

## Interpretation of Jihad in the Qur'an and the Bible

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and published in Bangladeshi daily  
"The Independent" on October 16 & 17, 2006

Pope Benedict XVI blamed Islam for conception of Jihad and assured that God does not like violence and violence is incompatible with the nature of God. Most Western scholars and thinkers may agree with the Pope. According to their view, Islam teaches its followers to be non-tolerant for other religions. It orders Muslims to wage 'Jihad' against non-Muslims and kill them. As a gesture of nobility the Pontiff expressed his regret for his comment. But his regret will not end the confusion and misunderstanding of his supporters. They will insist that 'Jihad' in Islam is really a bad and irrational thing. Some of them may acknowledge that Islam teaches many good things, but Islamic concept of Jihad has something wrong that may lead to hostility or militancy.

We may not proclaim that the Pope and his supporters are 'anti-Muslim' or their hatred or animosity toward Islam led them to such conclusion. It may not their hatred, but their ignorance of Islam and Muslims that led them toward such conclusion. They may have heard or read some quotation from the holy Qur'an about Jihad against unbelievers or infidels and understood that Islam advocates preaching of religion through violence.

The problem is not in quotation, but in interpretation. Not only the Qur'an, but the holy Bible also orders for Jihad or war against unbelievers in a way a non Christian reader may understand that the Bible teaches violence, hatred and intolerance.

Bible says: "Kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves." The Bible, Numbers 31/17-18.

Here a reader may understand that God orders for Genocide and holocaust. Everybody agrees that sometimes war may be inevitable. Where there is a state, there must be some options for war to protect the sovereignty and interests of the state and its people. All peace loving people may agree to this extent, but they always try to avoid war. In case of war they try to avoid harming non-combat people and consider such atrocities as war crimes. But here God commands to kill all non-combat male, female and children, except young unmarried woman for the entertainment of that holy people.

God says: "And when the LORD the God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword; but the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the LORD thy God hath given thee. Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations. But of the cities of these which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth; but thou shalt utterly destroy them." The Bible, Deuteronomy 20/13-16.

Here a reader may claim that God encourages His devotees to occupy land of other people and to free that occupied land from the poison of infidels and unbelievers He orders for wholesale destruction by killing every human being and every breathing animal.

God says: "He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed". Exodus 22/20.

It may be interpreted as an open license for indiscriminate killing of all non-Jewish or non-Christian people.

He also says: "For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off. Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images." (Exodus 23/23-24)

He also says: "Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee: But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves". (Exodus 34/12-14)

A reader may understand that it is a Divine instruction to deny religious freedom and liberty to non-Jewish and non-Christians. He may fill that God loves violence towards unbelievers and pagans. So He orders His people to be violate and non-tolerant towards them.

It may be mentioned that all these are irrevocable Divine orders to be fulfilled as Jesus says: " For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law (Torah), till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven". Matthew 5/18-19.

James says: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." James 1/17.

From these quotations one may conclude that God orders to kill every infidel, destroy their religious institutes and deny their religious freedom. He may also claim that for this open license Christian churches and government throughout the history killed millions of Jews, Muslims, so called witches and so called 'heretics'. He may also understand that for these Divine instructions they are killing hundreds of thousands of innocent people in Iraq and elsewhere.

As we stated before, war may be inevitable to protect sovereignty and interests of people and state. In the case of war peace-loving people try to make war less destructive. But from numerous quotations of the Bible one may claim that the holy prophets of God were not eager to make war less destructive. On the contrary, they were eager to fulfill such divine orders of wholesale killing and destruction. We find stories of such genocide and massacre in many books of the holy Bible. In 1 Samuel we find an example of such massacre: "And David and his men went up, and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those nations were of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt. And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive....". 1 Samuel 27/8-9.

Another example of massacre and brutal killing: "And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it... And he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brickkiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon". 2 Samuel 12/29-31.

God says: "My servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes". I King 14/8.

Here a reader may conclude that all such massacre and holocaust of David are

considered right and praiseworthy by God.

In his letter to Hebrews St. Paul says: "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." Hebrews: 11/32-34.

Here the reader may understand that Paul praises such massacres and brutal killings by David and other Prophets of God.

Matthew says: "And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." Matthew 15:22-26

A prejudiced reader may conclude here that this is the philosophy for such brutality and violence. The non-Jewish or non-Christian people are sub-human beings like dogs. These dogs may be provided with help or assistance if that does not harm the 'children of God'. If the interests of the children contradict those of the dogs, then the dogs may be mercilessly killed.

Mr. Pope and his supporters will conform that the above mentioned verses are correctly quoted from the holy Bible, but they may not agree to the interpretation and conclusion. They may brand such explanation and conclusion as biased, prejudiced or intentional misinterpretation. Out of their ignorance or biased mentality they are doing the same in interpreting 'Jihad' of Islam.

Jihad in Islam is nothing but 'state war'. Even 'holy war' is not the meaning of 'Jihad'. Both 'crusade' and 'holy war' are pure Christian terms invented by Christian popes to encourage Christians to invade Muslim countries. Jihad in Islam means endeavor. In political term it means 'war against enemies of the Muslim State'. Generally the enemies of the Muslim states are non-Muslims. This is why state enemies are termed as non-believers or infidels. But it does never mean that the Qur'an gives open license to kill infidels like the holy Bible. There are many preconditions for Jihad, such as:

(1) Statehood and order of the head of the state, (2) being attacked by the enemies, (3) accepting every opportunity of peace, (3) limiting the war only in combatant enemies, etc.

People of Madina embraced Islam through absolutely peaceful propagation and they chose Muhammad (Peace and Blessings be upon him) as head of their state. When Muslims of Madina were attacked by their enemies, God permitted them to fight. God says in the Qur'an: "To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged; and verily, Allah is Most Powerful for their aid." (Sura Hajj XXII: 39)

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) says: "Head of the state is the shield behind whom war to be waged" (Bukhari & Muslim)

The Qur'an says: "But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah: for He is the One that Heareth and Knoweth (all things)". (Sura Anfal VIII: 61)

Allah says in the Qur'an: "Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors" (Sura Baqara II: 190)

So war must be limited with combatant enemies of the state. Even in the battlefield it is prohibited for a Muslim fighter to kill a woman, child, sick, old man, monk or any non-combat person. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) says: "In the name of Allah and for His cause you fight, do not break faith, do not kill any woman, child, sick or old man, do not mutilate any human body, do not destroy any well, do not cut any tree except that prevent you from your enemy, do not kill an animal except for use and be friendly and merciful, for Allah loves those who are merciful." (Abu Daud, Baihaqi)

One may compare these Islamic instructions about 'Jihad' with above mentioned Biblical instructions to kill every male, female, children and even every breathing animal. One may also compare between the wars of Biblical prophets and those of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). I think no reasonable person can deny that Islamic concept and practice of Jihad meets the modern concept of war. Nobody can imagine a state without option of war. We may all agree that the doctrine of wholesale forgiveness, such as "whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" is to be followed in personal affairs, not in state affairs. We may not ask any state to leave its duty to defend sovereignty and security of its people. When a state is attacked by its enemies, we can not ask it to open its another frontier for the enemy. All we can do to keep war- when it is inevitable- as less destructive as possible and prevent targeting non-combatant people. This is the Jihad doctrine of Islam.

Islam prohibits violence, hatred and force in religion. There may be war for this reason or that, but not a single Muslim can ever think of insulting other people's religion or to force someone to embrace Islam. Allah says: "Revile not ye those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance. Thus have We made alluring to each people its own doings. In the end will they return to their Lord, and we shall then tell them the truth of all that they did." (Sura An'am VI: 108)

He says: "And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury); but say, "We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; our God and your God is One; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam)." (Sura Ankabut XXIX: 46)

He says: "Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects Evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things". (Sura Bakara II: 256)

Before coming of the Prophet (ﷺ) to Madina a number of youth of Madina embraced Judaism. When their parents embraced Islam, they wanted to forcibly convert them to Islam. The Prophet did not let them to do so. He said, No compulsion in Faith. So let them follow the religion of their own choice. (Tabari, Ibn Kasir, Ibn Hibban)

Nowadays we hear some western secular pundit calling to 'convert Muslims to Christianity.' We find some American or European well-learned secular politicians and scholars are eager to destroy Muslim Holy Places in Makkah and Madina for crime of unknown Muslim terrorists of Afghanistan or Iraq. Celebrated conservative columnist and commentator Ann Coulter wrote "we should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity." It is very likely that these famous and distinguished politicians and columnists will become policy makers of USA or other countries.

A few misguided and deviated Muslim youth may be involved in violence. They

may wrongly call their violence and terror activities as 'Jihad'. They are not waging their so-called 'Jihad' to occupy other people's land or to convert other people to Islam. They are doing so to protest occupation of their land, express their anger or to revenge killing of their people. Certainly they are wrong in the way of protest and we condemn their terror activities. All Muslim states and organizations are condemning them. Not a single Muslim state or any known Muslim organization is supporting violence.

On the other hand Mr. Bush and his supporters are involved in crusade and violence in the name of God. Mr. Bush told us that it is God who instructed him to invade Iraq. Mr. Blair also put the burden on God. We can not, or at least, should not condemn them, because they have very noble cause for killing of thousands of human beings, including indiscriminate killing in Faluja and other places. But we are really horrified, frightened and shocked with the philosophy of forcible conversion!

We see that the most ignorant and violent Muslim terrorists are not going to insult other people's religion. The people of Mr. Pope desecrated the holy book of Muslims and they made insulting cartoons of the holy Prophet of Muslims. Muslims all over the world protested such actions. They burnt US or Danish flags or effigies of their politicians. But we did not hear a single illiterate mullah of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, India or any other country burnt or insulted a copy of the Bible or an effigy of Jesus Christ, or made insulting cartoon of Jesus.

We do not find any ignorant and violent mullah is asking to convert any Christian to Islam. Such an ignorant mullah may ask to kill Mr. Bush, not for being a Christian or an American, or a defender of freedom and democracy, but for being occupier of their land and killer of their people. He may ask destruction for America or Israel, also for the same reason, not for being a democratic state, or for religion of the people of America or Israel. But he will never ask to kill Christians or convert them to Islam.

In light of the above we hoped and expected that Mr. pope say to Mr. Bush that God can not order you to kill thousands of human being in Iraq. He should have told his own people that killing and forcible conversation is not the way of God. But his statement did not fulfil our expectation. He condemned Islam for violence, but did not ask Christians to shun violence.

We do not know the reason. Some may suggest that it is because the non-Jewish or non-Christian people are dogs as described by Jesus Christ. Violence against dogs is not good, but it is not so horrible. But violence against human beings or children of God is horrible. This is why Mr. Pope advised Muslims only. We can not agree with such a view. We hope that Mr. Pope will clarify the reason.