁶⁹ Similarly, Sa'id bin Al-Musayyib said: When Abu Talib was on his deathbed, the Prophet (p) visited him.⁷⁰ This shows the permissibility and encouragement of visiting sick non-Muslims.
- During the peace treaty period of Hudaibiyah⁷¹, the Prophet Muhammad (p) gave Abu Sufyan (the leader of the polytheists of Mecca then) the very generous sum of 500 dinars (gold coins)⁷² with which to assist the poor of Mecca during their brief period of severe food shortage.⁷³ This financial aid to the Meccans was made despite their belief in idols, their past persecution and murder of Muslims, warfare and other inhuman atrocities and crimes against the Muslims of Mecca and Medina, and the fact that these same Meccans were responsible for the murder of several close companions and even relatives of the Prophet (p) himself.
- It was narrated by Asma bint Abu Bakr that, "My mother came to me during the lifetime of Allah's Messenger (p) and she was a polytheist. I said to Allah's Apostle (seeking his verdict), "My mother has come to me and she desires to receive a reward from me, shall

⁶⁹ Al-Bukhari, *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, edited, Muhammad Fu'ad Abd al-Baqi, Dar al-Bashair al-Islamiyyah, Beirut, 1989, p. 185, hadith no. 524; Al-Baihaqi, *Sunan al-Kubrah*, Maktabah Dar al-Baz, Mecca, hadith no. 6389; Abu Dawud, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, hadith nos. 3097 and 3095; Ibn Hibban, *Sahih bn Hibban*, edited, Shu'aib al-Arna, 2nd edition, Mu'assasah al-Risalah, Beirut, 1993, hadith no. 4884; Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 1356; Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal*, hadith no. 13375

⁷⁰ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. 7, Book 70, hadith no. 561

⁷¹ Many lessons have been derived by Muslim Scholars from the treaty of Hudaibiyah between the Muslims of Medina and the Polytheists of Mecca. These lessons are relevant to Muslim minorities living under non-Muslim rule, treaties and constitutional concessions, the priority of peaceful co-existence etc. For further reading, see: Ibn Hisham, *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, Dar al-Qalam, Beirut, vol.1, pp. 321-336; Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah*, Maktabat al-Ma'arif, Beirut, vol. 1, pp. 164 – 177; Adil Salahi, *Muhammad, Man and Prophet: A Complete Study of the Life of the Prophet of Islam*, The Islamic Foundation, Markfield, UK, 2002, pp. 495-530; Tariq Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007, pp. 149 – 163.

⁷² 500 Dinars of gold, which was half the "blood money" (diyyah) for manslaughter, is approximately USD \$100,000 today.

⁷³ Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Sahl Shams al-Din Sarakhsi, *Al-Mabsut*, Dar al-Ma'rifa, Beirut, 1986, vol.10, p.92; Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fatawa Mu'asirah*, al-Mansurah, Egypt: Dar al-Wafa', 1996, vol.1, p.295; Imtiaz Ahmad, "Friendship with Non-Muslims" in *Speeches for an Inquiring Mind*, Al-Rasheed Printers, Medina, 2001, p.56.

I keep good relations with her?" The Prophet (p) said, "Yes, keep good relations with her."⁷⁴

- Allah says in Qur'an 28:56, "*Verily, you cannot guide aright everyone **whom you love** (man ahbabta), but it is Allah who guides whom He wills, and He is fully aware of all those who receive guidance.*"

Major Qur'anic commentators cite the context of the revelation of this verse as being related to the Prophet's polytheist uncle Abu Talib⁷⁵ who supported him and whom he loved dearly but could not convince to become a Muslim, as evident in the narration below:

Sa'id bin Al-Musayyib⁷⁶ narrated from his father, "When the time of the death of Abu Talib approached, Allah's Apostle (p) went to him and found Abu Jahl bin Hisham and 'Abdullah bin Abi Umayyah bin Al-Mughira by his side. Allah's Apostle (p) said to Abu Talib, "O uncle! Say: None has the right to be worshipped but Allah, a sentence with which I shall be a witness (i.e., argue) for you before Allah. Abu Jahl and 'Abdullah bin Abi Umaiya said, "O Abu Talib! Are you going to denounce the religion of Abdul Muttalib?" Allah's Apostle (p) kept on inviting Abu Talib to say it (i.e., 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah') while they (Abu Jahl and Abdullah) kept on repeating their statement till Abu Talib said as his last statement that he was on the religion of Abdul Muttalib and refused to say, 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah.' Then Allah's Apostle (p) said, "I will keep on asking Allah's forgiveness for you unless I am forbidden (by Allah) to do so." So, Allah revealed (the verse) concerning him: "*It is not fitting for the Prophet and those who believe that they should invoke (Allah) for forgiveness for polytheists even though they be of kin, after it has become clear to them that they are companions of the fire* (Qur'an 9:113).⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Al-Tabarani, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabir*, vol.24, p.78; Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith nos. 2620, 5979 & 2477; Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, hadith no. 2372; Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad*, edited, Shu'aib al-Arnaut and others, 2nd Ed. Mu'assasat al-Risalah, Beirut, 1999, hadith no. 26915; Abu Bakr Abd al-Razzaq bin Hammam al-San'ani, *Musannaf Abd al-Razzaq*, edited, Habib al-Rahman al-A'zami, 2nd Ed., Al-Maktab al-Islami, Beirut, 1403 AH, hadith no 9932

⁷⁵ Muhammad bin Jarir al-Tabari, *Jamiu al-Bayan fi Ta'wil al-Quran*, Mu'assasat al-Risalah, Beirut, 2000, vol. 19, p. 598; Abul Fida' Ismail bin Umar Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim*, Dar Tayba li al-Nashr wa Tawzi', Medina, 1999, vol. 6, p.246; Abd al-Rahman bin Nasir al-Sa'di, *Taysir Karim al-Rahman*, Mu'assasat al-Risalah, Beirut, 2000, p.620.

⁷⁶ Also referred to by some as Sa'id bin Al-Musayyab.

⁷⁷ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. 2, Book 23, hadith no. 442

The verse (28:56) is therefore a clear indication of the fact that the Prophet Muhammad (p) loved a polytheist who refused to accept Islam. This is proof that non-Muslims are among those whom Muslims may love and hold close relationships.⁷⁸

- Allah says: “*And the food of those who were given the scripture is permissible for you, and your food is permissible for them*” (Quran 5:5)

In a hadith narrated by Anas bin Malik, “A Jewish lady brought a poisoned (cooked) sheep for the Prophet (p) who ate from it. She was brought to the Prophet (p) and he was asked, “Shall we kill her?” He said, “No.” I continued to see the effect of the poison on the palate of the mouth of Allah's Apostle (p).”⁷⁹

- Abdullah bin Uraiqit, a Meccan non-Muslim was trusted by the Prophet (p) and Abubakar – to lead them to Medina during their *hijra* (migration), even though there was a price of 100 camels on the Prophet (p) dead or alive.⁸⁰
- Muqawqis, the ruler of Egypt sent a rich present of a thousand measures of gold, twenty robes of fine cloth, a mule, and two Coptic Christian ladies who were held in great respect in Egypt to the Prophet (p). And the Prophet (p) accepted the presents.⁸¹
- It was narrated by Abdullah bin Umar that Umar bin Al-Khattab saw a silken dress (cloak from Utarid bin Hajib) being sold at the gate of the Mosque and said, “O Allah's Messenger (p)! Would that you buy it and wear it on Fridays and when the delegates come to you!” Allah's Messenger (p) said, “This is worn by the one who will have no share in the Hereafter.” Later on, some silk dresses were brought and Allah's Messenger (p) sent one of them to Umar. Umar said, “How do you give me this to wear while you said what you said about the dress of Utarid?” Allah's Messenger (p) said, “I have not given it to you to wear.” So, Umar gave it to a polytheist brother of his in Mecca.”⁸²
- Aisha reported that the Prophet (p) bought some foodstuff from a Jew on credit for a limited period and mortgaged his armour for it.⁸³

⁷⁸ Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*. Revised by The Presidency of Islamic Researches, IFTA, Call and Guidance, King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex, Medina, 1411 AH, p.1136, footnote no. 3388.

⁷⁹ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Volume 3, Book 47, hadith no. 786

⁸⁰ Safy al-Rahman Mubarakfuri, *al-Rahiq al-Makhtum*, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah 3.13, vol.1, p.131

⁸¹ Al-Tabarani, *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabir*, hadith no. 3497

⁸² Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, hadith no. 5522; Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 2612

⁸³ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 3rd Ed., edited by Mustafa Dib al-Bagha, Dar Ibn Kathir, al-Yamamah, Beirut, 1987, hadith no. 2374; Al-Baihaqi, *al-Sunan al-Kubrah*, Majlis Da'irah al-Ma'arif al-Nizamiyyah al-Ka'inah fi

- It was narrated by Aisha that she asked the Prophet (p), “Have you encountered a day harder than the battle of Uhud?” The Prophet (p) said, “Your tribes have troubled me very much, and the worst was the day of Aqaba when I presented myself to Ibn Abd Yalail ibn Abd Kulal and he did not respond to what I intended. I departed, overwhelmed with excessive sorrow, and I could not relax until I found myself at a tree where I lifted my head towards the sky to see a cloud shading me. I looked up and saw Gabriel in it. He called me saying: Allah has heard your people’s saying to you and how they have replied, and Allah has sent the Angel of the Mountains to you that you may order him to do whatever you wish to these people. The Angel of the Mountains greeted me and he said: O Muhammad, order what you wish, and if you like, I will let the mountains fall on them.” The Prophet (p) said, “No, rather I hope that Allah will bring from their descendants people who will worship Allah alone without associating partners with him.”⁸⁴
- The constitution (*Sahifah*) of Medina was charted by the Prophet (p) for peaceful coexistence and mutual respect of rights between Muslims and Jews as citizens.⁸⁵

Prohibited and Permissible forms of *Al-Wala’*

Some forms of *Al-wala’* could be prohibited, for example, helping non-Muslims in any way that could be unjustly harmful to Muslims or others. It could also be permissible such as when it comes in the form of kindness to those who are not hostile among them; for example, marrying *kitabiyah* wives (from the “People of the Book”), eating their foods, greeting them, giving them a gift, etc.⁸⁶ The case of Asma’ bint Abu Bakr and her mother as cited earlier on is a good example of acceptable *al-wala’*, so also is the Prophet’s relationship with his uncle and that of the Muslim emigrants with the Christian Negus of Habashah (Abyssinia).

al-Hind bi Balad Haidar Abad, 1344 AH, hadith no. 11414; Muhammad bin Yazid Abu Abdullah al-Qazwini, *Sunan bin Majah*, edited, Muhammad Fu’ad Abd al-Baqi, Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, hadith no. 2436; Ahmad bin Shu’aib Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Nasa’i, *Sunan al-Nasa’i*, 2nd Ed., edited by Abd al-Fatah Abu Guddah, Maktab al-Matbu’at al-Islamiyyah, Halab, hadith no. 4609

⁸⁴ Ibn Hisham, *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah*, Vol.2, p.15; Safiy al-Rahman al-Mubarakfuri, *Al-Rahiq al-Makhtum*, vol.1, p.100, in Maktabah al-Shamilah 3.13; Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 3231; Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Dar al-Jil, Beirut, hadith no. 4754.

⁸⁵ Safiy al-Rahman al-Mubarakfuri, *al-Rahiq al-Makhtum*, vol.1, p.148, in Maktabah al-Shamilah 3.13; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Zad al-Mi’ad fi Hady khair al-’Ibad*, vol.3, p.58; Ibn Hisham, *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah*, vol.3, p.34.

⁸⁶ See Abd al-Aziz bin Ris al-Ris, *al-Burhan al-Munir*, p.52, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah 3.13.

Also, marrying a *kitabiyah* and the ensuing love between the Muslim husband and the non-Muslim wife naturally leads to *mawaddah* (love), *rahmah* (mercy), *sakinah* (tranquillity), *hubb* (love), trust, etc. and does not contradict the concept of *al-wala'*.

2. Addressing Non-Muslims with Insulting Terms – *Kafir*!

Some Muslims call Christians and other non-Muslims by names such as *Kafir* (in Arabic), *Arne* (in Hausa), *Kirdi* (in Kanuri), etc., which these people regard as insulting. Since Islam is interested in peaceful coexistence, should Muslims call people of other faiths by these terms and names which they hate and find derogatory?

There are several words used in the Qur'an and Hadith to describe actions and beliefs that Allah regards as wrong, misguided, blameworthy, and unbecoming of anyone. These terms and those actions and attitudes associated with them, help guide us in knowing what to avoid in life and why. These terms are taught to us as descriptive of certain behaviours we should avoid, and not as names we should use when addressing people who may, in reality, be misguided wrongdoers. These words and phrases include *munafiq* (hypocrite), *fasiq* (wrongdoer), *mushrik* (polytheist), *dhalim* (unjust), *jahiliy* (ignoramus), *najas* (impure, dirty or immoral), *kafir* (ingrate, disbeliever), *As-hab al-Nar* (“People of the Fire”), etc.

In a particular context or usage, a word or term (such as *kafir*) may take on a purely descriptive meaning, referring to anyone who rejects or does not accept Islam. In this sense, every non-Muslim is a *Kafir*. In another sense, however, the same word may be viewed or perceived as derogatory, insulting, or condemnatory and also as being regarded or categorized together with Atheists or Polytheists.

While it may be true that a person (whether Muslim or non-Muslim) is actually guilty of *fisq*, *nifaq*, *shirk*, *kufir*, etc., it is not proper to call people by names such as *Fasiq*, *Munafiq*, *Mushrik*, *Kafir*, etc., respectively, especially if these names are offensive or insulting to them. Similarly, just because it is true that a person is actually an illegitimate child, does not make it proper to address such a person as a bastard or any other similarly offensive name.

Allah makes it categorically clear in the Qur'an that the Pharaoh - of the time of Prophet Musa (p) - was a *dhalim* and *kafir*,⁸⁷ and that prophet Musa (p) was one of the greatest and most respected messengers of Allah (among the *Uwl al-'Azm*⁸⁸). Yet, Musa (p) was instructed when

⁸⁷ Qur'an 7:103, 8:54, 85:18, 8:52

⁸⁸ Qur'an 46:35, 42:13. See Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim*, Dar Tayba li al-Nashr wa Tawzi', Medina, vol.7, p.305

addressing Pharaoh to speak nicely, politely, and softly to him, with the optimism that he may listen and take guidance, despite all his atrocities, arrogance, and disbelief.

Allah says, *“And speak to him (Pharaoh) with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [Allah].”* (Qur’an 20:44)

Therefore, even if a person is as confirmed in his *kufir* by Allah Himself as Pharaoh was, he still deserves courtesy from a person of faith. How then can anyone who does not have the standing of Prophet Musa (p), justify their qualification to speak rudely or insultingly at anyone who is not even as bad as Pharaoh in their *Kufir*?

Allah says in the Qur’an, *“Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful exhortation.”* (Qur’an 16:125)

Also, *“Do not argue with the People of the Book, except in a most kindly manner”* (Qur’an 29:46)

Someone once said to the Prophet (p), “Pray to Allah against the polytheists and curse them!” The Prophet (p) replied, *“I have not been sent as the invoker of curses; I have only been sent as a mercy.”*⁸⁹ He also said, *“Do you know what is better than charity and fasting and prayer? It is keeping peace and good relations between people, as quarrels and bad feelings destroy mankind”*.⁹⁰ The Prophet (p) similarly said, *“A believer should not taunt, curse, abuse or talk indecently”*.⁹¹

While the term *kufir* may be used to describe any wrong or unacceptable belief or ideology - such as the Trinity (Qur’an 5:17) or Sonship of Jesus (Qur’an 5:73), etc. - the Qur’an and Sunnah do not use the term ‘*kafir*’ to refer to, call or address Christians or Jews (*Ahl al-Kitab*) or even Zoroastrians. These religious communities were addressed by the Qur’an and the Prophet (p) by the names they called themselves – “Jews” (*Yahud*), “Christians” (*Nasara*), “Zoroastrian” (*Majus*), etc. More frequently, however, they were referred to and addressed in the Qur'an and Hadith by the honourable term "*Ahl al-Kitab*" (People of the Book) in recognition of their association with earlier divine revealed scriptures (or Books) and genuine prophets of Allah such as Musa and Isa (peace be upon them).

⁸⁹ Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, hadith no. 1192 in Alim 6.0

⁹⁰ Al-Tirmidhi, *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, hadith no. 2509

⁹¹ *Tirmidhi*, hadith no. 544, in *Alim 6.0*

In more than 12 places, the Qur'an instructs the Prophet (p) and Muslims when addressing Jews and/or Christians, by the words: "Say! O People of the Book (*Ahl al-Kitab*)..." Allah Himself addresses them with the phrase "O People of the Book!..." In many other verses, they are referred to as "Those who have been given Scriptures (before you)..." These are beside the numerous instances where they are referred to as *Yahud* (Jews) or *Nasara* (Christians). In fact, in the Qur'an, Allah describes the term "Nasara" (Christians) as a term that they use to describe themselves – "Those who call themselves Christians" (Qur'an 5:82) and "And from among those who said, 'we are Nasara' (Christians)..." (Qur'an 5:14).

Another concern is the fact that in many modern contexts and cultures, the terms *kafir* (in Arabic), *kirdi* (in Kanuri), or *Arne* (in Hausa), etc. are viewed as derogatory and insulting terms for addressing others, including non-Muslims. Unfortunately, some Muslims also deliberately use these terms with the intent to insult. Within such a context, it would be wrong and improper for a Muslim to use such terms to offend or insult others, especially when there are alternative, completely valid, and even more appropriate names for describing the religious identities of non-Muslims.

The Prophet (p) said, "Actions are judged by their intentions".⁹² Based on this and other similar statements in the Qur'an and hadith, Muslim jurists have derived a legal maxim (*Qa'idah al-Fiqhiyyah*) which states that "Matters will be judged by the purposes they fulfil" (*Al-umuru bi-maqasidiha*). They also conclude that "liability is decided based on intention and meaning and not based on words and forms" or that "greater consideration is paid to the intent and not to the words".⁹³ Thus, what is meant by a statement or term matters more than the words used. If a word like *kafir* (or any other) is therefore used in a particular context with the intent to insult, abuse, or denigrate another person, then it is wrong Islamically.

Besides the immorality of insults and abuse, there is also the concern for consequences and reciprocation with insults and inappropriate language in response. The Qur'an and Hadith have in fact consistently prohibited Muslims from hurting or insulting others through harsh words and derogatory nicknames that would make others insult Muslims in return.

⁹² Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 1; *Sunan Abu Dawud*, hadith no. 2203; *Al-Mu'jam al-Awsat*, hadith no. 40; *Al-Sunan al-Sughra*, hadith no. 2

⁹³ Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *I'lam al-Muwaqqi'in*, vol.1, p.219; Muhammad Bakr Isma'il, *Al-Qawa'id al-Fiqhiyyah Bayn al-Asalah wa al-Tawjih*, Dar al-Manar, Cairo, 1997, p.35 – cited in Sharul Hussain, *A Treasury of Sacred Maxims: A Commentary on Islamic Legal Principles*, Kube Publishing, Markfield, UK, 2016, p.35.

Allah instructs in the Qur'an, *"Do not call each other by offensive nicknames"* (Qur'an 49:11). Even though idols represent some of the greatest forms of sin against Allah - *shirk* (polytheism) – the Qur'an categorically prohibits Muslims from insulting those other than Allah who polytheists worship, as they may also respond with insults against Allah. Allah instructs, *"And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge..."* (Qur'an 6:108)

Regarding the concern for reciprocation, the Prophet (p) gave an example of how a person would indirectly be abusing his or her parents. He said, *"Among the major sins, is for a person to abuse his parents"*. A companion said, 'How would a man abuse (his parents)? The Prophet (p) said, *"(It would be) by him abusing someone, who will then (in return) abuse his parents."*⁹⁴

Abu Hurayra reported that the Messenger of God (p) said, *"He who believes in God and the Last Day, let him abstain from harming his neighbour; he who believes in God and the Last Day, let him honour his guest; and he who believes in God and the Last Day, let him say that which is good, or remain silent."*⁹⁵

Abu Hurayra reported that the Messenger of God (p) said, *"The Muslim is he from whose tongue and hand all people are safe..."*⁹⁶

Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal narrated in his *Musnad* from 'Abd Allah bin 'Amr bin al-'As who reported that a man said, 'O Messenger of God (p)! What [person's] Islam is best?' The Prophet (p) replied, *"The one from whose tongue and hand all people are safe."*⁹⁷

Imam al-Tabarani has also narrated from 'Abd Allāh bin 'Amr who said that "A man asked the Prophet (p), 'O Messenger of God! Whose Islam is best?' The Prophet (p) replied, *"The one from whose tongue and hand all people are safe'."*⁹⁸

Abdullah bin Umar narrated that a man asked the Prophet Muhammad (p), "What kind (or part) of Islam is best?" The Prophet (p) replied, "That you serve food and give the salutations of peace to the one whom you know, and the one whom you don't know."⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Imam al-Bukhari, *Adab al-Mufrad*, hadith no. 27

⁹⁵ *Al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 5672; *Muslim*, hadith no. 74

⁹⁶ *Al-Nasa'i*, hadith no. 4996; *Musnad Ahmad*, hadith no.7086

⁹⁷ Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad Ahmad*, hadith no.7086

⁹⁸ Al-Tabarani, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabir*, hadith no. 1451

⁹⁹ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih Bukhari*, hadith no. 12; *Muslim*, *Sahih Muslim*, hadith no. 63

The Prophet (p) said, “Make things easy (for people) and do not make things difficult (for them). Cheer people up and do not drive them away.”¹⁰⁰ In another version, the Prophet (p) said, “Make things easy (for people) and do not make things difficult (for them). Make people comfortable (or relaxed) and do not drive them away.”¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih Bukhari*, hadith no. 69.

¹⁰¹ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih Bukhari*, hadith no. 6125; Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, hadith no. 4626; Ahmad, *Musnad Ahmad*, hadith no. 12333.

3. Ideals in Interfaith Relations: Hostility or Harmony?

Some believe that Islam prescribes that Muslims should be in a permanent state of enmity with people of other faiths, irrespective of their disposition towards Islam and Muslims.

What is the ideal and normative relationship that Islam prescribes between Muslims and non-Muslims? Is it one of hostility or peace-building and friendliness?

Historically, from its inception in Medina, the Islamic state was, and continued thereafter, to be a plural society inhabited by Muslims and various non-Muslim citizens. Its defining feature was justice and equity.

The ideal and normative relationship that Islam prescribes between Muslims and non-Muslims is made explicitly clear in the Qur'an and exemplified in the life of the Prophet Muhammad (p). It is not that of war and hostility as opined by some, rather it is peace, justice, security, and promotion of goodness (*maslaha*) and the higher intents (*maqasid*) of *Shariah* – and whatever would contribute to or lead to these.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: "As for such (of the unbelievers) who 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. God only forbids you to turn in friendship towards such as fight against you because of (your) faith, and drive you forth from your homelands, or aid (others) in driving you forth: and as for those (from among you) who turn toward them in friendship, it is they, they who are truly wrongdoers!" (Qur'an 60: 8-9)

Several verses and prophetic traditions make us realize that the normative relationship that Islam prescribes between Muslims and non-Muslims is peaceful coexistence and not enmity or hostility. In other words, conflict or fighting is the exception and not the rule. Below are some of those texts:

- *"And if they (your enemy) incline to peace, incline you also to it, and trust in Allah" (Q8:61)*
- *"But if they cease (fighting), Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (Q2:192)*

- “...but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression” (Q2:193)
- “Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not commit aggression, for God loves not the aggressor” (Q2:190)
- The Prophet says: “Do not wish to meet the enemy, and ask Allah for safety; but when you face the enemy, be patient, and remember that Paradise is under the shade of swords.”¹⁰² This hadith shows that peace and safety is what Islam desires as a norm and not tribulation and enmity.

All the teachings of Islam related to seeking peace, arbitration, forgiveness, charity, social justice, and the objectives of Shari’ah (*Maqasid al-Shari’ah*), etc. are all directed towards greater peace in the society.

Even where fighting is permissible, it is only against aggression that for some reason cannot be forgiven. And in this case, fighting is permissible only as a lesser evil where there is no alternative route to peace with justice.

The fact that Islam would permit a Muslim man to initiate and have a relationship as close and intimate as that of marriage with a Christian or Jewish woman, despite the difference in faith, points to the extent of expression of love and kindness that a Muslim is allowed to offer a non-Muslim.¹⁰³ It is also proof that Islam does allow genuine friendship with people of other faiths, for marriage is a relationship that the Qur’an characterizes as one of “*tranquility*” and “*mutual love and mercy*” (Qur’an 30:21) – qualities that also characterize the closest of friends. As with all relationships, and irrespective of the person’s faith, such a marriage should not be allowed to undermine Islamic ideals.

The Qur’an explains the difference between polytheists (*mushrikun*) and People of the Scripture (*Ahl al-Kitab*) and makes the relationship between the latter and Muslims more intimate by permitting the eating of their slaughtered animal and marriage to their women.

¹⁰²Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 6810

¹⁰³ This level of respect and, indeed, love is not morally permissible to initiate in some other religions. (See legal studies on Christianity and Judaism, for example, where any form of interfaith marriage is prohibited, whether male or female. This prohibition is derived by some Christian and Jewish scholars in view of II Corinthians 6:14-15, I Corinthians 7:39, Exodus 34:12-16, Deuteronomy 7:1-4, Ezra 10:2-3, Nehemiah 13:25-27, etc. in the Bible. In Christianity, however, an already existing interfaith marriage is tolerated if one of the partners accepts Christianity and the other does not (I Corinthians 7:12-14)). Contemporary canons of Catholicism and guidelines for pastoral practice in Protestant churches, however, accommodate the fact that interfaith marriages are legitimate in common law. See: http://www.religioustolerance.org/ifm_bibl.htm, 2005, for more information about Biblical teachings on interfaith marriages.

The relationship between the early Muslims and all non-Muslim communities – polytheists, Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians, etc. - was always peaceful until and unless they broke their peace treaties with the Muslims. Islam emphasizes the rights of non-Muslims living in an Islamic state as citizens or protected people (*ahl al-Dhimmah*) which guarantees their rights to life, work, the practice of their religion, etc.

A study of the day-to-day relationship of the Prophet (p) and his Companions with their non-Muslim relatives and neighbours reveals that Islam encourages normative peaceful relations between Muslims and people of other faiths (People of the Book in particular). Such activities include greeting and eating the food of and with one another, exchanging gifts and visits, charity, encouraging forgiveness and patience, goodness to neighbours, trade, establishing peace treaties for mutual safety and security, etc. In fact, the Prophet (p) said: “*Whoever truly believe in Allah and the Day of Judgment should honour his neighbour.*”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 5673

4. Greetings for Religious Festivities – Merry Christmas, Happy Easter!

Many Muslims get goodwill gestures and greetings from various non-Muslims during Ramadan, Eid, and other Islamic occasions. Some feel obliged to equally reciprocate such gestures by also greeting people of other faiths during their religious festivities and celebrations with greetings such as “Merry Christmas”, etc. Some Muslim scholars regard such greetings as permissible and even encouraged, while others regard these as discouraged or prohibited.

What is the Islamic perspective on greeting people of other faiths during their religious festivals and celebrations?

Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of courtesy, good neighbourliness, reciprocity in kindness, and magnanimity. While Muslims and non-Muslims may exchange gifts, greetings, and pleasantries, Muslim scholars, however, have an issue with greetings that are specific to religious festivities, especially if these may be understood to mean acceptance and validation of an ideology that contradicts Islamic teachings.

Muslim scholars have therefore differed on the Islamic rulings regarding greeting people of other faiths on the occasions of their religious festivities. While some of them permit it, others prohibit it.

A general and fundamental rule in the Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*) is that anything that belongs to the category of worldly and mundane social transactions (*mu'amalat*) as opposed to prescribed religious or devotional worship (*ibadah*) or creed (*aqidah*), is governed by the general rule that “*everything is permissible except what is prohibited*”¹⁰⁵ by clear and explicit textual evidence from the Qur'an or authentic sunnah, or

¹⁰⁵ This well-known principle of *Usul ul-Fiqh* in Arabic is called “*Al-‘asl fil ashya’i al-ibahah*” (“the legal premise of everything is permissibility”). See Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, IIFSO, Kuwait, 1992, p.14-18. See also: Mohammad Akram Laldin, *Introduction to Shari’ah and Islamic Jurisprudence*, 2nd ed. CERT, Kuala Lumpur, 2008; Tariq Ramadan, *To Be a European Muslim*, The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, 1999; Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Qawa’id Fiqh: The Legal Maxims of Islamic Jurisprudence*, p.2; Abu Sulayman, ‘Abd al-Wahhab, “*An-Nazariyyah wal-Qawa’id fi al-Fiqh al-Islami*” in *Majallah Jama’ah al-Malik ‘Abdal-‘Aziz*, No.2, May 1978, p.53; Shihab ad-Din al-Qarafi, *Kitab al-Furuq*, Matha’ah Dar Ihya al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyyah, Cairo, vol.4, p.40; Jamal al Din Atiyyah, *Al-Tanzir al-Fiqhi*, p. 208; Abdurahman bin Abu Bakr al-Suyuti, *Al-ashbah wa al-Nazair*, vol.1, p.107; Badruddeen Muhammad bin Abdullahi Al-Zarkashi, *Al-Bahr Al-*

if it contradicts definite objectives (*maqasid*) of Shari'ah. In other words, whatever is not prohibited by clear evidence is in fact permissible.

According to Hatim bin 'Arif al-'Awni therefore, "The premise with regards to congratulating the unbelievers for their festivities is that of permissibility, except if such is done to show pleasure with their religion or where there is harm in it (i.e. where it could indicate an agreement with their disbelief)."¹⁰⁶

Very often, the different cultural contexts and meanings assigned within that social environment to specific greetings have affected the way each greeting and its implications are understood or interpreted by a scholar or people.

The major point of difference among scholars, therefore, appears to be on whether or not such greetings and well-wishes, when used in a particular cultural context, are understood to be simple statements of courtesy and kindness (belonging to the category of greetings and social transactions – *mu'amalat*), or whether these statements are understood to automatically imply an acceptance and endorsement of the particular festivity and the religious ideology behind it (which is related to creed and worship – *aqeedah/ibadah*). The latter is the view held by Ibn Qayyim, Ibn Taymiyyah, and some contemporary scholars such as Bin Baz, Ibn Uthaimin, Safar al-Hawali amongst others, who regard such greetings as prohibited.¹⁰⁷

As for those who permit such greetings, they regard it as part of courtesy and kindness (*ihsan* and *birr*) – as taught by Islam – to people of other faiths, especially to those who are relatives, neighbours, friends, colleagues, school mates and those who are peaceful in general. This is the view of a number of scholars such as Abdullah bin Bayyah, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Mustafa

Muheet Fi Usul Al-Fiqh, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1421 AH, vol.1, p.126; Muhammad Amir, *Taysir al-Tahrir*, Dar Nashr, vol.2, p.247; Abdullah bin Yusuf al-Juda'i, *Taysir 'Ilm Usul al Fiqh*, p.34, 69, 71 and 72; Abdullah al-Fauzan, *Khulasah al-Usul*, p.7; al-Zarqa, *Sharh al-Qawa'id al-Fiqhiyyah*, p.299; Muhammad bin Hassan al-Dadaw, *Sharh al-Waraqat*, p.76; Abdulkareem al-Khudair, *Sharh Matn al-Waraqat*, p.410; Abdulwahab Khallaf, *'Ilm Usul al-Fiqh*, Maktabah al-Da'wah, p.91; Muhammad Amin Ihsan Almuja'didi Albarkati, *Qawa'id al-Fiqh*, Dar al-Nashr, p.14; Zakariyya bin Gulam Qadir Albakistani, *Usul al-Fiqh 'Ala Manhaj Ahl al-Hadith*, Dar al-Kharraz, 1423 AH., p.116; Mashur bin Hasan Al-Salman, *Al-Tahqiqat wa al-Tanqihat al-Salafiyyah 'ala Matn al-Waraqat*, Dar Imam al-Malik, U.A.E, 1426AH, p.584-589.

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.dralawni.com/articles.php?show=187> (retrieved date: 4/2/2018)

¹⁰⁷ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ahkam ahl al-Dhimmah*, Dar bin Hazm, Saudi Arabia, 1418AH, vol.1, p.144; Ahmad bin Abd al-Razzaq al-Duwaish, *Fatawa al-Lajnah al-Da'imah*, al-Ri'asah al-'Amah li al-Buhuth al-'Ilmiyyah wa al-Ifta', vol.3, p.436, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah 3.13; Qita' al-Ifta' wa al-Buhuth al-Shar'iyyah, *Fatawa Qita' al-Ifta' bi al-Kuwait*, vol.3, p.25, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 3.13; Safar al-Hawali, *Hukm al-Ihtifal Bi A'yad al-Kuffar*, p.35, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah; Muhammad bin Salih bin Uthaimin, *Majmu' Fatawa wa Maqalat al-'Allamah bin Uthaimin*, vol.3, p.28-29; Khalid Abdulqadir, *Fiqh al-Aqalliyyat al-Muslimah*, Dar al-Iman, Lebanon, 1419AH, p.577-578

Zarqa, Rashid Rida, Hatim bin ‘Arif al-‘Awni, Gibril Fouad Haddad, Ali Gomaa, amongst others. Some scholars in this category also assert that this greeting may even become encouraged for Muslim minorities living among people of other faiths.¹⁰⁸

However, virtually all Muslim scholars agree on the prohibition of such greeting if the words used to express it are understood to contradict Islamic beliefs. They also agree that such greetings will be prohibited if the Muslim validates the religious festivities in his/her heart by believing that it pleases God.

As respected scholars have differed on this issue, as they have on many others, it is not proper to regard those who hold a different view as ignorant or misguided. Even those scholars who regard such greetings on religious festivities as prohibited (*haram*) do not go as far as regarding the opinion of those other scholars who consider it permissible (*halal*) as an act of disbelief (*kufr*).

In spite of their differences of opinion on this issue, all Muslim scholars agree that Muslims should relate with people of other faiths in a respectful, good, and kindly manner, as the Qur’an prescribes:

“As for such (of the unbelievers) 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 (birr) and to behave towards them with full equity (qist): for verily, God loves those who act equitably.” (Qur’an 60:8)

¹⁰⁸ Mustafa al-Zarqa, *Fatawa al-Zarqa*, vol.13, p.1-2; Abdullah bin al-Shaikh al-Mahfudh bin Bayyah, *Sina’ah al-Fatwa wa fiqh al-Aqalliyah*, p.430-437; *Fatwas of European Council for Fatwa and Research*, translated by Anas Osama Altikriri and Shaikh Nasif Al-Ubaydi, Al-Falah Foundation, Egypt, p.177-182; www.dar-alifta.org, verdict no. 3670, issued on: 08/10/1998, (date: 9/2/2018); <http://www.dralawni.com/articles.php?show=187> (retrieved date: 4/2/2018)

5. Food of the *Ahl al-Kitab* (People of Earlier Revelations)

Some Muslims refuse to eat food prepared by people of other faiths, regarding it as not “*halal*”. Some of these Muslims accept such food, out of courtesy, but dispose of it, rather than eat it. This is due to their belief that Islamic teachings prohibit eating food, including meat from animals slaughtered by people of other faiths.

Does Islam prohibit Muslims from eating the food and meat of others, including the “People of the Book” such as Jews and Christians?

Regarding eating the food of *Ahl al-Kitab* generally, Muslims have not been prohibited from eating non-meat foods that are prepared by people of other faiths (including polytheists, atheists, etc.) such as fruits, vegetables, and other plant products.¹⁰⁹ Islam has also not prohibited the consumption of fish, milk, eggs, and other similar dairy products that might have been prepared by such people of other faiths.¹¹⁰

Anas ibn Malik narrated that: “Allah’s Messenger (p) had a neighbour who was Persian [a Zoroastrian], and he was an expert in the preparation of soup. He prepared (soup) for Allah’s Messenger (p) and then came to him to invite him (to a meal)... Then he accepted his invitation, and both of them (the Prophet (p) and Aisha) set out and went to his house.”¹¹¹

Regarding eating the meat slaughtered by *Ahl al-Kitab*, Allah says, *"This day (all) the good things are allowed to you, and the food of those who have been given the Book is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them..."* (Qur’an 5:5)

Scholars have agreed that the word '*food*' in this verse refers to slaughtered animals. In his commentary of the verse - *"And the food of those who were given the Scripture is lawful for you"* - Ibn Kathir says, “Ibn Abbas, Abu Umamah, Mujahid, Sa’id bin Jubayr, Ikrimah, A’ta, Al-Hasan, Makhul, Ibrahim An-Nakhai’, Al-Suddy, and Muqatil Ibn Hayyan all say that this

¹⁰⁹ Muhammad At-Tahir Ibn ‘Ashur, *At-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir*, Mu’assasa al-Tarikh al-Arabi, Beirut, 2000, vol. 5, p.44.

¹¹⁰ Muhammad At-Tahir Ibn ‘Ashur, *At-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir*, Mu’assasa al-Tarikh al-Arabi, Beirut, 2000, vol. 5, p.44.

¹¹¹ *Sahih Muslim*, hadith no.958, in *Alim 6.0*

verse refers to slaughtered animals”.¹¹² Bukhari also mentioned that Ibn Abbas said, “...‘the food’ is their slaughtered animals”.¹¹³ Commenting on this issue, Ibn Qayyim said: “The earliest generation of Muslims (*salaf*) were in unanimous agreement that the verse (i.e. Qur’an 5:5) refers to the slaughtered animals of the People of the Book – Christians and Jews.”¹¹⁴

The point here is that this verse (Qur’an 5:5) comes to settle the issue of the slaughtered animals of the People of the Book since it has already been mentioned in Qur’an 5:3, that: *‘Forbidden to you are the flesh of dead animals and blood and the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to any other than Allah.’* Hence, other foods of the *Ahl al-Kitab*, besides slaughtered animals remain lawful (*halal*) in the absence of any evidence justifying their prohibition. This is in accordance with the general principle that “the original premise of all things is permissibility.”¹¹⁵

It has been reliably reported that the Prophet Muhammad (p) and his Companions ate food, including meat, slaughtered and prepared by Jews and Christians.¹¹⁶

For example, Anas bin Malik reported that, while the Prophet (p) was in Khaybar, a Jewish lady by the name Zaynab bint al-Harith brought a roasted sheep for him and his Companions. He ate it, and then realized that it was poisoned...¹¹⁷ This hadith exemplifies the

¹¹² Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, vol. 2, p.19. See also Muhammad Taqi Usmani, *Islamic Rulings for Slaughtering Animals*, p.33. See also Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ahkam ahl al-Dhimma*, p. 181.

¹¹³ Muhammad bin Abi Bakr bin Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ahkam ahl al-Dhimma*, Dar Ibn Hazm, Beirut, 1418AH, vol.1, p.181.

¹¹⁴ Muhammad bin Abi Bakr bin Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ahkam ahl al-Dhimma*, Dar Ibn Hazm, Beirut, 1418AH, vol. 1, p.502.

¹¹⁵ This well-known principle of *Usul ul-Fiqh* in Arabic is called “*Al-‘asl fil ashya’i al-ibahah*” (“the legal premise of everything is permissibility”). See Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, IIFSO, Kuwait, 1992, pp.14-18. See also: Mohammad Akram Laldin, *Introduction to Shari’ah and Islamic Jurisprudence*, 2nd ed. CERT, Kuala Lumpur, 2008; Tariq Ramadan, *To Be a European Muslim*, The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, 1999; Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Qawa’id Fiqh: The Legal Maxims of Islamic Jurisprudence*, p.2; Abu Sulayman, ‘Abd al-Wahhab, “*An-Nazariyyah wal-Qawa’id fi al-Fiqh al-Islami*” in *Majallah Jama’ah al-Malik ‘Abdal-‘Aziz*, No.2, May 1978, p.53; Shihab ad-Din al-Qarafi, *Kitab al-Furuq*, Matha’ah Dar Ihya al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyyah, Cairo, vol.4, p.40; Jamal al Din Atiyyah, *Al-Tanzir al-Fiqhi*, p. 208; Abdurahman bin Abu Bakr al-Suyuti, *Al-ashbah wa al-Nazair*, vol.1, p.107; Badruddeen Muhammad bin Abdullahi Al-Zarkashi, *Al-Bahr Al-Muheet Fi Usul Al-Fiqh*, Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1421 AH, vol.1, p.126; Muhammad Amir, *Taysir al-Tahrir*, Dar Nashr, vol.2, p.247

¹¹⁶ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Dar Tawq al-Najat, 1422 A.H, vol.6, p.509, hadith no. 2617; Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Dar al-Jeel, Beirut, vol.7, p.14., hadith no. 5834; *Musnad Ahmad*, vol.3, p.211, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah; Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, vol. 3, p.242; *Sahih Muslim*, hadith no. 958, in Alim 6.0.

¹¹⁷ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol.3, Book 47, hadith no.786; Al-Bayhaqi, *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, hadith no.15784; *Sunan Abu Dawud*, hadith no.4510; *Sahih Muslim*, hadith no.5834

permissibility of eating the food or slaughtered animals of the People of the Scriptures (Christians and Jews).

Ibn ‘Aa’idh in *Futooh al-Shaam* narrates that, “When Umar came to Syria, the Christians made food for him and called him, and he said: “*Where is it?*” They said: “In the church”, and he refused to go. He said to Ali: “*Take the people to eat lunch.*” So Ali took the people and entered the church, and he and the people ate lunch, and Ali looked at the images and said: “*What would be wrong if the Amir al-Mu’minin (Umar bin al-Khattab) entered this place?*”¹¹⁸

What has been prohibited (*haram*) is the consumption of animals that are sacrificed as offerings to idols, or “*dedicated to any other than Allah*” (Qur’an 6:121). The Qur’an (2:173, 16:115)¹¹⁹ also prohibits Muslims from consuming unclean things such as the flesh of carrion, blood, the flesh of swine (i.e. pig meat).¹²⁰ Muslims are also forbidden from eating animals that have been killed in cruel ways, such as by being clubbed or beaten to death, by being strangled, or by being made to fall from a height, etc. (Qur’an 5:3). Most contemporary scholars in this field have also approved of more humane and less painful methods of slaughtering animals that involve stunning or electrocution before slaughtering.¹²¹

In addition, Allah says, “*This day (all) the good things are allowed to you, and the food of those who have been given the Book is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them; and the chaste from among the believing women and the chaste from among those who have been given the Book before you (are lawful for you); when you have given them their dowries, taking (them) in marriage, not fornicating nor taking them for paramours in secret; and whoever denies faith, his work is indeed of no account, and in the hereafter, he shall be one of the losers.*” (Qur’an 5:5) The fact that the verse above permits a Muslim to marry a chaste woman from among the People of the Book, such as Jews and Christians, implies that Muslim and non-Muslim families are going to live and dine with each other.

Based on some hadiths and opinions of the Companions of the Prophet (p), Muslim scholars have however disagreed on some details regarding eating an animal killed by non-Muslims.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Cited in Ibn Qudamah, *Al-Mughni*, vol.8, p.113, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah 3.13

¹¹⁹ Ahmad Ibn Ali Ar-Razi Al-Jassas, *Ahkam al-Qur’an*, Dar Ihya’ At-Turath Al-Arabi, Beirut, 1405, vol.1, p.155; Imam Ash-Shafi’i, *Al-Umm.*, vol.2, p.231.

¹²⁰ Qur’an 5:3.

¹²¹ See: www.organic-halal-meat.com-article-fatwa-stunning.php (article: Methods of killing animals).

¹²² Ibn Rushd, *Bidayat al-Mujtahid wa Nihayat al-Muqtasid*, Al-Maktabah Al-‘Asriyyah, Beirut, vol.1, p.461-464; Ash-Shafi’i, *Al-Umm*, Dar al-Ma’rifah, Beirut, 1393, vol. 2; Munazzamah al-Mu’tamar al-Islami, *Majallah Majma’ Al-Fiqh al-Islami*, vol. 10; Muhammad bin Abdullah bin al-‘Arabi, *Ahkam Al-Qur’an*, vol. 4; Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, IIFSO, Kuwait, 1992, p.59-60

They disagreed for example on whether non-Muslims should comply with the Islamic rules of slaughtering animals in a more merciful way – such as with a sharp knife to the neck, etc. – instead of other more painful methods, and on whether Allah’s name must be mentioned (as recommended by Qur’an 6:121) when they slaughter their animals, and on whether it is permissible to eat an animal slaughtered for their festivals such as Christmas.¹²³ Some regarded these as all permissible¹²⁴ while others did not.¹²⁵

The companion, Ali bin Abu Talib said: *“If you hear a Jew or Christian mentioning other than Allah (on their animal) do not eat it. If you did not hear them mentioning other than Allah on it, eat it because Allah has permitted their animal for us and He knows what they utter”*.¹²⁶ Based on this and other pieces of evidence, many respected Muslim scholars are of the opinion that a Muslim is also not required to inquire into how an animal was slaughtered nor what was mentioned or not mentioned when it was being slaughtered.¹²⁷

¹²³ Ibn Rushd, *Bidayah al-Mujtahid wa Nihayah al-Muqtasid*, Al-Maktabah Al-‘Asriyyah, Beirut, vol.1 p.461-464; Muhammad bn Abdullah Ibn al-‘Arabi, *Ahkam Al-Qur’an*, vol. 4; Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, IIFSO, Kuwait, 1992, p.60-61

¹²⁴ Ibn Al-Arabi, *Ahkam al-Qur’an*, Dar al-Kutub Al-‘ilmiyyah, vol.3. p. 55; Abu Hayyan al-Andalusi, *Tafsir Al-Bahr al-Muhit*, Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, vol. 1, p. 427.

¹²⁵ See Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, IIFSO, Kuwait, 1992, p.60-61; Ahmad Amharzi ‘Alawi, *Majallah al-Bayan*, vol. 131, p. 8.

¹²⁶ Ahmad Ibn Ali Ar-Razi Al-Jassas, *Ahkam al-Qur’an*, Dar Ihya Al-Turath Al-Arabi, Beirut, 1405, vol.1, p.155; See also, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ahkam Ahl al-Dhimmah*, p.185-186; Al-Nawawi, *al-Majmu*, vol.9, p.78.

¹²⁷ Ibn Hazm, *Al-Muhallah*, vol.7, p.457; Kasani, *al-Badai’ Al-Sanai’*, vol.5, p.46; See also Muhammad Taqi Usmani, *The Islamic Laws of Animal Slaughter: A Discussion on the Islamic Laws for Slaughtering Animals & a Survey of Modern-Day Slaughtering Methods*, White Thread Press, California, USA, 2006, p.33

6. Food for Religious Festivities such as Christmas or Easter

Some Muslims refuse food or meat from animals slaughtered for or during the religious festivities of Jews and Christians such as Christmas or Easter. Other Muslims accept such food, but dispose of it, rather than eat it. This is due to their belief that it is prohibited for Muslims to eat such food given by people of other faiths. This often worsens existing interfaith relations and contributes to undermining peaceful co-existence in multireligious communities, and especially in interfaith family relations.

Are Muslims allowed (*halal*) to eat the food that the “People of the Book” prepare for occasions such as Christmas or Easter?

Regarding accepting food and gifts from Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and others during their religious festivals such as Christmas, Easter, Hanukkah, Passover, Nayrouz, Diwali, etc., there appears to be no authentic evidence from the Qur’an, Sunnah of the Prophet (p) or statement of the Companions prohibiting it. On the contrary, available evidence indicates that a number of the Companions actually accepted food and gifts from non-Muslims during their religious festivals. These include companions such as Ali, Aisha, Abu al-Darda, and Abu Barzah who approved of such gifts.¹²⁸

When Aisha was asked about eating food that was given by Zoroastrians (*Majus*) during their religious festivals, she responded, “do not eat what they slaughter for that day. But eat from their plant products.”¹²⁹ A similar statement was made by the companion of the Prophet (p), Abi Barzah.¹³⁰

Thus, companions accepted food of even those that were not *Ahl al-Kitab* (Jews and Christians) but did not eat only the slaughtered meat. They did not perceive such gestures as

¹²⁸ Ibn Abu Shaybah, *Al-Musannaf*, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah 3.13, vol.5, p.548; Ibn al-Arabi, *Ahkam al-Qur'an*, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut, vol.3, p.56; al-Tabari; Cited in Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, IIFSO, Kuwait, 1992, p.60, and authenticated by Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, *Gayah al-Maram fi Takhrij Ahadith al-Halal wa al-Haram*, al-Maktab al-Islami, Beirut, 3rd edition, 1405, vol.1, p.44.

¹²⁹ Ibn Abu Shaybah, *Al-Musannaf*, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah 3.13, vol.5, p.548

¹³⁰ Ibn Abu Shaybah, *Al-Musannaf*, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah 3.13, vol.5, p.548

being in any way consenting to unbelief or aiding the cause of disbelief (*shirk* or *kufr*), but simply a show of appreciation towards another person's generosity and kindness.¹³¹

Regarding the meat of animals slaughtered for the religious festivities of *Ahl al-Kitab*, scholars have differed. While some regard this as prohibited (*haram*), others as discouraged (*makruh*), and yet others consider it completely permissible (*halal*).

According to the distinguished jurist Ibn Rushd, "some jurists considered it detestable (*makruh*) to eat the animals that they slaughter for their festivals and places of worship, and this is Malik's opinion. Some of them, however, declared it permissible, which is the opinion of (the Maliki scholar) Ashhab. Some prohibited it due to the conflict of two general implications in the Book (i.e the Qur'anic text) on this subject. The words of the Exalted, "*The food of those who have received the Scripture is lawful for you*"¹³², may be interpreted to have restricted His words, "*And (forbidden is) that which hath been dedicated unto any other than Allah*"¹³³, as each of these can validly make an exemption from the other. Those who considered the words "*dedicated unto any other than Allah*" to have restricted the words "*The food of those who have received the Scripture is lawful for you*" said that what has been dedicated to their houses of worship and feasts is not permitted."¹³⁴

Someone asked the Companion, Abu al-Darda whether he could eat the meat of a lamb, slaughtered for the Church of St. George, which had been given to him. Abu al-Darda answered, "*O Allah, may You pardon us! Are they not the People of the Book, whose food is halal for us and ours for them? He then told the person to eat it.*"¹³⁵

Imam Malik was once asked about eating the meat of animals slaughtered for Christian festivals and churches. He replied, "I classify it as *makruh* (discouraged) but not *haram* (prohibited). Discouraged (*makruh*) because I am afraid it may have been dedicated to someone other than Allah, but not prohibited (*haram*) because perhaps, concerning the People of the Book, the meaning of the phrase, '*that which has been dedicated to any other*

¹³¹ Commenting on this, Ibn Taymiyyah concluded that "all of these indicate that celebrations or festivals play no part in prohibiting the acceptance of gifts. In fact, the ruling for gifts pertaining to religious festivals remains the same as the ruling pertaining to accepting gifts on any other occasion, since the acceptance of gifts cannot be considered as aiding the promotion of their religious rites (*sha'air*)." See Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtida' al-Sirat al-Mustaqim*, Edited by Nasir Abdu al-Karim al-'Aql, Dar 'Alam al-Kutub, Beirut, 7th Edition, 1419, p.45

¹³² Qur'an 5:5

¹³³ Qur'an 2:173

¹³⁴ Ibn Rushd, *Bidayatul Mujtahid*, vol. 1, p.535

¹³⁵ Reported by al-Tabari; Cited in Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, IIFSO, Kuwait, 1992, p.60. Authenticated by Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, *Gayah al-Maram fi Takhrij Ahadith al-Halal wa al-Haram*, al-Maktab al-Islami, Beirut, 3rd edition, 1405, vol.1, p.44. See also, Ibn al-Arabi, *Ahkam al-Qur'an*, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, vol.3, p.56.

than Allah' (in Qur'an 5:3), applies only to those animals which they slaughter to seek the pleasure of their deities and not for their consumption. As for what they slaughter to eat, it is their food, and Allah says, "*The food of those who were given the Scripture is permitted to you.*"¹³⁶

The great scholar Sufyan Al-Thawri was reported to have said, "If you see a man doing something over which there is a difference of opinion among scholars, and which you believe to be forbidden, you should not forbid him from doing it."¹³⁷ Therefore, even if a Muslim is personally not comfortable with the opinion of a certain scholar or School of Thought (*madhhab*), and does not want to eat the food of a particular non-Muslim for one reason or another, this should not be done in such a disrespectful way as to hurt the good positive relations between Muslims and peaceful non-Muslims.¹³⁸

Allah says in Qur'an 60:8, "*Allah does not forbid you in respect of those who do not fight you because of your religion and do not expel you from your homes – from being good and dealing justly towards them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.*"

¹³⁶ Commenting on this ruling of Imam Malik, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi stated: "This ruling by Imam Malik demonstrates his humility, piety, and caution in religion. He did not rush to the conclusion that it was haram, as some jurists do today, but confined himself to stating that it was makruh (discouraged). As we can see, faced with the problem of reconciling two conflicting general categories, that which is dedicated to anyone other than Allah and the permissibility of the food of the People of the Book, he exercised caution and deliberation." See, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, IIFSO, Kuwait, 1992, p.61, footnote 2.

¹³⁷ Quoted in AbdulHakim Murad, *Understanding the Four Madhhabs*, Muslim Academic Trust, Cambridge, 1999, p.13.

¹³⁸ Qur'an 29:46 and 41:34; For further reading see, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, IIFSO, Kuwait, 1992, pp.58-64; Ibn Rushd, *Bidayat al-Mujtahid – The Distinguished Jurist's Primer*, vol.1, (translated by Imran Ahsan Khan Nyazee), Garnet Publishing Limited, Reading, U.K., 1994; Al-Hafiz Basheer Ahmad Masri, *Animal Welfare in Islam*, The Islamic Foundation, Markfield, U.K., 2007.

7. Rights of non-Muslim Citizens

In many contemporary societies, people of various faiths and ethnicities are expected to live together as equal citizens, with the same dignity, rights, opportunities, and privileges. No group should be regarded as second-class citizens, purely on account of their faiths.

Do non-Muslim citizens have a guarantee of their rights and protection in an Islamic society?

The Prophet (p) commanded that non-Muslim citizens of an “Islamic State” or State governed by Islamic principles are to be protected against internal oppression and external aggression. A non-Muslim citizen of an Islamic state is called a “*Dhimmi*” (i.e., protected person).¹³⁹ Historian Jane Smith writes, “Christians and Jews, along with Magians, Samaritans, Sabians, and later Zoroastrians and others, were treated as minorities under the protection of Islam (*dhimmis*).”¹⁴⁰

Numerous hadiths enunciate the importance of upholding the rights of a *dhimmi*. On separate occasions, the Prophet (p) is reported to have said, “*On the Day of Resurrection, I shall dispute with anyone who oppresses a person from among the People of the Covenant, or infringes on his right, or burdens him beyond his strength, or takes something from him against his will*”¹⁴¹; and “*Anyone who kills a person from among the people with whom there is a treaty (mu’ahid)*¹⁴² *will not smell the fragrance of Paradise, even though its fragrance extends to a walking distance of forty years.*”¹⁴³

According to Abu al-Janub al-Asadi, “A Muslim who had killed a non-Muslim under treaty (*dhimmi/mu’ahid*) was presented in the court of Ali. After the proof of his crime was

¹³⁹ Jews and Christians were the earliest *dhimmis*, though the status was one that the Prophet (p) also later afforded to Zoroastrians and then Sabians. (Murad Wilfried Hofmann, *Protection of Religious Minorities in Islam*, Leicester, The Islamic Foundation, UK, 1998.) As the Muslim sultanates and empires grew to lands of other faiths, a *dhimmi* evolved to being virtually any non-Muslim who agreed to live under a Muslim government. This is all too evident in the fact that the Caliph Umar’s assassination was perpetrated by Abu Lulu’ah, the Zoroastrian, who was a *dhimmi*! (Sa’id Ramadan, *Islamic Law: Its Scope and Equity*, Macmillan, London, 1961, p.121).

¹⁴⁰ Jane I. Smith, “Islam and Christendom: Historical, Cultural and Religious Interaction from the Seventh to the Fifteenth Centuries” in *The Oxford History of Islam*. Ed. John L. Esposito, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p.307

¹⁴¹ Abu Dawood, *Sunan Abi Dawud*, hadith no. 3054

¹⁴² The term *mu’ahid* is used for an approved non-Muslim visitor from another state, as distinct from a *dhimmi* who is a citizen of the Islamic territory (Al-Shawkani, *Nayl al-Awtar*, vol.7, p.14; cited in Sa’id Ramadan, *Islamic Law: Its Scope and Equity*, Macmillan, London, 1961, pp.109-110).

¹⁴³ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.9, hadith no.49, in *Alim 6.0*

furnished and found valid, Ali ordered him to be killed (in retribution for killing the non-Muslim). The brother of the victim came to him (Ali) and said, 'I have pardoned him.' Ali asked, 'Did they (the heirs of the killer) scare you or threaten you in any way?' the man replied, 'No. Killing him will not bring my brother back. They offered blood money in return and I agreed to it.' Ali said, 'You know best; whoever is under our guarantee of protection, then his blood is like our blood, and the blood-money due to him is like the blood-money due to us.'"¹⁴⁴

Similarly, according to Jubayr bin Nufayr, "A large amount of wealth was brought to Umar bin al-Khattab, and Abu Ubayd said, 'I believe it was money collected from the tax levied on non-Muslim citizens.' Umar said, 'For certain, I fear you have destroyed many people!' They (the tax collectors) said, 'No, by Allah! We have taken only the surplus to their needs with tenderness and ease.' Umar inquires, 'Was it acquired without recourse to a whip or coercion?' They replied, 'Yes'. He said, 'All praise is due to Allah, Who did not put that (oppression) on my hands or during my rule.'"¹⁴⁵

In the same vein, Ibn Taymiyah holds that the 'achievement of justice' in a state as most fundamental and deserving of God's support, even for a 'nation of disbelievers'. According to the renowned scholar:

"In this life, people's situations uphold when justice prevails in their society even if they fall into various kinds of sins. However, people's situations do not uphold when injustice and lack of rights prevail in their society. That is why the saying goes: **'God upholds a state established on justice, even if it were a nation of disbelievers, and would not uphold a state established on injustice, even if it were a nation of Muslims.'** The other saying goes: 'This world lives with justice and disbelief, and does not live with injustice and Islam.' The Prophet, peace be upon him, had said: 'No sin has a faster Divine punishment than the sin of injustice...' Thus, people of injustice fail in this life, even if they were to be forgiven in the hereafter. This is because justice is the universal law of things.¹⁴⁶

From the hadith cited earlier, closely related to the concern for justice is also that of security for all citizens. For example, Imam Abu Hanifa states: "The purpose

¹⁴⁴ Al-Shafi'i, *al-Musnad*, hadith no.344; Abu Yusuf, *Kitab al-Kharaj*, p.187; Al-Bayhaqi, *Sunan al-Kubra*, vol.8, p.34, hadith no.15712 (All cited in Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, *Muhammad the Merciful*, Minhaj-ul-Quran Publications, London, 2013, p.324)

¹⁴⁵ Al-Qosim bin Sallam al-Harawi, *al-Amwal*, p.110, hadith no.99, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 3.13

¹⁴⁶ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Kutub wa Rasa'il wa Fatawa*, Maktabat Ibn Taymiyyah, nd., vol.28, p.146

(*maqsud*) of calling a certain land a 'Land of Islam' or a 'land of disbelief (*kufir*)' is not Islam versus *kufir*. It is security versus insecurity."¹⁴⁷

It is therefore required for the State to ensure the highest standards of justice and security for all, and that it upholds the principle that "*they enjoy the same rights we enjoy.*"¹⁴⁸ For example, Khalid ibn al-Walid, in his famous "Covenant of Peace" with the people of Hiraah, wrote:

"I have stipulated that if any one of them becomes unfit to work on account of old age or for some other reason, or if anyone who was formerly rich becomes so poor that his co-religionists have to support him, then all such persons will be exempted from paying the *jizya*¹⁴⁹ and they, together with their dependents, will get a pension from the Islamic Treasury as long as they choose to reside in the Islamic state."¹⁵⁰

Historian Jane Smith describes the early Islamic state's practice of *dhimmi* rights as follows:

"The specifics of the requirements for Christians who enjoyed *dhimmi* status were spelled out in what has come to be referred to as 'the covenant of Umar,' which exists in several versions and most likely was attributed to rather than designed by the second caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab (r. 634-44). The covenant stipulated prohibition of the building of new churches or repair of those in towns inhabited by Muslims, although in some cases when financing was available Christians did construct new places of worship... *Dhimmis* were allowed to keep their own communal laws, although they could apply to a Muslim judge if they wished.... Christians occupied high positions in the caliphal courts as physicians, engineers, architects, and translators, and sometimes they were treated as having virtually equal rights with Muslims.

¹⁴⁷ Al-Kasani, *Bada'i al-Sana'i*, vol.7, p.131

¹⁴⁸ Al-Kasani, *Bada'i al-Sana'i*, vol.7, p.100; Ibn al-Qayyim, *Ahkam Ahl al-Dhimmah*, Dar al-Ilm Lilmalayin, Beirut, 1964, p.48; both cited in Salim Al-Bahnasawy, *Non-Muslims in the Shari'ah of Islam*, Dar an-Nashr lil-Jami'at, Egypt, 2004, p.3

¹⁴⁹ A tribute and military exemption tax paid by able-bodied, male, non-clergy, non-Muslim subjects of an Islamic state, in lieu of having to join the army. Exemptions to women, children, elderly, monks, and those who join the Muslim army are evidence that the tax is not a fine for disbelief as some have postulated (Sa'id Ramadan, *Islamic Law: Its Scope and Equity*, Macmillan, London, 1961, p.123.)

¹⁵⁰ Abu Yusuf, *Kitab al-Kharaj*, p.144; cited in Sa'id Ramadan, *Islamic Law: Its Scope and Equity*, Macmillan, London, 1961, p.123.

Muslim writers and poets sometimes gave great tributes to Christians in their literature.”¹⁵¹

It is true that Muslim administrations, however, have at times imposed some inequitable conditions and restrictions upon *dhimmi* communities. Smith states that this may be explained by the fact that after the lifetime of the early caliphs, the:

“...*dhimmi* status seems to have been a changing one, in that laws were made and either broken or forgotten... never free from the whims of individual rulers who might choose to enforce strict regulations, or from the caprice of mobs expressing their passions in prejudicial and harmful ways [as may be observed even today in the policies of non-Muslim dominated nations towards their minorities]. In general, the first Arab Muslim dynasty, that of the Umayyads, was fairly flexible in terms of its Christian citizens, but in Islam’s second century the laws became more stringent. Under the reign of the caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-61), laws against *dhimmis* were most severe, sometimes resulting in persecution of Christians as well as of Mu'tazilis, Shiites, and others [Muslim sects] considered opponents of the state. Through the Middle Ages there was a hardening of attitudes against *dhimmis*, due more to political than to religious reasons, especially after the period of the Crusades.”¹⁵²

Despite these changing attitudes of rulers and the Muslim masses, knowledge of the implicit rights of *dhimmis* in an Islamic state compelled other Muslims to campaign for justice. Examples of this include the fervent protest of the public, led by Muslim jurists, against the Caliph Walid ibn Yazid when he exiled non-Muslim citizens of Cyprus to Syria¹⁵³; and the reprimand sent by Imam al-Awza’i to the Governor of Lebanon who exiled some non-Muslim civilians that lived in the same areas as some armed rebels.

The following extract from the letter that he (Imam al-Awza’i) wrote to him (the Governor of Lebanon) speaks for itself:

¹⁵¹ Jane I. Smith, “Islam and Christendom: Historical, Cultural and Religious Interaction from the Seventh to the Fifteenth Centuries,” *The Oxford History of Islam*. Ed. John L. Esposito, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p.308

¹⁵² Jane I. Smith, “Islam and Christendom: Historical, Cultural and Religious Interaction from the Seventh to the Fifteenth Centuries,” *The Oxford History of Islam*. Ed. John L. Esposito, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, pp.308-309

¹⁵³ Abul-‘Ala Mawdudi, *Islamic Law and Constitution*, Jamaat-e-Islamic Publications, Karachi, Pakistan, 1955, p.188; cited in Sa’id Ramadan, *Islamic Law: Its Scope and Equity*, Macmillan, London 1961, p.99

“*Dhimmis* of the hill-tracts of Lebanon have been exiled and you know the fact. Amongst them are men who had not taken part in the revolt. I fail to understand why common people should be punished for the sins of particular individuals and be deprived of their homes and properties. The Qur'anic injunction is quite clear that ultimately everybody will have to account for his own actions and nobody shall be held responsible for anybody else's actions. This is an eternal and universal injunction, and the best advice, therefore, that I can give to you is to remind you of one of the directives of God's Prophet that he himself will stand up as plaintiff against all such Muslims who are unkind to those non-Muslims who have entered into an agreement with them, and tax them beyond endurance.”¹⁵⁴

The Maliki jurist, Shihab al-Din al-Qarafi said:

“The covenant of protection imposes upon us certain obligations toward *ahl al-dhimmah*. They are our neighbours, under our shelter and protection upon the guarantee of Allah, His Messenger (p), and the religion of Islam. Whoever violates these obligations against any of them by so much as an abusive word, by slandering his reputation, or by doing him some injury or assisting in it, has breached the guarantee of Allah, His Messenger (p), and the religion of Islam.”¹⁵⁵

And Ibn Hazm said:

“If the enemy of a *dhimmi* comes with his forces to take him, it is our obligation to fight this enemy with soldiers and weapons and to give our lives for him, thus honouring the guarantee of Allah and His Messenger (p). To hand him over to the enemy would mean to dishonour this guarantee.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Abul-'Ala Maududi, *Islamic Law and Constitution*, Jamaat-e-Islamic Publications, Karachi, Pakistan, 1955, p.188; cited in Sa'id Ramadan, *Islamic Law: Its Scope and Equity*, Macmillan, London 1961, p.99

¹⁵⁵ Al-Qarafi, *Al-Furuq*, vol.3, p.14, cited in Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Non-Muslims in Islamic Society*, p.12

¹⁵⁶ Al-Qarafi, *Al-Furuq*, vol.3, p.14-15, cited in Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Non-Muslims in Islamic Society*, p.7

8. Muslims as Minorities

The Prophet (p) and early Muslims lived as a minority in Mecca before and after the Prophet's migration (Hijrah) to Medina when the Prophet (p) was about 53 years old. Some lived in Mecca under non-Muslim rule during the period of the Treaty of Hudaibiyah. Others lived as minorities in Abyssinia and elsewhere from the time of the Prophet (p) and his Companions right until today.

What are the responsibilities of Muslim minorities? Do Muslim minorities living within non-Muslim states need to honour any terms of residence?

While the Prophet (p) and his early Companions lived in Mecca, they respected its polytheist leadership and laws, so long as these did not require them to disobey any categorical injunctions of Islam. The main reason why the Prophet (p) and his Companions fled and migrated to other places was primarily to escape persecution and the threat to their lives¹⁵⁷; and not because they were living as Muslim minorities in a society ruled by non-Muslims. Even after fleeing from Meccan persecution, the first immigrants (*muhajirun*) were ordered by the Prophet (p) to seek refuge under Christian rule in the kingdom of Abyssinia (Habasha).¹⁵⁸ Again during the period of the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, some Muslims lived in Mecca, and under its leadership as dictated by the Treaty agreement endorsed by the Prophet (p).¹⁵⁹

A Muslim living anywhere in the world belongs to the *Ummah* (community of believers) and provided he or she is granted the right to his/her identity and the freedom to practice Islam, it is in the view of most scholars and as seen in the lives of the Prophet (p), his Companions and the earliest Muslims, permissible for a Muslim to reside, study or work in non-Muslim lands.

Based on the geopolitical realities of the times, Muslim jurists developed various ways, concepts, and terms for classifying the world and where Muslims could or could not reside

¹⁵⁷ In a statement made by the Prophet (p) when fleeing Mecca for Medina, he said, "(O Mecca!) You are the most beloved place to me. If not because your people chased me out, I would not live in a place apart from you" – *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, hadith no.3926; *Musnad Ahmad*, hadith no.18717.

¹⁵⁸ For more, see: Tariq Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007,p.59-62; Adil Salahi, *Muhammad, Man and Prophet: A Complete Study of the Life of the Prophet of Islam*, The Islamic Foundation, Markfield, UK, 2002, pp. 123-144.

¹⁵⁹ For more, see: Tariq Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007,p.149-163; Adil Salahi, *Muhammad, Man and Prophet: A Complete Study of the Life of the Prophet of Islam*, The Islamic Foundation, Markfield, UK, 2002, pp. 495-530.

and the sort of international relations more appropriate for each community. These included but were not limited to “*Dar al-Harb*” (Territory/Abode/Land of War), “*Dar al-Kufr*” (Abode of Disbelief/Rejection of Islam), “*Dar al-Sulh*” or “*Dar al-‘Ahd*” (Abode of Treaty), “*Dar al-‘Amn*” (Abode of Security), “*Dar al-‘Adl*” (Abode of Justice), “*Dar al-Shahadah/Da’wah*” (Abode of Witnessing Islam) and “*Dar al-Islam*” (Abode of Islam/Peace), etc.

These divisions, terms, and political concepts are not found by name either in the Qur’an or the Hadith but are the product of the diverse juristic reasoning (*ijtihad*) of scholars in various contexts of Islamic history. Furthermore, there is no categorical statement by Allah or the Prophet (p) demarcating the world into two bipolar domains of only “*Dar al-Harb*” (Abode of War) and “*Dar al-Islam*” (Abode of Islam) as presented by some scholars. Instead, the concepts arose from classical jurists who sought to classify the known world in which they lived, in order to deduce appropriate juridical rulings for political and strategic relations with others outside the Caliphate. Through examining the geographical divisions and power alliances that existed in their times, they were able to theoretically carve out an Islamic space within which their rulings applied. These divisions also allowed them to distinguish between Muslims who were living within and under Islamic rule, and those who were travellers or residing abroad who required specific rulings.¹⁶⁰

Generally, Muslims were advised by scholars to avoid living in environments that were hostile to, or at war with Muslims (Land of War or *Dar al-Harb*). They were however permitted and even encouraged to travel to and live - as did the Prophet and his Companions – as law-abiding citizens in lands that were tolerant of Islam, had significant respect for the Rule of Law, justice, and security, and where Muslims had the freedom to practice their faith without fear of persecution.

Ibn Hajr cites the view of al-Mawardi that if a Muslim is able to practice Islam openly in a non-Muslim land, then that land becomes *Dar al-Islam* (the Abode of Islam) by virtue of his settling there, and living there is preferable to moving away from it as other people may be attracted to Islam merely by their interaction with him.¹⁶¹ According to al-Mawardi, “The public acts of worship (*sha`a’ir*) of Islam such as group prayers in mosques and call for

¹⁶⁰ Tariq Ramadan, *To Be a European Muslim*, The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, UK, 1999, pp.123-124

¹⁶¹ Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, *Fath al-Bari*, Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, vol.7, p.230.

prayers are the criteria by which the Prophet, peace be upon him, differentiated between the Land of Islam and the Land of Disbelief.”¹⁶²

The criterion of “the achievement of justice”, is so central in the Islamic concept of ‘Land or Abode of Islam’ to the extent that the term ‘land of justice’ (*Dar al-‘Adl*) is very often used interchangeably with the term ‘Land of Islam’ (*Dar al-Islam*) in numerous sources.¹⁶³

In fact, Imam Abu Hanifa states: “The purpose (*maqsud*) of calling a certain land a ‘Land of Islam’ or a ‘land of disbelief (*kufir*)’ is not Islam versus *kufir*. It is security versus insecurity.”¹⁶⁴

Mecca itself – according to Imam al-Bayhaqi for example – became a ‘Land of Islam’ after its ‘conquest’ only because of its newly found sense of security. He writes: “Mecca became a ‘Land of Islam’ and ‘land of security’ after its conquest because no one there was forced against his/her religion. Any other land is likewise if it acquires the same kind of security.”¹⁶⁵

It is clear from the classic definitions too that security itself is a means to the end of freedom to practice the Islamic ‘public acts of worship’ (Arabic: *sha`a’ir al-Islam*). In fact, several scholars have mentioned that Muslims who have enough security and freedom to practice *sha`a’ir al-Islam* actually live in a ‘Land of Islam’, even if they were the minority.

Al-Razi writes that "If the Islamic acts of worship are evident in streets and public places, this certainly entails that Islam is dominant."¹⁶⁶ Ibn Taymiyyah equally wrote that “The public acts of worship (*sh`a’ir*) of Islam are the true signs that a certain land is a Land of Islam.”¹⁶⁷

For Muslims visiting or planning to reside in non-Muslim countries, it is usually a prerequisite that in order to be granted entry, they must agree to abide by certain terms and conditions, whether for visa or migration purposes. A Muslim who is born in a non-Muslim land is usually given automatic citizenship and is naturally bound by the terms and conditions of citizenship.

¹⁶² Al-Mawardi, *Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyah*, vol.1, p.275.

¹⁶³ For example: Ibn Taymiyyah, *Kutub wa Rasa’il*, vol.28, p.146; Rashid Rida, *Al-Khilafah*, p.50 & 62; Al-Mawardi, *Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyah*, vol.1, p.22; Al-Sarakhsi, *al-Usul*, vol.9, p. 182; Al-Kasani, *Bada’i` al-Sana’i`*, vol.7, p.80; Ibn Qudamah, *Al-Mughni*, vol.9, p.14; Al-Nawawi, *Rawdat al-Talibin*, vol.10, p.49; Al-Zar`i, *Al-Jawab al-Kafi*, vol.1, p.101; Ibn Abidin, *Hashiyat Raddul-Mukhtar*, vol.4, p.45; Al-Alusi, *Ruh al-Ma`ani*, vol.18, p.91; Nizam, *Al-Fatawa al-Hindiyah*, vol.2, p.179.

¹⁶⁴ Al-Kasani, *Bada’i` al-Sana’i`*, vol.7, p.131

¹⁶⁵ Al-Bayhaqi, *Sunan al-Bayhaqi*, vol.9, p.16.

¹⁶⁶ Al-Razi, *Al-Mahsul*, vol.4, p.43.

¹⁶⁷ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Nubuwwat*, vol.1, p.197.

Often, these terms and conditions are already part of international or inter-governmental treaties and agreements between Muslim countries and others. Muslim citizens are bound to respect these agreements, as did the Companions when the Prophet endorsed the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, even though some of the conditions of that Treaty were unfavourable to the short-term interests of Muslims.

All believers are characterized as those “*who are faithful to their trusts and their pledges*” (Qur’an 23:8). Once a Muslim chooses to remain a citizen or resident (rather than migrate to another land), he is required to acknowledge the nation’s legislation and conduct himself within the scope of the law. Upon acceptance of these conditions of residence, a Muslim is bound by them, as stipulated in the hadith and adopted as an Islamic legal maxim, “*al-muslimun ‘inda shurutihim*”¹⁶⁸ (i.e. “Muslims are bound by their conditions”).¹⁶⁹ This obligation on Muslim minorities in non-Muslim lands illustrates Islam’s endorsement of peaceful interfaith co-existence. It, however, does not prevent Muslims from seeking legal reform towards achieving justice and a better society.

Moreover, a Muslim should not just be dutiful to his host country but actively contribute towards improving it. This is because Muslims are enjoined to be “*the best nation ever raised for mankind, enjoining right and forbidding wrong...*” (Qur’an 3:110) ‘Ikrimah explained this verse, saying, “In the past, people were not secure in other people’s lands, but as Muslims, people of any colour feel secure among you...”¹⁷⁰, while Abu al-Su‘ud elaborates that, “You are the best community for people, which means helpful to other people.”¹⁷¹ Al-Khatib also says, “A feature of the Muslim nation is that it should not keep any beneficial advantage to itself but should share its benefit with other human societies.”¹⁷² These explanations accord with the Prophet’s statement, “*The best among you is the best towards people,*”¹⁷³ and the example of Prophet Yusuf (peace be upon him), who was a foreigner residing in Egypt, and even offered his services at the level of government (Qur’an 12:54-55).

¹⁶⁸ Bukhari, *Sahih Bukhari*, hadith no.2273

¹⁶⁹ Tariq Ramadan, *To Be a European Muslim*, The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, UK, 1999, p.173

¹⁷⁰ *Tafsir Ibn Abi Hatim*, vol.1, no.472, cited in Taha Jabir al-Alwani, *Towards a Fiqh for Minorities: Some Basic Reflections*, International Institute of Islamic Thought, London, 2003, p.27

¹⁷¹ *Irshad al-‘Aql al-Salim ila Mazaya al-Qur’an al-‘Azim*, vol.2, p.70; cited in Taha Jabir al-Alwani, *Towards a Fiqh for Minorities*, International Institute of Islamic Thought, London, 2003, p.28

¹⁷² Abd al-Karim al-Khatib, *Al-Tafsir al-Qur’an*, vol.4, p.548; cited in Taha Jabir al-Alwani, *Towards a Fiqh for Minorities*, International Institute of Islamic Thought, London, 2003, p.28

¹⁷³ Muhammad bin Salamah, *Musnad al-Shihab*, Mu’assasah al-Risalah, Beirut, 1407AH, hadith no.1234

Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah, a highly distinguished scholar serving on many international *fiqh* councils and one of the contemporary world's leading authorities in *Usul al-Fiqh* (Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence), explains the obligations of Muslims in non-Muslim lands in the following remarks:

“...the relationship between Muslims living in this land and the dominant authorities in this land is a relationship of peace and contractual agreement – of a treaty. This is a relationship of dialogue and a relationship of giving and taking... It is absolutely essential that you respect the laws of the land that you are living in... We have to maintain those things that are particular to us as a community, but we also have to recognize that there are other things that are not particular to us but rather general to the human condition that we can partake in.”¹⁷⁴

Examples of this friendly yet faith-retaining integration may be found throughout the history of Muslim minority groups in non-Muslim lands. Muslims in China, for instance, are celebrated for successfully constructing an indigenous Muslim identity within the country and making significant contributions to their homeland.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah, "Muslims Living in Non-Muslim Lands", http://sunnah.org/articles/muslims_in_nonmuslim_lands.htm, 2005

¹⁷⁵ See Ibrahim Ma Zhao-Chun, "Islam in China: The Internal Dimension" in *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, UK, July 1986, vol.7, no.2, pp.373-383.

9. Protection of Churches, Synagogues, etc.

In recent times, places of worship, holy sites, and sacred spaces have been desecrated, bombed, or destroyed, in the name of religion, in various conflicts. Sometimes, Muslims have been involved in destroying, but also in protecting churches, synagogues, etc.

Are Muslims allowed to destroy churches and other non-Muslim places of worship?

The Qur'an says, *"Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands clear from error"* (Qur'an 2:256). Also, *"Say: 'The truth has now come from your Sustainer. Let then he who wills, believe in it, and let he who wills, reject it'"* (Qur'an 18:29).

Islam respects the rights of people of other faiths to practice their own religious beliefs (Qur'an 5:48-49). Jews and Christians, for example, are respected as People of Scripture (*Ahl al-Kitab*), and their right to their places of worship must be respected.

The Qur'an prohibits anyone from destroying monasteries, churches, synagogues, or mosques. Qur'an 22:39-40 says, *"Permission is given to those who fight because they have been oppressed...For had it not been for God's repelling some men by means of others, (all) monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, wherein the name of God is often mentioned, would certainly have been destroyed..."*

Based on this verse of the Qur'an, great scholars such as Ibn Hazm hold that Muslims are even required to fight if necessary, to defend these non-Muslim places of worship from being destroyed.¹⁷⁶

The continued existence of numerous monasteries, sacred grounds, and places of worship belonging to Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Hindus, Buddhists, etc., in places that have once been or still are completely under Muslim rule shows the respect that Islam has for the rights of others to their respective faiths and places of worship.¹⁷⁷

This spirit can be seen in display in the letter of the first Caliph of Islam Abu Bakr Siddiq to the non-Muslims of Najran. In the letter, the Caliph wrote:

¹⁷⁶ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, IIFSO, Kuwait, 1992, p.339; Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, *Protection of Churches, Mosques, and Synagogues in Islam*, Islamic Education Trust, Minna, Nigeria, 2012, p. 6.

¹⁷⁷ For further reading: Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, *Protection of Churches, Mosques, and Synagogues in Islam*, Islamic Education Trust, Minna, Nigeria, 2012; Fathi Osman, *The Other: A Restructuring of the Islamic Concept*, Pharos Foundation, U.S.A., 2008; Hoffman Murad, *Protection of Religious Minorities in Islam*, The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, U.K., 1998.

“In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful. This is the written statement of God's slave Abu Bakr, the successor of Muhammad, the Prophet and Messenger of God. He affirms for you the rights of a protected neighbour, in yourselves, your lands, your religious community, your wealth, retainers, and servants, those of you who are present or abroad, **your bishops and monks, and monasteries**, and all that you own, be it great or small. You shall not be deprived of any of it, and shall have full control over it...”¹⁷⁸

In a similar vein, the treaty of the second Caliph of Islam, Umar ibn al-Khattab, with the people of Iliya of Jerusalem reinforces this fact. In it, he states that:

“This is the security given by the slave of God, Umar, the Commander of the Faithful, to the people of Iliya: they are guaranteed the security in their persons, possessions, **churches, crucifixes, and everyone within**, whether sick or in good health, as well as everyone in their community. **Their churches will not be occupied or demolished, nor will anything be taken from them: neither furnishings nor crucifixes or money.** They will not be forced away from their religion, or harmed because of it...”¹⁷⁹

As a result, since the era of the “Rightly-guided Caliphs”, Jews and Christians have held their services in freedom and security.¹⁸⁰

The above ideals of Islam held by Muslims did not always end up in speeches or on paper. They were actually displayed by the rightly guided Muslim leaders when they conquered non-Muslim lands. For example, one of the Muslim caliphs, Abdul-Malik, took the Church of Saint John from the Christians and made it part of a mosque. When Umar bin Abdul-Aziz succeeded him as the new Caliph, the Christians complained to him about what his predecessor had done to their church. Umar wrote to the governor that the portion of the mosque that was rightfully theirs be returned to them if they were unable to agree with the governor on a monetary settlement that would satisfy them.¹⁸¹

The Wailing Wall in Jerusalem is known to historians to be one of the holiest places of worship in Judaism. It was completely buried under rubble and heaps of debris during the

¹⁷⁸ Abu Yusuf, *Kitab al-Kharaj*, p. 79

¹⁷⁹ Tabari, *Tarikh al-Tabari*, vol 3, p. 159

¹⁸⁰ Qaradawi, Yusuf, *'al-Aqaliyyat ad-Diniyya wa-Hal al-Islami*, p. 13

¹⁸¹ Qaradawi, Yusuf, *'Ghayr al-Muslimeen fil-Mujtama' al-Islami*, p. 32

era of the Ottoman caliph, Sultan Sulayman I (1494-1566). When the caliph came to know of this, he ordered his governor in Jerusalem to remove all the rubble and debris, clean the area, restore the Wailing Wall, and make it accessible for Jews to visit.¹⁸²

Non-Muslims' Testimonies to Muslims' Protection of Churches

The respect Islam enjoins on Muslims towards non-Muslims with regards to protecting their various places of worship can be testified to by non-Muslims, some of whom though are ardent critics of Islam and Muslims are objective enough to tell the truth as it is.

The Christian Patriarch Ghaytho wrote about the Arab of his time:

“The Arabs, to whom the Lord has given control over the world, treat us as you know; they are not the enemies of Christians. Indeed, they praise our community, and treat our priests and saints with dignity, and offer aid to churches and monasteries.”¹⁸³

Also, the Historian, Will Durant wrote:

“At the time of the Umayyad caliphate, the People of the Covenant, Christians, Zoroastrians, Jews, and Sabians, all enjoyed a degree of tolerance that we do not find even today in Christian countries. They were free to practice the rituals of their religion and their churches and temples were preserved. They enjoyed autonomy in that they were subject to the religious laws of their scholars and judges.”¹⁸⁴

Western historians and orientalist acknowledge these facts. Le Bon writes:

“The tolerance of Muhammad towards the Jews and Christians was truly grand; the founders of other religions that appeared before him, Judaism and Christianity in particular, did not prescribe such goodwill. His caliphs followed the same policy, and his tolerance has been acknowledged by skeptics and believers alike when they study the history of the Arabs in depth.”¹⁸⁵

The American author, Lothrop Stoddard wrote,

“The caliph Umar took the utmost care to tend to the sanctity of the Christian holy places, and those who became caliph after him followed his footsteps. They did not

¹⁸² Hussayn, Abdul-Latif, ‘*Tasamuh al-Gharb Ma'l-Muslimeen*,’ p. 67

¹⁸³ Tritton Arthur Stanley, *The People Of The Covenant In Islam*. p. 158.

¹⁸⁴ Durant Will, *The Story Of Civilization*’ vol. 13. p. 131-132.

¹⁸⁵ Le Bon Gustav, *Arab Civilization*, p. 128

harass the many denominations of pilgrims who came annually from every corner of the Christian world to visit Jerusalem.”¹⁸⁶

Thus, the bombing and burning of non-Muslim places of worship that we witness today are misguided and criminal acts that are blameworthy and condemned by Islam. This is because Allah prohibits (forbids) not only the destruction of the churches, monasteries, and synagogues of non-Muslims, but He also prohibits reviling the gods and deities of even idol worshippers. This prohibition from Allah goes beyond the prohibition of destruction to full protection by Muslims and government forces. Whenever people of other faiths living peacefully and in harmony with the Muslims are being oppressed even by Muslims, it is the duty of all God-fearing Muslims and their government to protect them.

¹⁸⁶ Stoddard, L.W., *The Islamic World At Present*, vol 1, p. 13-14

10. Associating with People of Other Faiths

The Qur'an (3:100–101) says, “O you who have believed, if you obey a party of those who were given the Scripture, they would turn you back, after your belief, [to being] unbelievers. And how could you disbelieve while to you are being recited the verses of Allah and among you is His Messenger? And whoever holds firmly to Allah has [indeed] been guided to a straight path.”

These verses have been interpreted by some to mean that Muslims should dissociate themselves from especially Jews and Christians (“those who were given scriptures”) for fear that these would turn Muslims away from Islam.

What is the correct interpretation of this verse?

The verse under consideration should not be interpreted outside its own context or the context of the whole Qur'an and Sunnah, while disregarding the rules and principles of interpretation of religious texts that help prevent error or clarify any confusion. This is especially when some Companions of the Prophet (p) have actually commented on this particular verse and its context.

According to Qur'anic commentators (*Mufasssirun*) such as Al-Baghawi¹⁸⁷, Al-Tabari¹⁸⁸, and Ibn Ashur¹⁸⁹, the circumstance during which the verse was revealed (*sabab al-nuzul*) was a case in Medina where a particular Jewish resident by the name Shas bin Qays, was envious of the growing authority and respect that the Prophet Muhammad (p) was receiving in Medina. He earlier on played a more prominent role in the leadership of Medina. As Islam united the major Arab tribes of 'Aws and Khazraj and brought an end to their mutual rivalry and infighting, the Jewish community became less significant as the Muslims became a larger united block. In an attempt to sow discord between the old rivals, Shas bin Qays and his followers tried to incite hatred among the Muslims by reminding the 'Aws and Khazraj of their respective past losses and why they should actually see each other as enemies and not brothers in faith.

¹⁸⁷ Abu Muhammad al-Hussain bin Musa Al-Baghawi, *Ma'alim al-Tanzil*, Dar al-Taybat al-Nashr, Medina, 1417AH, vol.2, p.75

¹⁸⁸ Muhammad bin Jarir al-Tabari, *Jami' al-Bayan*, Mu'assasat al-Risalah, Beirut, 1420AH, vol.6, p.59

¹⁸⁹ Muhammad bin Tahir Ibn Ashur, *Al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir*, Maktabat al-Shamilah 3.13, vol.3, p. 248

The verse in question was revealed in this context, and the Prophet (p) intervened while asking the ‘Aws and Khazraj Muslims, “O Muslims! Will you be responding to the call to the Pre-Islamic Days of Ignorance (*jahiliyyah*), while I am amongst you, and after Allah has honoured you with Islam and united you?” After that, they dropped their weapons and hugged one other in brotherhood.

This verse, therefore, teaches that Muslims should not obey or follow people who will cause or contribute to disunity and conflict among them. And that they should not obey or answer any call to tribalism, racism, or other forms of unacceptable Pre-Islamic (*Jahiliyyah*) ethics. According to Abubakr Jabir Al-Jaza’iri, an important lesson to be derived from this verse is that “Muslims should be cautious of taking advice from Jewish or Christian leaders in what may lead them into disbelief”.¹⁹⁰

It is clear from the actual context of the verse and the understanding of scholars, that these verses (along with other similar ones) were not understood to imply that Muslims should dissociate themselves from all people of other faiths.

As is clear from numerous other references in the Qur’an, the Sunnah and the actions of the Companions of the Prophet (p) cited in this work, this verse, as with many others, was not understood to teach hostility towards, or dissociation from peaceful people of other faiths, or from engaging with them for the common good as fellow human beings. It did not prohibit political ties and treaties, commerce, marriage, visiting, exchanging gifts, cooperating in doing good, mutual assistance, religious dialogue and enlightenment (*da’wah*), etc.

¹⁹⁰ Abubakr Jabir al-Jaza’iri, *Aysar al-Tafasir*, Maktabat al-Ulum wa al-Hikam, Medina, 1424, vol.1, p.355

11. Other Commonly Misinterpreted Verses of the Qur'an on Interfaith Relations

Many commonly misinterpreted verses linked to interfaith relations in the Qur'an make use of the term "*wali*" which means protector, guardian, willing subordinate, responsible manager, master, superior, or favoured servant or companion; confidante. The term often implies one party being superior in rank and authority to another.¹⁹¹

Muhammad Asad in his commentary on the Qur'an notes:

"It should also be borne in mind that the term *wali* has several shades of meaning: "ally", "friend", "helper", "protector", "guardian", etc. The choice of the particular term – and sometimes a combination of two terms is always dependent on the context."¹⁹²

As has been reiterated on earlier occasions, verses of the Qur'an should not be interpreted without reference to their own textual and historical context, or the context of the whole Qur'an and Sunnah. For interpretations to be valid, they should also respect the rules and principles of interpretation of religious texts that help prevent or clarify any confusions or seeming contradictions.

Let us examine some examples of these commonly misinterpreted verses one by one:

1. **Qur'an 3:28:** ***“Let not the believers take those who deny the truth for their allies (awliyā’) in preference to the believers – since he who does this cuts himself from God in everything – unless you fear from them something that is to be feared (to protect yourselves against them in this way)...”***

This verse is understood by some to simply mean that Muslims are not supposed to make friends with all people of other faiths. What is the correct interpretation of this verse?

The injunction in the verse – *“Let not the believers take those who deny the truth for their allies (awliyā’) in preference to the believers”* - is logical from any religion's point of view. In cases where the interests of the *“deniers of truth”* clash with the interests of the faithful, it

¹⁹¹ Ruhi al-Ba'labaki, *Al-Mawrid*, Dar El-Ilm Lilmalayin, Beirut, Lebanon, 1996, p.1248

¹⁹² Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, Dar al-Andalus, Gibraltar, 1980, p.155

would be hypocritical for any believer to ally himself with a denier of truth in preference to fellow believers.

Verses such as this one imply that a hierarchical relationship in which deniers of truth have authority over believers should not be sought after. This understanding is consistent with some other verses which encourage guardianship and protection between believers and discourage Muslims from taking protection from non-Muslims who subordinate them, in preference to other Muslims who have their interests at heart.

Imam al-Tabari explains that:

“Whoever is loyal to Jews and Christians against believers is one of them... No one can be loyal to others unless he is part of them and is content with that. If he is content with their beliefs and their religion, he becomes an enemy and hates whatever disagrees with the [beliefs of those he has supported], and will be judged according to the same judgments that are applied to these people.”¹⁹³

Ibn Kathir comments that what is meant in Qur’an 3:28 is that Allah forbids his servants from taking a party of disbelievers as “*awliyā*” and extending love to them at the expense of believers. He goes on to say that this corroborates Allah’s words in Qur’an 60:1:

“...take not my enemies and yours as *awliyā*, offering them your love even though they have rejected the truth that has come to you and driven out the Messenger and yourselves simply because you believe in Allah, your Sustainer...”¹⁹⁴

It also relates to Qur’an 8:73 which states that “*Those who deny the truth are awliyā’ of one another. Unless you do likewise, there will be tumult and oppression on earth.*” Yusuf Ali, in his commentary of the Qur’an, elaborates that the message of this verse is that the good should consort with the good, just as the evil consort with each other; otherwise the world will give way to aggression and chaos.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ *Tafsir al-Tabari*, vol.6, p.179, quoted in Salim Al-Bahnasawy, *Non-Muslims in the Shari’ah of Islam*, Dar an-Nashr lil-Jami’at, Egypt, 2004, p.50, emphasis added.

¹⁹⁴ Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-Azim*, Dar al-Tayba, Riyadh, 1430AH. Edited by Sami bin Muhammad Salamah, 2nd edition, vol.2, p.30.

¹⁹⁵ Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur’an: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*. Revised by The Presidency of Islamic Researches, IFTA, Call and Guidance, King Fahd Holy Qur’an Printing Complex, Medina, 1411H, footnote no.1242, cited in *Alim 6.0*

Hence, these verses are not condemning general friendliness towards people of other faiths, which was the norm for the Prophet (p) and his Companions and is encouraged by numerous texts. Rather, it condemns association (*wala'*) that implies favouritism and preference for disbelievers and their interests over those of believers, particularly those disbelievers who have recently persecuted or are presently persecuting Muslims.

2. Qur'an 4:139, reads, "As for those who take the deniers of truth for their allies (*awliyā'*) in preference to the believers – do they hope to be honoured by them, when behold, all honour belongs to God (alone)."

This verse is also interpreted by some to discourage or prohibit building better relations with people of other faiths.

This verse is very similar in meaning to the preceding one, and also does not in any way negate general friendly relations with people of other faiths. Here, believers are discouraged from seeking an alliance which may make them subordinate to disbelievers in order to be accepted or honoured by the latter. Muhammad Asad in his commentary of the Qur'an writes:

"The term 'allies' (*awliyā'*, sing. *wali*) does not indicate in this context, merely political alliances, but more than anything else a 'moral alliance' with the deniers of truth in preference to the way of life of the believers, in the hope of being 'honored' or accepted as equal, by the former. Since an imitation of the way of life of confirmed unbelievers must obviously conflict with the moral principles demanded by true faith, it unavoidably leads to a gradual abandonment of those principles."¹⁹⁶

Ibn Kathir states that the verse rebukes believers who seek eminence in the eyes of disbelievers, while all power and authority belong to Allah.¹⁹⁷ Al-Qurtubi also asserts that those referred to in the verse are hypocrites (*munafiqun*) who connive with others against Islam in order to win recognition and favour. This, he says, is evidence that rebelling against the people of *Tawheed* (Islamic monotheism) is a sign of hypocrisy.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, The Book Foundation, England, 2003, p.150, n.154 to Qur'an 4:139

¹⁹⁷ *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, in *Maktab Taalib al-Ilm CD-ROM*, Ariss Computers Inc., Beirut, Lebanon, 2002.

¹⁹⁸ *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, in *Maktab Taalib al-Ilm, CD-ROM*, Ariss Computers Inc., Beirut, Lebanon, 2002.

This verse, therefore, does not in any way discourage or hinder interfaith bridge-building, but only prohibits Muslims from compromising Islamic values or seeking acceptance when relating with people of other faiths.

- 3. Another commonly misinterpreted verse (Qur'an 2:120) reads, “*Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with you unless you follow their form of religion. Say: ‘The Guidance of Allah – that is the only Guidance!’ Were you to follow their desires after the knowledge which has reached you, then you would find neither protector nor helper against Allah.*”**

This verse is interpreted by some to mean that people of other faiths – and more specifically, Jews and Christians - will never really respect or accept Muslims as they are, unless they convert to Judaism or Christianity. This is understood to imply that Jews and Christians cannot be trusted or relied upon as individuals or as a community.

However, it is a well-known fact that many non-Muslim countries in the West for example, which are predominantly Christian (and with strong Jewish influence) have accepted as full and equal citizens many Muslim migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers fleeing persecution and conflict from Muslim countries. Some of these Muslims have even been elected by these same non-Muslims into important senior positions of their national leadership. Some of these Western countries where Islam is now the fastest-growing religion have even given refuge, protection, and freedom of religion and expression to important Muslim scholars and reformists who were persecuted in Muslim lands.

So what exactly does the verse teach when it says “*the Jews and Christians will never accept or be pleased with Muslims*”? Does it really refer to all Jews and Christians?

This verse, like most other verses in the Qur'an, has both a specific contextual meaning and also universal ethical principles of general relevance.

As has been reiterated on earlier occasions, the verse under consideration (Qur'an 2:120) should not be interpreted without reference to its own textual and historical context, or the context of the whole Qur'an and Sunnah.

Regarding this verse, Ibn Kathir comments that the Prophet's companion, Qatadah narrated that Qur'an 2:120 - "*Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied (lan tarda) with you unless you follow their form of religion (millah)...*" - was revealed in the specific context of the Prophet's dialogue and discussions with some People of the Book – Jews and Christians. Allah was assuring the Prophet (p) that he should not be stirred by their disputation, for their hearts having already been satisfied with disbelief, would never find any explanation by the Prophet (p) satisfactory, while he should know that he is upon true guidance.¹⁹⁹ Ibn Kathir also said that the verse contains a strong warning for Muslims to avoid following the (religious) paths of Jews and Christians after what they (i.e. Muslims) have learned of the truth from the Qur'an and example of the Prophet (p).²⁰⁰

The Qur'an declares itself as the final and most preserved revelation, and a correction of the errors of belief and practice of those claiming allegiance to earlier revelations – hence, the warning in the verse to desist from reverting to error.

This verse is closely related to some of the verses mentioned earlier which make the realistic observation (that would apply to any other faith community or religion), which is that disbelievers, as a rule, are not suited to safeguard Muslims' interests because they have their own interests to protect, and Muslims should not hope to attain their favour as opposed to the favour of Allah.

This point is expressed in another verse, particularly regarding antagonist non-Muslims who had shown clear hostility against the Prophet (p) and early Muslims:

"They will spare nothing to ruin you; they yearn for what makes you suffer. Hatred has been expressed by their mouths, but what their hearts conceal is still greater. Thus have We made clear to you the signs, if you possess understanding. Lo! You love them, but they do not love you..." (Qur'an 3:118-119)

¹⁹⁹ *Tafsir of Ibn Kathir*, in *Maktab Taalib al-Ilm CD-ROM*, Ariss Computers Inc., Beirut, Lebanon, 2002.

²⁰⁰ *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, in *Maktab Taalib al-Ilm CD-ROM*, Ariss Computers Inc., Beirut, Lebanon, 2002.

A common misinterpretation of these verses (and similar ones) also comes from inferring that the words, *“Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with you unless you follow their form of religion”* (in Qur’an 2:120) can also be generalized to mean that ALL and EVERY Jew and Christian will never be satisfied with Islam and Muslims.

The fact however that many Jews and Christians at the time of the Prophet (p), throughout Islamic history and until this day have been so satisfied and pleased with Islam and Muslims as to even convert to Islam, embrace it as their religion and join the Muslim Ummah, clearly suggests that this verse is restricted in its meaning and can only be context-specific and not generalized to apply to all Jews and Christians.

There are different types of Muslims and non-Muslims mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Some are trustworthy and upright, while others are corrupt and hypocritical. The Qur'an, therefore, acknowledges that people of other faiths are not all alike (Qur'an 3:113, 3:75), some are reliable while others are not:

“(But) they are not all alike: among the followers of earlier revelation, there are upright people...” (Qur’an 3:113)

“Behold, as for those who are bent on denying the truth (alladhina kafaru), it is the same to them, whether you warn them or do not warn them; they will not believe.” (Qur’an 2:7)

“Among the followers of earlier revelation are some who, if entrusted with a hoard of gold, will (readily) pay it back; others, who, if entrusted with a single silver coin, will not repay it unless you constantly stand over them demanding it.” (Qur’an 3:75)

“And, behold, among the followers of earlier revelation there are indeed such as [truly] believe in God, and in that which has been bestowed from on high upon you as well as in that which has been bestowed upon them. Standing in awe of God, they do not barter away God's messages for a trifling gain. They shall have their reward with their Sustainer - for, behold, God is swift in reckoning!” (Qur’an 3:200)

So while Jews, Christians, and others both in the past and present, may remain non-Muslims, some bear no ill will or hatred towards Islam or Muslims, and may even, as did the Christian King of Abyssinia or the Prophet’s uncle Abu Talib, come to the defence of Muslims for the sake of their faith, justice or filial duty.

We may therefore safely conclude that though Qur'an 2:120 and Qur'an 3:118-119 applied in the past to specific contexts, they will continue to apply to particular individuals and communities. They, however, do not necessarily apply to all communities or to every one of its members, and it is contrary to the spirit and clear teachings of Islam to generalise its message to all people of other faiths.

4. The Qur'an 5:57 says, “O you who have attained to faith! Do not take for yourselves allies/protectors (*awliyā*) such as mock at your faith and make a jest of it – be they from among those who have been given revelation before your time, or (from among) those who deny the truth...”

Some have concluded from this verse, as with some of the earlier verses discussed, that Muslims should not take as friends or allies all people of other faiths.

What is the actual meaning of this verse to interfaith relations?

As has been mentioned earlier, the verses of the Qur'an should not be interpreted without reference to its own context, or that of the whole Qur'an and Sunnah, and should not disregard the rules of interpretation (*tafsir*) of religious texts that help prevent seeming contradictions or clarify any confusions.

The type of “disbelievers” referred to in the verse above is made clearer through an examination of the context and verses that follow Qur'an 5:57. The next verse reads;

“And when you proclaim the call to prayer, they take it (but) as a mockery and fun, that is because they are a people who understand not. Say, ‘O people of the Scripture, do you criticize us for no other reason than that we believe in Allah, and in that which has been sent down to us and in that which has been sent down before...” (Qur'an 5:58-59)

As it has been made abundantly clear in Qur'an 60:7-9 cited below (and implied in Q5:57 above), as well as the numerous sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad (p), this prohibition of a ‘moral alliance’ with non-Muslims who mock Islam does not constitute an injunction against normal friendly relations with those of them that interact with Muslims

respectfully or peacefully; nor is it an injunction against accepting assistance from non-Muslims whose sincerity is not in doubt.²⁰¹

*“As for those (unbelievers) who do not fight against you on account of (your) faith, nor drive you out of your homelands, **God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to deal with them with fairness and equity....** God only forbids you to turn in friendship towards (an *tawallawhum*) such as fight against you because of (your) faith, and drive you forth from your homelands, or aid (others) in driving you forth: and as for those (from among you) who turn toward them in friendship, it is they, they who are truly wrongdoers! (Qur’an 60:9)*

It may, therefore, be inferred from this that Muslims may “*tawalla*” (i.e. “turn to”) those non-Muslims that do not fight against or support those who fight against Muslims on account of their faith.

5. Allah says in Qur’an 58:22, “You shall not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day befriending those who oppose Allah and His Messenger even though they be their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their relatives. He has inscribed faith in their hearts and has strengthened them with a spirit from Him, and He shall make them enter Gardens beneath which rivers flow. Therein they shall abide. Allah is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with Him. They belong to Allah’s party. Verily Allah’s party shall prosper.”

This verse is understood by some to imply that true believers are not expected to befriend people of other faiths who have refused to accept Islam, irrespective of their relationship and disposition towards them. These people believe that Allah praises and rewards such unfriendly attitudes with Paradise. What is the correct interpretation of this verse?

²⁰¹ Such as some of the Prophet's uncles and non-Muslim political allies – see the relevant section on "Trusting People of other Faiths" above. Sheikh Muhammad Rashid Rida also writes, "Forbidden in the issue of showing loyalty is when Muslims show loyalty to Jews and Christians and make alliances with them to support them against other Muslims or to connive with them against other Muslims. But making alliances with non-Muslims in ways that will benefit the believers or preventing harm from them is a matter of discretion which the majority of scholars have permitted." (*Tafsir al-Manar*, vol.16, pp.81-82; quoted in Salim Al-Bahnasawy, *Non-Muslims in the Shari'ah of Islam*, Dar an-Nashr lil-Jami'at, Egypt, 2004, p.52

As previously reiterated, any interpretation or conclusion from any verse of the Qur'an should not be done without proper reference to the context of that verse, or that of the whole Qur'an and Sunnah; and should not disregard the rules and principles of interpretation of religious texts that help prevent seeming contradictions or clarify any confusions.

According to Muhammad Asad, "the key to the understanding of this verse is to appreciate that the operative phrase of this passage is contained in the words, "*anyone who contends against (man hadda) God and His Apostle*": i.e., anyone who is engaged in active hostility against God's message and the person or the teachings of His Apostle. As regards relations with non-believers who are not actively hostile to Islam, the Qur'an explicitly permits and implicitly ordains in many places (e.g., in 60:8-9) kindness and friendliness towards them."²⁰²

The verse was revealed in the early Medinan years (between the 4th and 5th year of *Hijrah*)²⁰³ when the Muslim community was faced with continuous opposition and the threat of extermination by the Quraysh polytheists. In such a context of hostility and the state of war between the two parties, it is only natural and logical that there cannot be friendly relations with such hostile tribes, even if they were relatives, as this would weaken the cohesiveness and unity of the Muslim community in their response to the offensive opposition of the polytheists.

Thus, while this phrase could, in theory, be interpreted to refer to all non-Muslims, it could also be interpreted to refer specifically to those non-Muslims who oppose, contend against, or blaspheme Allah and his Messenger (p), or are hostile, aggressive, or warring with Muslims; such as those referred to in Qur'an 5:57:

"O you who have attained to faith! Do not take for yourselves allies/protectors (awliyā') such as mock at your faith and make a jest of it – be they from among those who have been given revelation before your time, or (from among) those who deny the truth..."

However, interpreting it to refer to all non-Muslims, including peaceful people of other faiths, contradicts other numerous texts from the Qur'an and Sunnah, and the actual lived history

²⁰² Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, The Book Foundation, England, 2003, p.964, n.29 to Qur'an 58:22.

²⁰³ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, The Book Foundation, England, 2003, p.958

(*seerah*) of the Prophet (p) and his Companions; and can therefore not be justified, as this has no authoritative evidence supporting it.

On the other hand, interpreting it to refer to only hostile non-Muslims is in line with other texts that ask Muslims not to befriend or incline towards (*wala'*) those people of other faiths who fight against them on account of their faith, such as Qur'an 60:9:

“God only forbids you to turn in friendship towards those who fight against you because of (your) faith, and drive you forth from your homelands, or aid (others) in driving you forth...” (Qur'an 60:9)

While Muslims are allowed to shun or dissociate themselves from such hostile people of other faiths, other texts nonetheless show the Prophet (p) forgiving some of such people. The Qur'an also encourages thus:

“The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal. Repel (the evil) with one which is better (i.e. Allah orders the faithful believers to be patient at the time of anger, and to excuse those who treat them badly) then verily he, between whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend.” (Qur'an 41:34)

Neglecting other explicit statements of the Qur'an and hadiths related to this issue, while disregarding the principles and rules of interpretation of religious texts, only creates misinterpretations, misconceptions, unnecessary contradictions, and sometimes, dangerous conclusions which actually contradict clear and explicit texts.

A legal maxim to this effect states that “An interpretation that reconciles all relevant and authentic texts is always superior to an interpretation that gives preference to one text while setting aside other relevant and authentic texts (*Al-Jam' Awla min al-Tarjih*).”²⁰⁴ Another maxim related to this states that “Using a relevant text or statement is preferred (and superior) to abandoning it (*I'mal al-Kalam Awla min I'malih*).”²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Ibn Rushd, *Bidayah al-Mujtahid wa Nihayah al-Muqtasid*, vol.1, p.62, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah; Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, *Fath al-Bari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, Dar al-Ma'rifah, Beirut, 1379, vol. vol.9, p.474; Abu Ishaq al-Huwaini, *Durus li al-Shaikh Abu Ishaq al-Huwaini*, part.146, p.7; Al-Shatibi, *al-I'tisam*, al-Maktabah al-Tijariyyah al-Kubra, Misr, vol.1, p.247; Muhammad al-Amin bin Muhammad al-Mukhtar al-Shinqiti, *Adwa' al-bayan*, Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, 1415, vol.2, p.97

²⁰⁵ Taj al-Din Abd al-Wahhab al-Subuki, *al-Ashbah wa al-Nazahir*, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1411AH, vol.1, p.477; Al-Shatibi, *al-I'tisam*, al-Maktabah al-Tijariyyah al-Kubra, Egypt, vol.1, p.247; Abd al-Karim Zaydan, *Synopsis on the Elucidation of Legal Maxims in Islamic Law*, translated with Intro and notes by MD. Habibur Rahman Azman Ismail, Malaysia, p.15

Thus, nothing in the verse under consideration (Qur'an 58:22) teaches or supports violence or aggression towards peaceful others; or prevents Muslims from befriending people of other faiths who are not hostile or aggressive towards Islam and Muslims.

6. ***Qur'an 60:4 reads, "You have a good example in Ibrahim and his companions: They said to their people: 'We totally dissociate ourselves from you, and from the deities that you worship instead of Allah. We renounce you and there has come to be enmity and hatred between us and you until you believe in Allah, the One True God.' (But you may not emulate) Ibrahim's saying to his father: 'Certainly, I will ask pardon for you, although I have no power over Allah to obtain anything on your behalf.' (And Ibrahim and his companions prayed): 'Our Lord, in You have we put our trust, and to You have we turned, and to You is our ultimate return.'"***

Some Muslims have interpreted this verse to imply that Muslims must harbour hatred and enmity towards, and dissociate themselves from all people of other faiths, irrespective of their relationship or peaceful disposition towards them. What is the correct interpretation of this verse?

A basic knowledge of the history of the conflict between Prophet Ibrahim (p), his companions and their people, as well as the context of this verse should make it clear that there is no way Qur'an 60:4 could be interpreted to justify unprovoked enmity, hatred or aggression against non-hostile people of other faiths.

Prophet Ibrahim (p) was born into a family of idolaters in the kingdom of Babylon, and his father, Aazar, was not just an idolator, but was, in fact, an idol maker. After Ibrahim (p) was guided by God to Islamic Monotheism (*Tawheed*), and granted prophethood, he refused to worship the idols and called upon his people to abandon idol worshipping. His father and the people of his town rejected his call, and on the approval of their king Nimrod (Namruz), they

decided to punish Ibrahim by burning him alive, for disrespecting and breaking their idols. However, Allah saved Ibrahim from the fire.²⁰⁶

As it has been reiterated earlier, the verse under consideration should not be interpreted with disregard to other verses of the same chapter, its own textual and historical context, or the context of the whole Qur'an and Sunnah, while disregarding the rules and principles of interpretation of religious texts that help prevent seeming contradictions or clarify any confusions. This is especially when the Prophet (p) and his Companions actually lived to apply this particular verse. Hence, the importance of thoroughly understanding the prophetic history (*Seerah*) and what actually took place, when interpreting such a text of the Qur'an that has clear practical and social implications.

Therefore, considering the persecution and violent aggression faced by Prophet Ibrahim (p), including being thrown into the fire, it is rational that enmity and hatred grow between the two parties. Thus, it is reasonable that he and his companions should dissociate and distance themselves from such aggressors and oppressors.

It is therefore logical and justifiable that Muslims should dissociate and distance themselves from people of other faiths who persecute or are hostile towards them. However, such dissociation or enmity should not lead Muslims to become unjust or disregard Islamic values and principles. Allah says:

*“O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity; **and never let hatred of anyone lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just; this is closest to being God-conscious.** And remain conscious of God; verily, God is aware of all that you do.”*
(Qur'an 5:8)

The second part of the verse teaches that Muslims should not allow filial love for relatives to blind them from their cruelty or hostility. According to Muhammad Asad, "his filial love prevented Ibrahim from including his father in his declaration of "enmity and hatred", although later - after his father had died as an idolater - Ibrahim could not but disavow him."²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ For more on the story of Prophet Ibrahim, see Qur'an 19:42-48, 21:68-71, 9:114, 21:51, 6:74-81, 2:258, 60:4, 26:86-87, and 14:37; and the various commentaries of scholars.

²⁰⁷ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, The Book Foundation, England, 2003, p.976, n.5 to Qur'an 60:4

However, this part of the verse does not prohibit praying for guidance and forgiveness for people of other faiths, as long as they are still alive. Rather, “this prohibition relates to the dead among such sinners - i.e., those who have died without repentance (Zamakhshari, Razi) - and not to those who are still living: for "a prayer for forgiveness in respect of a living [sinner]... amounts to asking God that He grace him with His guidance... and this is permissible" (Manar XI, 60).”²⁰⁸

Generally, the whole of this chapter (Qur’an 60 – *Surah al-Mumtahinah*) deals with the relations between the Muslims and the people of other faiths, and in particular with the undesirability of relations with those enemies who were bent upon attacking and exterminating Islam, and who, not being satisfied with expelling the Muslims from their homes in Mecca, still wage war on them in their refuge in Medina.

Ibrahim’s example is quoted in the verse under consideration (Qur’an 60:4) to show that despite being loving and tender towards his people, yet, when it became clear to him that they were bent upon uprooting the Truth, even Ibrahim could not maintain relations of friendship with them. The Prophet (p) and his Companions were in like manner now obliged to renounce all relationships of friendship with a people who were not only the avowed enemies of the Muslims but were also in a state of continual war with them.

Therefore, once the context of the verse is considered, this verse can in no way be used to justify enmity, hatred, dissociation, aggression, or violence against peaceful people of other faiths.

²⁰⁸ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur’an*, The Book Foundation, England, 2003, p.317, n.148 to Qur’an 9:113

12. Living Among People of Other Faiths

The Prophet (p) is reported to have said, “*I have dissociated myself from any Muslim who stays in the mix of polytheists.*”²⁰⁹ This has been interpreted by some to mean that it is prohibited for a Muslim to associate himself with any Muslim who is living in a non-Muslim country or community, or working as a civil servant in a non-Islamic government. Some Muslims even avoid going to *Jum’ah* (Friday) prayers with such civil servants, and commencing the fast of Ramadan with them. Such associations and interactions by Muslims are seen by some as even amounting to acts of disbelief (*kufir*), since the Prophet (p) said, “*I have dissociated myself*” from such Muslims.

However, throughout the time of the Prophet (p) and his Companions, there have always been Muslim citizens living as minorities in non-Muslim societies with their religious freedoms protected. It is also well-known that historically Muslims have always lived in the midst of various people of other faiths – polytheists, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, Hindus, Buddhists, etc. - from as early as the Meccan Period of Islamic history to this day. What then could be the meaning of this hadith, and why would the Prophet (p) say such?

The hadith under consideration should not be interpreted outside its own historical context (*sabab al-wurud*) or the context of the whole Qur’an and Sunnah, while disregarding the rules and principles of interpretation of religious texts that help prevent errors or clarify any confusions. This is especially when scholars of Hadith have actually commented on the specific context of this particular hadith.

The circumstances around which this hadith was narrated (*sabab al-wurud*) make it clear that it was referring specifically to some Muslims who were living among a particular polytheist community (of Khath’am) who were at war with the Prophet (p). The Prophet (p) was making it clear that as the Head of State, he was not going to be responsible for the fate of Muslims who decided to remain among them. In the actual context of the hadith, some Muslims living among the warring polytheists actually got killed during the fighting and the

²⁰⁹ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, hadith no.2647; *Jami’u al-Tirmidhi*, hadith no.1604; *Sunan al-Nasa’i*, hadith no.6982

Prophet (p) decided at the end of it, to pay only half the value of the “blood wit” (*diyyah*) to their families, instead of the usual full amount, because it was partly their fault for remaining within that community. It is in this context that the Prophet (p) is quoted to have said that he disassociates himself from the responsibility of paying the blood money (*diyyah*) of any Muslim who decides to live among such polytheists.²¹⁰

It is clear from the actual practice and life history (*seerah*) of the Prophet (p), his Companions and the earliest generation of Muslims, that this hadith was not understood to mean that Muslims could not live among peaceful people of other faiths or vice-versa. There were many Muslims who lived as minorities at the time of the Prophet (p) and thereafter in Mecca, Abyssinia and elsewhere. Many of those who embraced Islam but who came from outside Medina were actually asked by the Prophet (p) to return to their polytheist communities to share the message of Islam with their people.²¹¹ Many of the companions of the Prophet (p) left Medina and went to places where Muslims were minorities or even absent in order to spread the message of Islam. Others throughout Islamic history went far and wide for business, political alliances, and exploration, which even facilitated the spread of Islam across the world.

This hadith, therefore, does not in any way undermine improving interfaith relations or working with non-hostile people of other faiths as was in fact done in many contexts by the Prophet (p) and the earliest Muslims.

²¹⁰ Muhammad Shams al-Haq al-Azim al-Abadiy, *‘Awn al-Ma’bud: Sharh Sunan Abu Dawud*, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1415, vol.7, p.218, no.2645

²¹¹ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 6008; *Sahih Muslim*, hadiths no. 674 and 1,865.

13. Fighting: Against Aggression, not Religious Diversity

Some Muslims and non-Muslims have concluded that the concept of *jihad* in Islamic teachings is identical with the originally Christian concept of "Holy War" – unprovoked and violent aggression against people of other faiths simply because of intolerance to religious diversity, and to spread the faith. This understanding among some Muslims naturally contributes to making people of other faiths more fearful, suspicious, and apprehensive of Muslims having access to greater political and military power. They consequently do all they can – for "security reasons" and "national interests" - to restrict the growth and influence of Muslims or Islam. This, in turn, contributes to mutual mistrust, prejudice, bridge-burning, interfaith tension, and hostility.

Is fighting, warfare (*qital/harb*), or combative *jihad* targeted against other religions and their followers, or is it against hostility and violent aggression, irrespective of faith? Is *jihad* an Islamic version of “Holy War”?

Jihad simply means to strive hard or struggle in pursuit of a just and goodly cause in a manner that is in line with the guidance of Allah (*fi sabilillah*). In Islamic teachings, it refers to the unceasing effort that an individual must make towards self-improvement and self-purification in God’s cause.

It also refers to the duty of Muslims, both at the individual and collective level, to struggle against all forms of evil, corruption, injustice, tyranny, and oppression – whether this injustice is committed against Muslims or Non-Muslims, and whether by Muslims or Non-Muslims. In this context, *jihad* may include peaceful struggle or, if absolutely necessary, armed struggle.

What should be very clear is that *jihad* cannot be reduced or restricted to simply warfare or fighting, and that the very important phrase that qualifies and determines the permissibility and acceptance of any form of *jihad* is “*fi sabilillah*” – in the way or cause of Allah, or to achieve the higher intents of Islamic teachings (*Maqasid al-Shari’ah*) – i.e. accruing benefit for all and prevention of harm from society.

***Jihad* is neither “Holy War” nor only about War**

“*Jihad*” is sometimes translated as “Holy War”, but this is a misnomer and an incorrect translation that has been very misleading. Though there were “many varying theories and forms of holy war, a defining feature of its dominant expression was that it legitimized war as a means of coercing conversion to Christianity.”²¹² In contrast, “Holy War” does not exist in the Islamic tradition, nor can the term *jihad* “be reduced to a military matter.”²¹³

“Holy war” (*al-harb al-muqaddasah*, in Arabic) is not an expression used by the Qur’anic text, the Sunnah, or Muslim theologians. Indeed, scrutiny of all relevant texts and the reasons for each of the actual battles fought during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions reveal that in Islamic theology, “war is never holy, it is either justified or not,” and if it is a “just war”, then those killed in battle are considered martyrs.²¹⁴

As stated earlier, a simple study of the areas of consensus of classical Muslim scholars regarding when warfare or fighting others is permissible, who and what is a legitimate target (i.e. when it is just to resort to war - *jus ad bellum*, in Latin), and the conduct of warfare in Islamic law (i.e. how to fight justly - *jus ad bello*), is sufficient to make clear the “Just War” concept of the military form of *jihad*,²¹⁵ and why unprovoked aggression, terrorism, and insurgency are actually regarded as punishable offences in Islamic Law.²¹⁶

***Jihad* is against Aggression, not Religious Diversity**

The proof that military *jihad* or armed conflict is only directed against aggression and oppression, and not against religious diversity is the fact that the Qur’an in numerous places very categorically states that when the enemy stops fighting or inclines to peace, Muslims are required to cease fighting and also incline to peace, and place their trust in Allah (Qur’an 2:192 and 8:61), and that “*Allah does not love aggressors*” (Qur’an 2:190).²¹⁷

²¹² Waleed Aly, *People Like Us: How arrogance is dividing Islam and the West*, Picador Pan Macmillan, Australia, 2007, p.158

²¹³ Waleed Aly, *People Like Us: How arrogance is dividing Islam and the West*, Picador Pan Macmillan, Australia, 2007, p.154

²¹⁴ Khaled Abou El Fadl, *The Place of Tolerance in Islam*, Beacon Press, Boston, 2002, p.19

²¹⁵ See Ahmed Al-Dawoody, *The Islamic Law of War: Justifications and Regulations*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2011, p.8, 11-41.; Muhammad Naqib, Ishan Jan and Abdurashid Lawan Haruna, *International Humanitarian Law*, IIUM Press, Gombak, Malaysia, 2015, pp.203-219.

²¹⁶ See Ahmed Al-Dawoody, *The Islamic Law of War: Justifications and Regulations*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2011; Khaled Abou El-Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006; Mohamed Salim El-Awa, *Punishment in Islamic Law*, American Trust Publications, USA, 1981.

²¹⁷ See also, Qur’an 4:75; 4:89-91; 2:190-193; 22:39-40; 49:9; 9:4-6; 9:12-13; and 9:123, etc.

Fight (qātilū) in the cause of God those who fight (yuqātilū) you, but do not commit aggression, for God loves not the aggressor. (Q.2:190)

But if they cease, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Q.2:192)

And fight them back (qātilū hum) until there is no oppression (fitnah) and religion is (done) for God, but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression. (Qur'an 2:193)

And if they (your enemy) incline to peace, incline you also to it, and trust in Allah. (Qur'an 8:61)

(Fight them) except those who join a people between whom and you, there is a treaty or those who come to you because their hearts restrain them from fighting you or their own people. If Allah had willed, He would have given the unbelievers power over you, and they would have fought you. Therefore, if they withdraw from you and fight you not, and instead send you guarantees of peace, know that Allah has not given you a license (to fight them). (Qur'an 4:90)

If one amongst the (combatant) polytheists asks you for asylum grant it to him so that he may hear the word of Allah and then escort him to where he can be secure: that is because they are men without knowledge. ...As long as they stand true to you, stand you true to them: For Allah does love the righteous. (Qur'an 9:6-7)

If fighting in Islamic law were directed against a people just because they are not Muslims, then Muslims would not be instructed to stop fighting them even if the non-Muslims concerned stopped, since their stopping does not mean they have become Muslims.

Muhammad Asad notes that "all Islamic jurists, without any exception, hold that forcible conversion is under all circumstances null and void and that any attempt at coercing a non-believer to accept the faith of Islam is a grievous sin."²¹⁸

Non-Combatants are not legitimate Military Targets

Additional evidence that fighting in Islamic law is only against injustice and not due to religious difference is the clear prohibition in Islamic Law, based on the Qur'an, Sunnah, and practice of

²¹⁸ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, The Book Foundation, England, 2003, p.70, n.249 to Qur'an 2:256

the Companions, of killing non-Muslims who were non-combatants - such as women, children, etc. – which is recognized and respected by all Schools of Islamic Jurisprudence.²¹⁹

For example, the Prophet (p) said, “*Never kill women and children*”²²⁰, “*Do not kill hermits*”²²¹, “*Do not slay the old and frail...*”²²², and “*Leave them (monks) and that to which they devote themselves.*”²²³ To this list, scholars add other non-combatants such as the blind, chronically ill, clergy, traders, craftsmen, farmers, the insane, peasants, serfs, etc.²²⁴ Others who can be safely included are those with amnesty or peace treaties (*mu’ahid* and *dhimmis*), Emissaries and Diplomats, etc.²²⁵

If all these categories of non-Muslims are not to be killed, then fighting any non-Muslim is not because they belong to other faiths, but because they have committed acts of aggression against Muslims. In other words, if the fighting (*qital*) form of *jihad* was a form of “holy war” and against non-Muslims simply because they had not accepted Islam, then the fact that they were women, elderly, or non-combatants, etc. would have made no difference to their being legitimate military targets.

Jihad can also be against Muslims

Moreover, the Companions demonstrated after the death of the Prophet (p), and the Jurists stipulated in their works, that fighting (*qital*) is also permitted against Muslims should they perpetrate aggression, insurgency, or injustice against fellow believers.

“If two parties among the believers fall into a quarrel, make peace between them; but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other, then fight (qātilū) against the one that transgresses until it (the transgressing party) complies with the command of Allah...” (Qur’an 49:9)

²¹⁹ Ahmed Al-Dawoody, *The Islamic Law of War: Justifications and Regulations*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2011, p.107-118; Muhammad Naqib, Ishan Jan and Abdulrashid Lawan Haruna, *International Humanitarian Law*, IIUM Press, Gombak, Malaysia, 2015, pp.203-219.

²²⁰ Imam At-Tahawy, *Shahr Ma’ani al-Athar*, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1399AH, hadith no.4770 (ed. Muhammad Zuhri al-Najjar); al-Bayhaqi, *al-Sunan al-Sugrah*, hadith no. 3894

²²¹ Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad Ahmad*, Mu’assasah al-Risalah, Beirut, 1420 A.H, vol.4, p.461

²²² Al-Bayhaqi, *al-Sunan al-Sugrah*, hadith no. 3894; al-Bayhaqi, *al-Sunan al-Kubrah*, hadith no. 17932

²²³ Abu Bakr Abd al-Razzaq, *Musannaf abd al-Razzaq*, hadith no. 9377; al-Bayhaqi, *al-Sunan al-Kubrah*, hadith no. 18614.; *Musnad Ahmad*, hadith no. 2728; al-Tabarani, *al-Mu’jam al-Kabir*, hadith no.11396; al-Bayhaqi, *al-Sunan al-Sugra*, hadith no.3893.

²²⁴ For more references and discussion, see Ibn Rushd’s *Bidayat al-Mujtahid wa Nihayat al-Muqtasid* (The Distinguished Jurist’s Primer), vol.1, 1994, pp.458-460; Ahmed Al-Dawoody, *The Islamic Law of War: Justifications and Regulations*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2011, p.107-118

²²⁵ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 3166

This is most evident in the early battles against the Khawarij and other militant Muslim factions in the past and present.²²⁶

As has been noted earlier, the pact of protection (*dhimma*) with citizens of a Muslim society but who belong to other faiths, guarantees their safety. In fact, Muslims are obliged, if necessary, to take arms and fight against whoever aggresses against them: “If the enemy of a *dhimmi* (Muslim citizen) comes with his forces to take him, it is our obligation (as Muslims) to fight this enemy with soldiers and weapons and to give our lives for him, thus honouring the guarantee of Allah and His Messenger (p). To hand him over to the enemy would mean to dishonour this guarantee.”²²⁷

In conclusion, *jihad* in Islam has nothing to do with “Holy War” and prohibits fighting others simply due to their difference in faith. Fighting, if absolutely necessary is only permissible against those who are hostile and violently aggressive against others irrespective of their faith and religious affiliation.

²²⁶ Khaled Abou El-Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006.

²²⁷ Imam Al-Qarafi, *Anwar al-Buruq fi anwa' al-Furuq*, vol.4, p.398, Maktabah al-Shamilah 3.13. As discussed earlier, Muslims are even required (based on Qur'an 22:39-40), to fight if necessary, to defend non-Muslim places of worship from being destroyed, See: Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, IIFSO, Kuwait, 1992, p. 339; Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, *Protection of Churches, Mosques, and Synagogues in Islam*, Islamic Education Trust, Minna, Nigeria, 2012, p. 6.

14. Abrogation of Verses Prescribing Friendliness

Some Muslims claim that the verses of the Qur'an prescribing fighting were revealed later in Medina, and that these verses “cancel”, “abrogate” (*naskh*) or “nullify” the relevance of all the other and often earlier verses recommending peaceful relations. The implication of this theory of “abrogation” when applied to verses related to war and peace, and relations with people of other faiths, is that there is no more a relevant basis in the Qur'an for peace-building, promoting positive interfaith relations, and limiting war. It is also why some have even claimed that Muslims can be aggressive and in a constant state of hostility with peaceful others.

Have the verses of the Qur'an prescribing friendliness with people of other faiths been “abrogated” by other verses in the Qur'an such as the so-called “verse of the sword” (i.e., Qur'an 9:5)? Is there any support for this understanding or its conclusions from the Qur'an, the tradition (*sunnah*) of Prophet (p), or his Companions?

The claim that any one of the numerous verses of the Qur'an and hadith of the Prophet (p) recommending peaceful coexistence with people of other faiths have been “abrogated”, “nullified” or made irrelevant by other texts has no support from Allah in the Qur'an itself, the authentic narrations (hadith) of the Prophet Muhammad (p), his biography and life history (*seerah*), the actions of his rightly guided Companions, or the consensus (*ijma'*) of Muslims scholars.

Such a claim also clearly contradicts what has authentically been narrated of the actual real, lived, and recorded histories of the early Muslim community and how they related with the various people of other faiths both during and after the time of the Prophet (p).

A careful analysis of the claim that verses promoting peaceful coexistence have been abrogated by others, makes it clear that such claims originate from the inability of certain scholars to reconcile what seems to them as irreconcilable conflict or contradiction (*ta'arud*) between the implications of two sets of verses – those verses related to fighting and those related to peace. To resolve the seeming contradictions between the relevant sets of verses, they have come to the conclusion that some of the verses (those prescribing peaceful coexistence as a norm) have been abrogated (*mansukh*) by those prescribing fighting or war

(*qital/harb*). This claim is in spite of the absence of any categorical evidence for it in the primary sources of law – the Qur’an or Sunnah.

The claim that the Words of Allah in the Qur’an or that an undisputedly authentic statement (*hadith*) of the Prophet (p) on any particular issue is “nullified”, “abrogated”, “neglected” or “made (legally) irrelevant” cannot be accepted without explicitly clear, categorical and definitive evidence from the Qur’an itself or from absolutely authentic (*qat’i al-thubut*) hadith supporting such a claim. The evidence cannot simply be the intellectual interpretive limits or inabilities of a particular scholar in reconciling seemingly conflicting text (*ta’arud*).

The majority of scholars who see no conflict or contradictions between the two sets of texts maintain that each verse has a context in which it is applicable and eternally relevant to the human condition – whether in times of peace or a situation of hostility and war – as demonstrated throughout the life of the Prophet (p), his Companions and Islamic history.

Examples of claimed abrogation of verses related to war and peace:

Some scholars, for example, have claimed that the verse, "*fight in the cause of God, those who fight you but do not go beyond the limits (to instigate aggression) ...*" (Qur’an 2:190) and other similar verses have been abrogated (*mansūkh*) by verses such as those in *Surah Al-Tawbah* (Qur’an 9:5). The so-called “verse of the sword” which has created a challenge for some of these scholars says:

“Once the Sacred Months are past, (and they refuse to make peace) you may kill the polytheists (mushrikun) when you encounter them, punish them, and resist every move they make. If they repent and observe the formal Prayers (Salat) and give the obligatory charity (Zakat), you shall let them go. Allah is The Forgiver, Most Merciful.” (Qur’an 9:5)

In other words, it is claimed that after the revelation of Chapter 9, and verse 5 in particular, Muslims can never have peaceful relations with any people of other faiths. They claim that Muslims are now required to engage in a permanent state of warfare or hostility against unbelievers until they embrace Islam or agree to pay the *jizya*²²⁸ poll tax. This is in spite of

²²⁸ For some discussion of this, see Dr. Monqiz As-Saqqar, *Jizya in Islam*, Translated by Hayam Elisawy, Source: http://www.irfi.org/articles/articles_1051_1100/Jizya_in_islam.htm (visited on 4/12/2013);

the fact that this interpretation has no historic precedence in the life of the Prophet (p) or his Companions to support it.

As it has been reiterated earlier, the verse under consideration (Qur'an 9:5) or any other text should not be interpreted without reference to its own textual and historical context, or the context of the whole Qur'an and Sunnah, while disregarding the rules and principles of interpretation of religious texts that help prevent seeming contradictions or clarify any confusions. This is especially when the Prophet (p) and his Companions actually lived to apply this particular verse. Hence, the importance of thoroughly understanding the prophetic history (*Seerah*) and what actually took place, when interpreting such text of the Qur'an that have clear practical and social implications.²²⁹

The following analysis of some of the “abrogating” (*nasikh*) and “abrogated” (*mansukh*) texts is intended to demonstrate the problem with the claim of abrogation as it applies to texts associated with interfaith relations, war, and peace.

Criteria for a verse to abrogate another verse

According to scholars, the criteria for such abrogation include that the abrogating verse must be revealed after the abrogated verse; the two verses must have legal applications; they should be mutually irreconcilable, and there is absolute abandonment of the previous ruling (derived from the earlier revealed verse) irrespective of the case. In other words, the abrogated verse is no longer applicable for a ruling on the subject matter. It is distinguished from a case of specification or qualification (*takhsis*) in that after a *takhsis*, a prior ruling is not totally invalid, but rather valid for more specific or narrowly defined cases.²³⁰

Sheikh Abu Ammaar Yasir Qadhi elucidates that claims of abrogation are only a last resort once all attempts to reconcile two opposing texts have been made. The two verses must oppose each other with no possibility of being valid at the same time.²³¹ “Therefore, if one of

Sheikh Khalid Abdul-Qadir, *Fiqh al-Aqalliyat al-Muslimah*, Darul-Iman, Lebanon, 1998, p.39.

²²⁹ Ahmed Al-Dawoody, *The Islamic Law of War: Justifications and Regulations*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2011, p.8, 11-41.

²³⁰ Abu Ammaar Yasir Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'aan*, Al-Hidaayah Publishing and Distribution, UK, 1999, p.250

²³¹ Abu Ammaar Yasir Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'aan*, Al-Hidaayah Publishing and Distribution, UK, 1999, p.237; Jasser Auda, *Maqasid Al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law*, IIIT, USA, 2008, p. 221-224.

the rulings can apply to a specific case, and the other ruling to a different case, this cannot be considered an example of *naskh* (abrogation).”²³²

No consensus on abrogated verses

There is no consensus among scholars as to how many verses have been abrogated by others in the Qur’an. Yasir Qadhi for instance tables the number of abrogated verses mentioned by different scholars, ranging from as many as 214 cases mentioned by Ibn Hazm to as few as 5 cases mentioned by Shah Wali Allah al-Dehlawi.²³³ Other scholars insist that there are no cases of abrogation in the Qur’an and all such examples are actually reconcilable cases of qualification or specification (*takhsis*), and that the claim of abrogation is simply a result of the inability of a particular scholar to reconcile two or more seemingly contradictory verses or texts.²³⁴ Scholars who list high numbers of abrogated verses attribute this to what they refer to as the “Verse of the Sword” (Qur’an 9:5) having abrogated the majority of the verses.

Qur’an 2:190 is not abrogated by any subsequent verse

The verse in question reads, “*And fight in the way of Allah those who fight against you, but do not transgress the limits, surely Allah does not love those who transgress the limits*” (Qur’an 2:190).

The claim of abrogation of Qur'an 2:190, in particular, has been rejected by Ibn ‘Abbas, ‘Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz, Mujahid, and others who assert that it is a firm rule (*muhkam*)²³⁵, meaning those who Muslims should fight against are those who are in a state of fighting the community.²³⁶

Imam al-Tabari also considers the claim of abrogation of Qur’an 2:190²³⁷ as not supported by any evidence from the Sunnah at the time Qur'an 9:5 was revealed, and that Qur'an 9:5 is, in fact, complementing or qualifying (*takhsis*) and not abrogating (*nasikh*) Qur’an 2:190. Tabari

²³² Abu Ammaar Yasir Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur’aan*, Al-Hidaayah Publishing and Distribution, UK. 1999, p.250

²³³ Abu Ammaar Yasir Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur’aan*, Al-Hidaayah Publishing and Distribution, UK. 1999, p.251

²³⁴ Israr Ahmad Khan, *The Theory of Abrogation: A Critical Evaluation*, Research Centre, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Malaysia, 2006

²³⁵ A legal ruling that is firmly established and that cannot be abrogated.

²³⁶ See Muhammad ibn Ahmad Al-Qurtubi, *Jami’ Ahkam Al-Qur’an*, Matba’ah Dar al Kutub al Masriyyah, Cairo, 1354/1935, vol.2, p.348

²³⁷ “*And fight in the way of Allah those who fight against you, but do not transgress the limits...*” (Qur’an 2:190).

cites the opinion of a group of scholars that says that the forbiddance of killing those that have not waged war against Muslims is still a permanently valid rule – and that “*fa la shay’in...*” (there is nothing that abrogates) the ruling of Qur’an 2:190. He mentions that Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz said those upon whom Muslims should not transgress the limits refer to women, children, and those who have not waged war on the Muslim community. This is furthermore the opinion Imam Tabari himself holds to be the best of all opinions. He cites Ibn Abbas’ explanation of the verse as follows: “*it means do not kill women, nor children, nor old people, nor those that meet you with peace and abstain from fighting you; for if you do so, know that you have transgressed beyond the limits.*”²³⁸

If there is no valid basis for the claim that Qur’an 9:5 abrogates any of the other verses related to peaceful coexistence, how then can what some view as an irreconcilable conflict in the meaning of the texts be resolved or reconciled (*jam’*)? We will proceed to analyze the verse and its own context.

²³⁸ Al-Tabari, Tafsir of Qur’an 2:190 from *Maktab al-Taalib al-Ilm*, Ariss Computers Inc., Beirut, 2002

15. Understanding the so-called “verse of the sword”

The Qur’an chapter 9, verse 5 is claimed by some scholars to have abrogated or nullified the teachings of other verses that preach peaceful co-existence with non-hostile people of other faiths. Does this verse teach or prescribe unprovoked aggression against non-Muslims?

Verses 1-7 of Surah 9 read:

“Freedom from obligation is herein issued from Allah and His Messenger to the polytheists with whom you have entered into a treaty. (Verse 1)

Therefore, roam the earth freely for four months, and know that you cannot escape from Allah, and that Allah will disgrace the disbelievers. (Verse 2)

A proclamation is herein issued from Allah and His Messenger to all the people on the great day of pilgrimage, that Allah is free from obligations to the polytheists, and so is His Messenger. Thus, if you repent, it would be better for you. But if you turn away, then know that you can never escape from Allah. And give tidings of a painful torment to those who disbelieve. (Verse 3)

Except those of the polytheists with whom you have a peace treaty and who have not violated it, nor banded together with others against you, you shall fulfill your treaty with them until the end of its term. Surely, Allah loves the righteous. (Verse 4)

*Once the Sacred Months are past, (and they refuse to make peace) you may kill the polytheists when you encounter them, punish them, and resist every move they make. **If they repent** and observe the formal Prayers (Salat) and give the obligatory charity (Zakat), you shall let them go. Allah is The Forgiver, Most Merciful. (Verse 5)*

And if any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection, so that he may hear the Word of Allah, and then escort him to where he can be secure. (Verse 6)

*Exempted are those who have signed a peace treaty with you at the Sacred Masjid. **If they honour and uphold such a treaty, you shall uphold it as well. Allah loves the righteous. (Verse 7)***

Verse 8 specifies that the polytheists who Muslims are no longer to trust with peace accords are those who show no respect for treaties or peace agreements, while verse 13 elaborates, “*Will you not fight people who violated their oaths (repeatedly), plotted to expel the Messenger, and were the first to attack you?*”

The context of the verses makes it clear that verse 5 is referring specifically to those polytheist Arabs that violated the terms of their peace treaties and who were bent on exterminating the Muslim community (i.e. those other than the ones who are referred to in verse 4). The ending of Verse 5 and the whole of verse 6, also make it very clear that some of those who fought against the Muslims, may repent and themselves become Muslims (“observing the formal prayers and giving the compulsory zakat”, etc.), while some may still remain polytheists but seek protection or asylum from Muslims (Verse 6), which must be granted. This is partly what justifies the interpolation –“(and they refuse to make peace)”- in the translation (or interpretation) of the earlier part of Verse 5 above.²³⁹

With specific reference to verses 9:12-13, Sheikh Abdul Rahman as-Sa’di explains that the context was when the Quraysh breached their peace treaty by collaborating with Banu Bakr to attack the polytheist tribe of Banu Khuza’ah, who had an alliance/treaty with the Prophet (p) and were thus the Prophet’s allies.²⁴⁰

Therefore, Qur’an 9:5, when read and understood in its own context makes it clear that it does not, and should not be used to prescribe unfriendliness, hostility, or unprovoked aggression with people of other faiths. It therefore also does not abrogate peace-building and peaceful coexistence between Muslims and others.

All texts relevant to interfaith relations, war, and peace, must be interpreted in their own specific contexts and that of the whole Qur’an and Sunnah. Such interpretations must also take cognizance of how these specific verses were understood and implemented in the lifetime of the Prophet (*seerah*) and his rightly guided companions. Not respecting these rules and principles of interpretation of the text has resulted in conclusions that contradict both the

²³⁹ See Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazali, *A Thematic Commentary of the Qur’an*, Islamic Book Trust, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 2001, p.117-183; and Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur’an*, The Book Foundation, England, 2003, pp.288-291, n.1-22 to Qur’an 9:1-15.

²⁴⁰ *Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman fi Tafsir Kalam al-Mannan*, p.291; cited by Jalal Abualrub in *Holy Wars, Crusades, Jihad*, Medina Publishers, Florida, USA, 2002, p.161

letter and the spirit of other clear and categorical texts prescribing peaceful co-existence with friendly or non-hostile people of other faiths.

The general principle with regards to relating with others is laid down in Qur'an 60:8-9 as follows:

“As for such (of the unbelievers) 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 (birr) and to behave towards them with full equity (qist): for verily, God loves those who act equitably. God only forbids you to turn in friendship towards such as fight against you because of (your) faith, and drive you forth from your homelands, or aid (others) in driving you forth: and as for those (from among you) who turn toward them in friendship, it is they, they who are truly wrongdoers!”

16. Other Commonly Misinterpreted Verses of the Qur'an on Jihad

What are some other commonly misinterpreted verses of the Qur'an relating to Jihad?

The following verses of the Qur'an are used by some Muslims and non-Muslims to justify that Islam prescribes inciting violence against people of other faiths who do not convert to Islam:²⁴¹

1) ***“And fight them until there is no fitnah and religion is for Allah.” (Qur'an 2:193)***

This quote does not report the verse in full, which reads, *“And fight them (qātilū hum) until there is no fitnah (oppression) and religion is for Allah, but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression.”* (Qur'an 2:193)

The explanation of Ibn Umar and Ibn Zubair on the meaning of this verse is that aggressors are to be fought until a Muslim is no longer threatened with killing and arrest on account of his faith.²⁴²

The context of Qur'an 2:190-193 makes it clear that those being fought against are those who are aggressive to Muslims. The phrase *“until... religion is for Allah”* means until Allah is worshipped without fear of persecution and none is compelled to bow down before another being. It has never been understood to contradict *“No compulsion in religion”* (Qur'an 2:256), nor has it abrogated any of the numerous texts in the Qur'an and hadith prescribing peace-building and peaceful co-existence.

Asad also notes that "all Islamic jurists, without any exception, hold that forcible conversion is under all circumstances null and void and that any attempt at coercing a non-believer to accept the faith of Islam is a grievous sin."²⁴³

²⁴¹ These quotes are written here as they appear in the works of Muslim extremists and non-Muslim critics of Islam. Note that in some cases, the quote is actually a misquotation of the Qur'an or misrepresents the message in its context. These will be noted as we proceed.

²⁴² Sheikh Khalid Abdul-Qadir, *Fiqh al-Aqaliyyat al-Muslimah*, Darul-Iman, Lebanon 1998. See also *al-Isabah*, vol.2, p.347

²⁴³ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, The Book Foundation, England, 2003, p.70, n.249 to Qur'an 2:256

2) ***“Strike terror (into the hearts of) the enemies of Allah and your enemies.”***
(Qur’an 8:60)

This quote is an example of selective quoting out of context. The entire passage reads, *“Let not the disbelievers think that they can get the better (of the believers); they will never frustrate (them, with aggression). Against them, make ready your strength to your utmost power, including steeds of war (horses), to strike terror (into the hearts of) the enemies of Allah and your enemies (too), and others besides whom you may not know but whom Allah does know...But if the enemy incline towards peace, you must (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah”* (Qur’an 8:59-61).

Hence, the context of the verse explains that the “enemies” being referred to, and whom believers are to strengthen themselves against - until they “*incline towards peace*” - are those already aggressive to them in one way or another, and who are attempting to frustrate the community.

The verse enjoins sufficient preparation of resources so that enemies, both known and unknown, will be deterred from attacking Muslims, through fear of the consequences.²⁴⁴ This is not just a logical and reasonable recommendation but it is also the actual practice of nations that want to deter hostile or potentially hostile others, from attacking them.

It has never been understood to contradict “*No compulsion in religion*” (Qur’an 2:256), nor has it abrogated any of the numerous texts in the Qur’an and hadith prescribing peace-building and peaceful co-existence.

3) ***“I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieved, so strike [them] upon the necks and strike from them every fingertip... It is not you who slew them, it was Allah.”*** (Qur’an 8:12-17)

First, all scholars and commentators of the Qur’an maintain that this set of verses were specifically related to the Battle of Badr between an army of about 1,000 Meccan

²⁴⁴ The “terror” towards actual or potential threat being referred to in the verse could, for instance, and where necessary, be through a “show of strength” such as by letting others know what weapons are being accumulated to strengthen one’s military capacity. It has never been understood as a justification for terrorism or aggression against innocent civilians. Such “military exercises” are common even today.

polytheists and the Muslim army of about 300, in the 2nd year after Hijrah.²⁴⁵ A basic knowledge of the history and context of this battle should make it clear that there is no way this verse could be interpreted to justify aggression against non-hostile people of other faiths.

The immigrant Muslims (*Muhajirun*) who had escaped persecution and violent aggression in Mecca were the ones who were aggressed upon. Some of them were tortured, hunted down, killed, expelled from Mecca, and had their property confiscated and used for trade by the Meccan leadership. The *Muhajirun* who were now safe in Medina tried to recover some of their own property when a major Meccan trade caravan was passing close to Medina. The caravan diverted away and escaped, but the Meccan leadership decided that they still needed to put together an army of about 1,000 to crush the group of about 300 Meccan *Muhajirun* who had come out to intercept the caravan. By God's grace and through the inspiration of the angels (mentioned in the verses), the Battle of Badr ended in a decisive victory for the Muslims, after which the *Muhajirun* then returned to Medina. It was just before fighting began in this battle that the verse in question was revealed.

Moreover, "text without context is pretext" or prejudiced. The verses from their own historic and textual context make it clear that it is not in the context of peaceful relations with others that Muslims are asked to suddenly attack people of other faiths. The verses were discussing a situation where hostilities and aggression have already begun - "*when you meet those who disbelieve advancing on a battlefield*"! Verses 15-17 also make it abundantly clear that the instructions in the verses took place in the context of the battlefield with disbelievers of the Meccan Qurayshi tribe who were present for combat. Trying to interpret the verses without due respect for the context and proper consideration of the occasion of their revelation (*sabab al-nuzul*) easily leads to misinterpretations of these verses or any other texts.

The full text reads, "*(Remember) when your Lord inspired the angels (to inform the believers), 'Verily, I am with you, so keep firm those who have believed. I shall cast*

²⁴⁵Ibn Ashur, *al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir*, Maktabah al-Shamilah, vol.6, p.169; Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, *Al-Tafsir al-Wasit*, Maktabah al-Shamilah, vol.1, p.1780; See Meraj Mohiudeen, *Revelation: The Story of Muhammad*, Whiteboard Press, USA, 2016, pp.198-211; Safy al-Rahman Mubarakfuri, *Al-Rahiq Al-Makhtum (The Sealed Nectar: Biography of the Noble Prophet)*, Dar al-Salam Publishers, Riyadh, 1996, pp.210-228; Adil Salahi, *Muhammad, Man and Prophet: A Complete Study of the Life of the Prophet of Islam*, The Islamic Foundation, Markfield, UK, 2002, pp.253-273; Tariq Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007, pp. 100-107.

terror into the hearts of those who have disbelieved, so strike them over their necks and smite over all their fingertips.’ This is because they defied and disbelieved Allah and His Messenger. And whoever defies and disobeys Allah and His Messenger, then verily, Allah is severe in punishment. This is the torment, so taste it, and surely for disbelievers is the torment of the Fire (in the Hereafter). O you who believe, when you meet those who disbelieve advancing on a battlefield, do not turn your backs to them. And whoever turns his back to them on such a day – unless it be a stratagem of war or to retreat to a troop (of believers) – he has indeed drawn upon himself wrath from Allah... You killed them not, but Allah caused them to be killed. And it was not you who cast when you did cast but it was Allah who cast, that He might test the believers by a fair trial from Him... This (is the truth), and surely, Allah weakens the deceitful plots of the disbelievers” (Qur’an 8:12-18).

Even if it is interpreted (as some have done) to mean that the angels physically engaged in combat in the Battle of Badr, verses 15-17 make it very clear that the instructions to kill took place in the context of the battlefield with disbelievers who were already present for combat.

According to Muhammad Asad in his commentary on this verse,

“The implication being that in view of God's promise of victory, no retreat is permissible. Since this verse (like the whole of this surah) relates predominantly to the battle of Badr, it may well be presumed that the above admonition forms part of the message of encouragement beginning with the words, "I am with you" (verse 12), which God commanded the angels to convey to the believers before the battle. In accordance with the didactic method of the Qur'an, however, the moral lesson contained in this verse is not confined to the historical occasion to which it refers, but has the validity of a permanent law.”²⁴⁶

Therefore, the selected texts from the verses of Qur’an 8:12-17 cannot justifiably be used as evidence to support unprovoked aggression or hostility against people of other faiths. To interpret these as such would go against the context of the verses themselves, that of

²⁴⁶ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur’an*, The Book Foundation, England, 2003, p.273, n.17 to Qur’an 8:15.

the whole Qur'an and Sunnah, and the actual lived history (*seerah*) of the Prophet (p) and his Companions.

4) ***“Fight them and Allah will punish them by your hands, cover them with shame, help you (to victory) over them, (and) heal the hearts of believers.”***
(Qur'an 9:14)

The misinterpretation of this verse (as with the case of the so-called “verse of the sword” – Qur'an 9:5) is a result of the same disregard and neglect of the full context of the verse itself. The defensive nature and non-hostile implications of the instruction in the verse to fight, becomes very clear if we start reading from the verse just before – Qur'an 9:13.

“Will you not fight people who violated their oaths, plotted to expel the Messenger, and were the first to attack you? Do you fear them? No, it is Allah who you should more justly fear if you believe. Fight them, and Allah will punish them by your hands, cover them with shame, help you (to victory) over them, (and) heal the hearts of believers.” (Qur'an 9:13-14).

Here, Allah is allaying the fear of the believers who have been persecuted and oppressed on account of their faith for a long time and encouraging them to fight back, knowing that He will aid them to victory and security. The clear text of the preceding verse also makes it obvious that those to be fought “*were the first to attack*”, and that the Muslims were, therefore, responding to violent aggression against them.

Hence, relying only on Qur'an 9:14 cannot, therefore, be justifiably used as evidence to support unprovoked aggression or hostility against people of other faiths, as that would also go against the context of the verse itself, that of the whole Qur'an and Sunnah, and the actual lived history (*seerah*) of the Prophet (p) and his Companions.

5) “O you who believe, fight the disbelievers who are nearest to you; let them find harshness (or firmness²⁴⁷) in you, and know that Allah is with those who are God-conscious (have taqwa).” (Qur’an 9:123)

This verse, similar to the previous ones from the same chapter 9 (*Surah al-Tawbah*), is meant to give courage to the believers against those who were already preparing to attack them, with the reassurance that Allah is with those who are pious. It was never understood to mean that Muslims are expected to fight all peaceful people of other faiths that they live with or are surrounded by, such as neighbours.

Fighting, in all such cases, was not on account of non-Islamic faith *per se*, but on account of the aggression and treachery initiated by certain groups against the Muslims. According to Muhammad Asad, “The reference to ‘those deniers of the truth who are near you’ may arise from the fact that only ‘those who are near’ can be dangerous in a physical sense or, alternatively, that - having come from afar - they have already approached the Muslim country with an aggressive intent.”²⁴⁸

Concerning the expected relationship between Muslims and those near to them such as neighbours, Allah says,

“Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and do good to your parents, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbour, the neighbour farther away, the companion at your side, the traveller, and those whom your right hands possess. Indeed, Allah does not like those who are self-deluding and boastful.” (Qur’an 4:36)

We also have numerous examples from the life of the Prophet (p) and his Companions about how they related with their non-hostile neighbours who belonged to other faiths.

The Messenger of Allah (p) is reported to have said, “*Whoever believes in Allah and in the Hereafter should take care of his neighbour,*”²⁴⁹ and “*Jibril continued to remind me of the neighbour’s rights till I thought he would tell me that the neighbour inherits from his neighbour.*”²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ “...and let them find you adamant ...” i.e. “Uncompromising with regard to ethical principles” - See Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur’an*, The Book Foundation, England, 2003, p.320, n.163 to Q9:123)

²⁴⁸ See Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur’an*, The Book Foundation, England, 2003, p.320, n.163 to Q9:123)

²⁴⁹ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.8, hadith no. 29 in *Alim 6.0*

²⁵⁰ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.8, hadith no. 27; See also hadith no. 28 in *Alim 6.0*

It is reported on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah (p) said, “*He who believes in Allah and the Last Day should either utter good words or better keep silent; and he who believes in Allah and the Last Day should treat his neighbour with kindness and he who believes in Allah and the Last Day should show hospitality to his guest.*”²⁵¹

Anas ibn Malik narrated that, “Allah’s Messenger (p) had a neighbour who was Persian [a Zoroastrian], and he was an expert in the preparation of soup. He prepared (soup) for Allah’s Messenger (p) and then came to him to invite him (to a meal)... Then he accepted his invitation, and both of them (the Prophet (p) and Aisha) set out and went to his house.”²⁵²

Similarly, Mujahid narrated that Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-‘As slaughtered a sheep and said, “Have you presented a gift from it to my neighbour, the Jew, for I heard the Apostle of Allah (p) say, ‘*Jibril kept on commending the neighbour to me such that I thought he would make him an heir*’?”²⁵³

In a similar vein, the Maliki jurist, Shihab al-Din al-Qarafi said:

“The covenant of protection imposes upon us certain obligations toward *ahl al-dhimmah*. They are our neighbours, under our shelter and protection upon the guarantee of Allah, His Messenger (p), and the religion of Islam. Whoever violates these obligations against any of them by so much as an abusive word, by slandering his reputation, or by doing him some injury or assisting in it, has breached the guarantee of Allah, His Messenger (p), and the religion of Islam.”²⁵⁴

Therefore, the verse in question (Qur’an 9:123) cannot justifiably be used as evidence to support unprovoked aggression or hostility against people of other faiths. To attempt such would go against the context of the verse itself, that of the whole Qur’an and Sunnah, and the actual lived history (*seerah*) of the Prophet (p) and his Companions.

²⁵¹ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no.6018; *Sahih Muslim*, hadith no.182; *Musnad Imam Ahmad*, hadith no.9967; *Sunan Abu Dawud*, hadith no.5156.

²⁵² *Sahih Muslim*, hadith no.958, in *Alim 6.0*

²⁵³ *Abu Dawud*, hadith no. 2446 in *Alim 6.0*

²⁵⁴ Al-Qarafi, *Al-Furuq*, vol.3, p.14, cited in Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Non-Muslims in Islamic Society*, p.12

17. Islam: Spread by the Sword?

The Prophet (p) is reported to have said, “I have been ordered to fight (*qaatal*) the people until they say, “There is none worthy of worship but God.””²⁵⁵ Some interpret this hadith to mean that Muslims are enjoined to continue to wage war against people of other faiths until they accept Islam, whether by choice or force. Thus, it is sometimes concluded that Islam was spread by the sword.

What is the correct interpretation of this hadith?

The misinterpretation of this hadith comes from not appreciating or sufficiently respecting some of the most basic rules of verb conjugation in Arabic grammar and morphology (*sarf*).

The Arabic word in this hadith is not “*qatl*” (“fight” or “kill”) but “*qaatal*,” which means “to fight back” – a meaning more ambiguous than “*qatl*” which implies proactivity and taking the first initiative. The word “*qaatal*” implies reciprocity, and thus may not be used for a scenario where one initiates an attack without provocation. The hadith literally, therefore, is saying “I have been ordered to fight back ...” and not “I have been ordered to initiate fighting...”! This point of grammar is sufficient to refute the interpretation that tries to use the hadith to support unprovoked and proactive hostility against others.

The misinterpretation of this hadith also comes from interpreting it without due respect to other relevant texts in the Qur’an and hadith, and what the recorded history (*Seerah*) of the Prophet (p) and his earliest companions shows regarding how they actually understood and implemented this hadith.

The interpretation of this hadith (or any other) cannot be valid if the conclusion clearly contradicts the explicitly categorical injunctions of Allah in the Qur’an or other numerous authentic hadiths. This hadith cannot thus be interpreted in such a way as to contradict the many clear injunctions of the Qur’an and *Sunnah* that categorically prohibit fighting non-combatant people of other faiths. Such injunctions include:

²⁵⁵ *Sahih al-Bukhari (Abridged)*, vol.4, no.196; Zaki al-Din al-Mundhiri, *Mukhtasar Sahih Muslim*, ed. Nasiruddin al-Albani, Al-Maktab al-Islami wa Dar al-Arabiyyah, 1972, p.8

Fight (qatilu, in Arabic) in the cause of God those who fight (yuqatilu) you, but do not commit aggression, for God loves not the aggressor. (Q.2:190)

“And fight them (qatilu hum) until there is no fitnah (oppression) and religion is for Allah, but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression.” (Qur’an 2:193)

“And if any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection, so that he may hear the Word of Allah, and then escort him to where he can be secure.” (Qur’an 9:6)

(Fight them) except those who join a people between whom and you, there is a treaty or those who come to you because their hearts restrain them from fighting you or their own people. If Allah had willed, He would have given the unbelievers power over you, and they would have fought you. Therefore, if they withdraw from you and fight you not, and instead send you guarantees of peace, know that Allah has not given you a license (to fight them). (Qur’an 4:90)

The Prophet Muhammed (p) is also reliably cited as saying, “Never kill women, children, and the old weakened with age”, “Do not kill hermits”, “Do not slay the old and decrepit...”, and “Leave them (monks) and that to which they devote themselves.” To this list, scholars add other non-combatants such as the blind, chronically ill, the insane, servants, slaves, peasants, serfs, etc.²⁵⁶

Some scholars have interpreted the hadith under discussion as permitting aggression towards the same polytheists referred to in Qur’an 9:5 (discussed earlier), but they also restrict it to only the polytheist Arabs (*mushrikun*) of that context who, at the time of the Prophet (p), were notorious for breaking their treaties and continuously fighting and conspiring against the Muslim community. This is based on the understanding that the fighting enjoined in Qur’an 9:5 was only in respect of aggressive polytheist Arabs, and thus not applicable to non-Arab polytheists, “People of the Book”, Sabians, etc.²⁵⁷ Even then, the interpretation of the hadith cannot be extended to also imply permission to kill polytheist women, the elderly,

²⁵⁶ For further references and discussion, see Ibn Rushd’s *Bidayat al-Mujtahid wa Nihayat al-Muqtasid* (The Distinguished Jurist’s Primer), vol.1, 1994, pp.458-460; Ahmed Al-Dawoody, *The Islamic Law of War: Justifications and Regulations*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2011, p.8, 11-41; Muhammad Naqib, Ishan Jan and Abdulrashid Lawan Haruna, *International Humanitarian Law*, IIUM Press, Gombak, Malaysia, 2015, pp.203-219.

²⁵⁷ See Louay Safi, *Peace and the Limits of War: Transcending Classical Conception of Jihad*, IIIT, Herndon, USA, 2001, pp.12-15, citing authorities such as Abu Hanifa, al-Shafi’i, Malik, and Abu Yusuf.

children, those who uphold their treaties, and other non-combatants as is clear from the context of Qur'an 9:5-6 as discussed earlier. The fact that there is no supporting historical record (*seerah*) that the Prophet (p) ordered Muslims to fight non-combatant polytheists unless they embraced Islam, makes it abundantly clear that the hadith in question was not understood in any way that contradicted the usual ethics of a just war (*qital/harb*) in Islamic law.

The second part of the hadith under consideration conveys the sacredness of the declaration of faith in One God (*shahadah*) - *'There is none worthy of worship but God'* - since it is just one of the reasons, and by no way, the only reason, to cease fighting as is clear from other numerous texts from the Qur'an and hadith. Other means or reasons to end fighting listed in the Qur'an include: surrendering or seeking peace (Qur'an 8:61, 2:193), seeking Muslim protection (Qur'an 5:6), becoming a citizen, and paying the *jizyah* or 'military exemption tax' (Qur'an 9:29), etc. This understanding has also been demonstrated by the Prophet (p) in another hadith where he chastised a believer for killing an enemy in battle after the enemy uttered the declaration of faith on the brink of being defeated.²⁵⁸

Muhammad Asad notes that "all Islamic jurists, without any exception, hold that forcible conversion is under all circumstances null and void and that any attempt at coercing a non-believer to accept the faith of Islam is a grievous sin."²⁵⁹

Like any other hadith or verse of the Qur'an, the hadith under consideration cannot be interpreted outside the context of the whole Qur'an and Sunnah, neglecting other explicit statements in the Qur'an and hadith on this issue, and disregarding the rules and principles of interpretation of religious texts.

Furthermore, and in the absence of any categorical authority from Allah or His Messenger (p), it would be wrong to try and conclude that this hadith (or any other hadith) in any way abrogates or supersedes any of the very explicit Qur'anic verses on this topic – such as *"There is no compulsion in religion"* (Q2:256).

²⁵⁸ *Sahih Bukhari*, Dar Ibn Kathir, Al-Yamamah/Beirut, 3rd ed., 1407A, hadith no.2651; *Sahih Bukhari*, Dar Ibn Kathir, Al-Yamamah/Beirut, 3rd ed., 1407A, hadith no.4021

²⁵⁹ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, The Book Foundation, England, 2003, p.70 n.249 to Qur'an 2:256