

## Key concepts

- There are different meanings of the term jihad, which is considered one of the most important aspects of Islam, after the main beliefs. Muslims refer to the greater and lesser jihad, and some to the jihad of the tongue, as well as that of the sword.
- Military jihad was used in the time of Muhammad as a defensive war under certain conditions. The term has been used controversially by Muslims in some parts of the world, and opposed by others, leading to the question of its relevance.

- At times during the life of Muhammad, he called on Muslims to wage jihad. This included to oppose the Makkans and to take part in the Battle of Badr. In the history of Islam, Muslim Caliphs expanded the Islamic Empire and sometimes called their military activities jihads, or holy wars, done in the name of Islam.
- However, the Qur'an insists that no one can be forced to become a Muslim. Muhammad strived for Islam and most of the time that was through doing peaceful activities and building up the strength of the Muslims. Striving peacefully is also a jihad.
- Muslim scholars have sometimes referred to the jihad of the tongue, meaning a Muslim can talk and persuade others of what is wrong. Sufis refer to the jihad of the nafs, the inner jihad or struggle with the ego and the struggle to avoid temptation and follow the commands of Islam.

- Modern day acts of terrorism have been committed by some people of Muslim background who claim to be doing so for Islam. These have received widespread coverage in the media giving the impression that military or lesser jihad is a feature of Islam today, despite the protests of a great majority of Muslims that such acts were done 'not in my name'.
- Scholars such as Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri have written about the true meaning of lesser jihad and the very limited circumstances that it might be carried out: as a last resort, in defence, called by a Muslim ruler; not involving women and children or weapons of mass destruction.
- Some rule out lesser jihad nowadays. Others saw the struggle against imperialism and then the Arab Spring as a jihad against oppression.

## Key quotes

- 'There shall be no compulsion in religion.' (The Qur'an Sura 2.256, Yusuf Ali)
- 'We reject violent jihad. We believe we must target the ideology of violent Islamist extremism in order to liberate individuals from the scourge of oppression and terrorism both in Muslim-majority societies and the West.' (Muslim Reform Movement)
- 'Jihad ... for most Muslims, means perseverance, endurance, and exertion towards excellence.' (Khaled Abou El Fadl)
- 'Whoever kills a person unjustly...it is as though he has killed all mankind. And whoever saves a life, it is as though he had saved all mankind.' (The Qur'an sura 5.32, Yusuf Ali)
- 'Shall I tell you what is better for you than spending gold and silver, and better than fighting your enemy?' They said: 'Of course.' He said, 'The remembrance of Allah.' (Hadith of Prophet Muhammad)

## Key words

Jihad	Mujahedeen	Nafs	Mujahid
Bid'ah	Anti-Semitism	Banu Nadir	Banu Qaynuqa
Battle of Badr	Muslim brotherhood	Pacifism	Xenophobia
Greater Jihad	Lesser Jihad		

## Issues for analysis and evaluation

### Key questions, arguments, and debates

1. To what extent is the term 'jihad' misunderstood?  
Is jihad and terrorism seen as the same thing? To what extent are misunderstandings down to the media and to what extent due to the way Muslims present the issues themselves? How far do people really understand the inner struggle which some Muslims refer to as their personal jihad?
2. Are teachings about lesser jihad relevant today?  
Is there any place for violent jihad in the modern world, even as a last resort? How should Muslims respond to the issue of pacifism?  
Some argue that pacifism is incompatible with Islam, others that it may be helpful. There are a variety of views on lesser jihad, with many placing peaceful striving and explanation of views to gain support peacefully as an appropriate interpretation of the word today.