

Misconception: Islam and The Quran promotes 'jihad' or 'holy war'



Background: Some think that the term "jihad" means "holy war" and it is a requirement which all Muslims must engage in.

'Jihad' is a common Arabic word meaning to strive/struggle or exert effort, and is used in different ways depending on context in The Quran. We learn from The Quran that believers must be willing to exert effort in the cause of God, using their wealth and themselves. This effort/jihad may or may not include fighting. It does not have an exclusive meaning of 'holy war' or 'fighting', as shown below.

An example in The Quran where 'jihad' refers to giving 'effort' as charity as opposed to giving money/objects as charity:

It is these (hypocrites) who find fault with such of the believers who give generously in charity, and they find fault with such believers who have nothing to give but their effort, God disdains them, and they will have a painful retribution. [9:79]

An example in The Quran where 'jihad' can mean parents 'striving' to change the beliefs of their children. Please note, even in such circumstances believers are still asked to treat them amicably:

If they strive to make you set up any partners besides Me, then do not obey them. But continue to treat them amicably in this world. You shall follow only the path of those who have sought Me. Ultimately, you all return to Me, then I will inform you of everything you have done. [31:15]

In The Quran, striving/jihad is also mentioned in God's cause leading to guidance is contrasted to turning away from the truth and fabricating lies about God see: [29:68-69]

The only time a 'great jihad' is mentioned in The Quran is in the following verse and it refers to striving against those who deny the truth with the message of truth:

And if We wish, We could send to every town a warner. So do not obey those who deny the truth, and strive against them with it (The Quran) in a great striving. [25:51-52]

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