

# WHAT IS JIHAD

'Jihad' is one of the most widely used, abused and misunderstood Arabic words in the world. The term 'Jihad' is used in all types of media ranging from television, radio and print media to conjure up images of fighting, violence or killing people. Some have incorrectly defined the word 'Jihad' as 'spreading Islam by the sword' or 'Holy War'. The ideology of Holy war was first conceived by the Crusaders and not of Islamic origin. Furthermore, there exists no evidence within the Qur'aan or the teachings of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) to suggest 'Jihad' is intended as Holy war against non-Muslims, as is meant in the above context. In fact, Islam actually condemns taking the life of an innocent person (be it a Muslim or non-Muslim) and considers it to be a major sin and crime, which is severely punishable under Islamic law.

Allah says in the Qur'aan (Koran) "...whosoever killed a person - unless it be for killing a person or for creating disorder in the land - it shall be as if he had killed all mankind; and who-so gave life to one, it shall be as if he had given life to all mankind" [Qur'aan Ch5:V32]

The confusion surrounding the term Jihad can be eradicated by looking closely at the actual definition of the term. The word Jihad stems from the Arabic root word 'J-H-D', which literally means "to struggle" or "to strive". There are many forms of Jihad but the most important ones are; 'Jihad al-Nafs' (Jihad against one's self), 'Jihad bil-Lisaan' (by being vocal against evil), 'Jihad bil Yaad' (Jihad by using action against evil and oppression), each type of Jihad is ranked differently.

Jihad is not about killing people but denotes any type of striving or positive struggle, whether it be a teacher who is teaching ; a person helping the poor or the elderly; parents helping their children in learning good virtues; a person involved in charity is also performing jihad. Fighting to protect and defend the innocent by eradicating oppression and tyranny is also a form of jihad, be it by actions, words or in combat. The Qur'aan also teaches humanity to stand up for justice against atrocities or injustice even if against one's own family or in favour of one who you dislike.

Any struggle encountered in day to day life to please Allah (God) can be considered 'Jihad'.

"O you who have attained faith! Be ever steadfast in your devotion to Allah (God), bear witness to truth in all equity; and never let the hatred of anyone lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just: this is the closest to being God-conscious." [Qur'aan Ch5:V8]

Another factor that needs to be considered in removing confusion surrounding the term is the context in which the word is used in the Qur'aan. On the one hand the Qur'aan uses the term to describe events that were taking place at the time and revelations through the Prophet (peace be upon Him) in response to those events. Whilst on the other hand it was meant as instruction for future generations to view 'Jihad' as struggle of the soul in everyday life to please Allah, not as instruction to go to Holy war as is constantly repeated by the media. It is easy to pull words out of context when dealing with religious scriptures.

