

# COMBATTING 21ST CENTURY VIOLENT EXTREMISM

## TERRORISM, ISIS, AL-QAEDA IN IRAQ AND SYRIA

**A Must Read:**  
The Islāmic Salafī  
position towards  
extremist insurgents  
in light of Quranic  
and Prophetic  
teachings.



EXTREMISTS

## 1. The Message of Islām

The most important aspect of Islām and the greatest of its fundamentals is the call to the worship of Allāh, Almighty God, without associating partners with Him in any aspect of one's worship. This was the starting point of the call of the Messengers, from Noah to Moses to Jesus and finally, Muḥammad (ﷺ). Allāh has stated: "We sent a Messenger to every nation proclaiming: Worship Allāh alone and leave the worship of the false deities" (Qur'ān, 16:36).

## 2. Salafī Islām Demands That The Muslims Deal Justly And Kindly With The Non-Muslims

Allāh has stated in the Qur'ān: "Allāh does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who did not fight against you on account of religion, and they did not drive you out of your homes. Indeed, Allāh loves those who deal with equity. It is only as regards to those who have fought against you on account of the religion, have driven you out of your homes, and have helped to drive you out, that Allāh forbids you to befriend them" (Qur'ān, 60:8-9). The Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) explained to his Disciples that which was revealed in the Qur'ān, and they in turn, acted in accordance with that. The Prophet (ﷺ) would engage the enemy in battle, but he would always maintain justice. He would never harm women, children and non-combatants, and he forbade others from that. He would sometimes establish treaties with the severest of enemies, hoping that some good would result from it. He made peace treaties with the Jews of Madinah, the Idol-worshippers of Makkah and the Christians. These are undeniable facts. Islām is not, as is asserted by some, a blood-thirsty religion, nor does Islām desire fighting just for the sake of fighting. Unfortunately, the modern-day "Extremist-Islamists" have marred the beauty of Islām, distorted the concept of Jihād and turned countless people away from looking into the true message of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ). "Indeed, in the Messenger of Allāh, you have a fine example" (Qur'ān, 33:21).

## 3. Jihād In Islām Has Clear Guidelines

Jihād in Islām is of various types, and from them is Jihād upon the battlefield in a conventional just war. The following are some of the important principles and guidelines of Jihād as stated by the Salafī scholars:

1-War is declared by leaders and governments, not by individual citizens, or insurgents and preachers from the pulpits, or through social media! These independent declarations of Jihād and warfare carry no legitimacy in Islām. An example of a legitimate declaration of war was the first Gulf War in 1990-91 after Kuwait was invaded by the Iraqi army under the leadership of Saddam Hussein. So Saudi Arabia defended its borders by the use of its recruited army in an alliance with other countries.

2-The Muslim enrolls himself into a legitimate army that is governed by a ruler of a Muslim country, who has authority and

the apparatus of government. Militias and insurgencies have no legitimacy or legal authority.

3-The Muslim army (under legitimate leadership) must have the ability and the necessary strength to fight, or to repel an attack if they are defending their land. If it does not have the necessary ability, then it does not engage the enemy in battle. In such a situation, the Muslims are permitted to retreat and initiate peace treaties.

4-Non-combatants are not killed or harmed in conflicts and battles. This includes women, children, monks, emissaries, teachers, nurses, doctors, aid workers and others. The Jihadist claim that all non-Muslims are legitimate targets runs contrary to Islamic teachings.

5-It is permitted for governments of Muslim countries to make peace treaties with non-Muslims for the general benefit of their populations, and to cease hostilities. The people are bound by these treaties, and they cannot violate them. This is regardless of whether the rulers over the Muslims are pious or oppressive. It is not permitted to harm those under a pact of protection. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: “Whoever kills a non-Muslim who is under an agreement will not smell the fragrance of Paradise.”

6-Jihād is conducted for Almighty God alone for His religion, sincerely and truthfully seeking His pleasure, based upon clear textual guidelines. One does not fight Jihād for personal gain, or tribalism, or wealth, or political partisanship, or nationalist causes, or for quenching blood-thirst, or to rape and pillage, or for repute, fame and adventure.

“Whoever kills a non-Muslim who is under an agreement will not smell the fragrance of Paradise” (Reported by al-Bukhārī)

#### 4. Jihād In The View Of The Extremists

“So there are extremists who obligate Jihād in any and every situation, without applying any pre-conditions or principles. They do so even if the Muslims are weak and powerless, and even if they do not have a ruler over them. So each one fights the “enemy” and engages in battles and skirmishes without a legitimate rulership, and they kill the non-Muslims whom it is not permissible to kill. They kill people who have a treaty with the Muslim countries, and they kill those who are protected by agreements and covenants. So this is extremism and not Jihād. Rather, these extremists go even further by blowing up homes, residential buildings and built-up areas of cities. They kill Muslims and non-Muslims, young and old, males and females, mercilessly. They put terror and fear into the Muslims and non-Muslims who live under the protection of the Muslim governments. Then they have the audacity to call that Jihād! Rather,

that is corruption and not Jihād. They draw the Muslims into evil, destruction and ruination. Jihād has pre-conditions and governing principles that are made clear in the books of Qur'anic commentary, Prophetic tradition and Islamic jurisprudence" (Abridged from the speech of Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Fawzān, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia).

**“If they ever gained strength, they would surely corrupt the whole of the earth, including Iraq and Syria. They would not leave alone a child, whether male or female, neither a man or a woman. This is because as far as they are concerned the people have caused corruption. A corruption that cannot be fixed except by mass killing!”**

(Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah*, 10/584–585)

## 5. The Unrelenting Slaughter In Syria And Iraq In The Name Of Jihād Is Not Jihād

The appearance of the ideology of ISIS, ISIL or al-Qaeda in Iraq in the 21st century is not actually a new phenomenon. Muslim governments over centuries have encountered these types of rebellious movements known in Islamic terminology as the Kharijites. Along with the Shi'ites (embodied in the modern-day Iranian regime), these Kharijites have never recognized any legitimacy except their own. Their goal being to seize power and to establish a regime of merciless brutality, in the name of “justice”! The great Syrian Salafī scholar and historian, Ibn Kathīr, who died over seven centuries ago, penned the following words that resonate strongly in our times, and one senses the deep insight of this scholar. He said regarding the Kharijites: “If they ever gained strength, they would surely corrupt the whole of the earth, including Iraq and Syria. They would not leave alone a child, whether male or female, neither a man or a woman. This is because as far as they are concerned the people have caused corruption. A corruption that cannot be fixed except by mass killing!” (See *al-Bidāyah*, 10/584–585). This is a bleak reminder of what can befall nations if these extremists are allowed to flourish without restraint. And today, we are witnessing the fulfilment of these words of Ibn Kathīr at the hands of ISIS and other Jihadist insurgencies in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere. These murderers who, in the name of Islām, have instituted the mass killing of people on the basis that rectification cannot take place except by the death of the masses. The killing perpetrated by ISIS, al-Qaeda and other extremist groups is worse than the murder committed by the sinners, because the sinners do not claim that they have license to kill from God, whilst the extremists claim that God Almighty Himself has commanded them with this slaughter, and

therefore, they believe they are doing God's work! For this reason, the response to this extremist ideology must be well thought out, robust, and rooted in Islamic doctrine. At the theological level, the extremists must be combatted with Qur'anic and Prophetic narrations, backed up by the sayings and writings of the earliest generations of Muslim scholars. This has a two-fold effect. Firstly: It helps to shut down the Jihadist propaganda machine that claims to be following the Qu'rān and the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) (which is, of course, untrue). Secondly: When unsuspecting Muslim youth, especially in the West, hear and read these refutations, they will see through the false arguments of the extremists.

**“They permitted the killing of children, yet they did not allow the eating of any fruits from trees without paying for it! They tired themselves out with worship, and would frequently stay awake, yet they raised their swords against the Muslims. Even Satan himself could not have imagined the extent of their evil!”**

(Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, p. 91)

## **6. Recognizing An Extremist Or One Who Is Being Groomed Into Violent Extremism**

There are certain signs and signals that are apparent in an extremist that are recognizable for the one who knows what to look for. Recognizing these signs is essential in combating radicalization of Muslim youth in the West. To list just a few of those traits:

1-They focus the youth constantly upon the political situation of the Muslim regimes and the Middle East, and make that the centre point of religious discussion.

2-They openly rebuke the Muslim rulers, whom they regard to be tyrants, and call for rebellion in Muslim countries, under the banner: “Judgement is for Allāh” – a phrase misappropriated by the extremists, and misused.

3-They praise the heads of extremist ideologies such as Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1966). Quṭb is revered by Jihadists all around the world, from Ibn Laden and Ayman al-Zawahirī to Anwar al-Awlakī and Abū Qatādah. He was a prominent leader of the Egyptian group, the Muslim Brotherhood. His writings are widespread and translated into dozens of languages including English. The US-born Yemeni terrorist, Anwar al-Awlakī, once boasted that he was so immersed in the writings of Sayyid Quṭb that he felt the presence of Quṭb with him in his prison cell!

4-Extremists (Kharijites), and those under their influence, are distinguished with the trait of declaring Muslims who contradict their political world view as unbelievers. They see the Muslim rulers who commit sins or acts of tyranny to be unbelievers. The declaring of Muslims to be unbelievers is referred to in Islamic terminology as takfir. For this reason, the extremists are often referred to as Takfirites.

5-Extremists in the West will quite often glorify the acts of violence perpetrated by “Jihadist” groups, whether it be suicide bombings, beheading of hostages, killing of non-Muslims, etc. One does not see in their speech the condemnation of violent extremism or its figureheads.

## 7. One Should Not Be Deceived By The Extremists Due To Their Outward Display Of Piety

Over a thousand years ago, the Salafī scholar, al-Ājurī, said regarding the extremist insurgents: “Neither the scholars of old nor of these times ever differed about the Kharijites. They regarded them as an evil people who were disobedient to Allāh and His Messenger even though they prayed, fasted and exerted themselves in worship. And all of this was of no benefit to them” (al-Sharī‘ah, 1/135). Another scholar, Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1200 CE) said: “They permitted the killing of children, yet they did not allow the eating of any fruits from trees without paying for it! They tired themselves out with worship, and would frequently stay awake, yet they raised their swords against the Muslims. Even Satan himself could not have imagined the extent of their evil!” (Talbīs Iblīs, p. 91).

## 8. What Can I Do If I Know Of Extremists Who Are Inciting Or Plotting Terrorist Attacks?

The Salafī position regarding those who incite or plan terrorist acts such as suicide bombings, kidnapping or killing is that Muslims should inform the authorities. This is regardless of whether these acts are perpetrated in Muslim or non-Muslim countries. Muslim communities must be at the forefront of stamping out these non-Islamic acts that are done falsely in the name of Islām. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “There is not a people amongst whom sins are committed, and they are stronger than those who commit them, yet they do not prevent them, except that Allāh sends His punishment upon them all.” The Messenger (ﷺ) described these Kharijites, explaining that they have no understanding of Islām. He said: “They will recite the Qur’ān but it will not go beyond their throats. They will exit the religion just as an arrow passes swiftly through its target.” Parents too, have a mighty responsibility to cultivate their children upon the true and correct Salafī understanding of Islām, so that they are not deceived by these impostors.



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