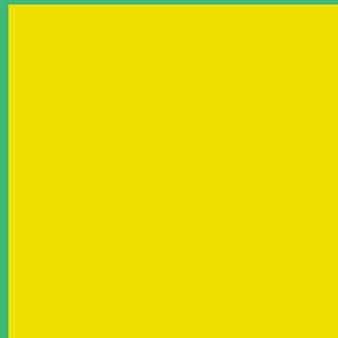


4



WHEN ENCOUNTERS BECOMES
CONFLICT: JUST WAR AND
JUST PEACE

MODULE FOUR

WHEN ENCOUNTERS BECOMES CONFLICT: JUST WAR AND JUST PEACE

4.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This manual for the teacher is a didactic package in which the following theme is elaborated: “When encounters becomes conflict: war and peace.” This manual is developed for the age group of 12 to 18 years old and offers the teacher of a learning group the opportunity to work out the theme at the level of the own class group.

In this manual, the teacher can address various topics related to the overarching theme “ When encounters becomes conflict: war and peace.” Based on impulses and didactic suggestions, it is possible to approach the theme from different perspectives. Impulses are elements that the teacher can bring into the classroom to start the conversation.

This manual makes a distinction between ‘basic material’ and ‘in-depth knowledge’. The basic material takes two lessons. The teacher also has the choice to deepen the knowledge of the students and use the extra chapters with accompanying impulses and didactic suggestions, provided in this manual.

4.1.1 STRUCTURE OF THE MANUAL

The manual consists of four chapters:

- 1) This manual starts with a general introduction. This introduction outlines the Islamic view on violence. Some important concepts from Islamic theology will be explained. Finally, the first part focuses on some violent groups that use and promote violence as a social solution. We refute their view. This chapter is part of the basic learning material for the students.
- 2) In the second part, we emphasize the importance of spiritual jihad and briefly explain the philosophy of Islam regarding the soul. This chapter is part of the basic learning material for the students.

3) In the third part we will discuss different creatures. We try to make a distinction based on their kind of soul and the capacity to keep his/her desires under control (spiritual jihad). This is an in-depth chapter.

4) In the third part, we take a closer look at the different forms of jihad. We try to explain the true meaning of jihad. This demonstrates that the term jihad cannot immediately be associated with violence. This is an in-depth chapter.

The manual ends with a short glossary. It contains a list of terms that may require additional explanation. Some concepts are therefore clearly explained for the student.

4.1.2 CONTENT OF THE MANUAL

This didactic package deals with the theme: "When meeting becomes conflict: war and peace."

The starting point of this manual is a scenario showing a realistic situation in the daily life of some students. The video makes out the general introduction to the theme "When meeting becomes conflict: war and peace" for the learning group. It is the starting point for the teacher and from thereon, further impulses and didactic suggestions from this manual can be used.

4.2 ISLAM AND VIOLENCE

4.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Islam and violence are often associated to each other. Several incidents ‘in name of the Islam’ created an incorrect perception of what is prescribed in Islam. Examples hereof are the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11 2001, but also the growth of extremist organizations such as ISIS in 2014, the terror attacks in several European cities. As a result, Islam has often been discussed in the media in a negative way.

Although these attacks were initiatives of Islamic groups, their actions are in contrast to the principles of Islam. These extremist groups justify their actions by calling it ‘jihad’ thereby misusing the term to justify violence.

Although radicalism and extremism have often been associated with Islam over the last two decades, violence is not at all inherent in Islam. Islam forbids the use of violence against anyone, without difference between believers and non-believers. It is true that the Qur’an contains certain verses about violence, but one must read these verses in their intended context. It is not the intention that we interpret and apply Koran verses literally in our current society. This would be inconsistent with the intent of the text.

Radicalism and extremism have taken different forms over the years. In the last century, for example, we were faced with a number of right-wing extremist organizations and groups. Communist extremism also had a negative impact on Western society. In recent years, we have also been contending with advancing Islamic radicalism. What becomes clear here is that violence is not necessarily inherent in a particular belief, philosophy or ideology, but that many different factors lead to extreme thinking. This stems from different beliefs, philosophies and ideologies and Islam has no patent on that. This is also confirmed by the Israeli writer and intellectual Amos Oz: “Fanaticism is not only the heritage of Al Qaeda or IS, Jabhat Al-Nusra, Hamas and Hezbollah, of neo-Nazis, anti-Semites, white supremacist thinkers, Islamophobes, the Ku Klux Klan, the hilltop hooligans and other blood shedders in the name of their beliefs. All those fanatics and what looks like them - we all know them. They look at us day after day from the television screen, passionately waving in front of camera lenses preaching all kinds of slogans into the microphone.... ”.¹

Violence is not inherent to faith, but man people and groups use faith for their own interests. Everything that ends up in the hands of people can go wrong. The most sublime object in the hands of people can end in evil. In Latin it is expressed as follows “Corruptio optimi pessima” or “The very best becomes the worst when it turns into its opposite”.

¹ O. AMOS, *Beste Fanatici*, Drie essays, Amsterdam, De Bezige Bij, 2017, p.23.

4.2.2 CONCEPTS OF VIOLENCE

Before we zoom in on the content, we will define some concepts about violence from the Quran, hadith and Islamic theology:



Figure 4.1
Source: © kalpis /
Adobe Stock

1. Jihad: Linguistically, jihad means ‘to make an effort’. The term is usually used in the context of acts of war; endeavor in war. But in the overarching sense of Jihad as assumed in this manual, war is only a small part. Various Islamic scholars attribute thirteen meanings to the term Jihad. The main meaning is therefore to make an effort, but not necessarily in the context of war. For example, you can make efforts for justice, for a well-functioning society.

2. Al-Qital: Linguistically means fighting. This term is also usually used in a war context, but, like jihad, has a broader meaning.

3. Al-Harb: Literally it means war, like for example two countries attacking each other. Al-Harb differs fundamentally from jihad. War mainly revolves around the domination and victory of the other. Jihad refers to the efforts made to guarantee general security.

4. Al-Unf: Literally means violence. Although Al-Unf is often associated with Islam, the term is not mentioned anywhere in the Quran.

5. Al-Irhab: Al-Irhab stands for terrorism. ‘Terrorizing’ is stated in the Quran, in Surat Al-Anfal verse 60. It says: **“And use whatever means of power you have, including war horses, to terrify the enemy of Allah, your enemy and the others.”**² (Al-Anfal: 60) It is important to correctly interpret the term ‘terrorization’. Terrorizing here does not mean carrying out the acts of violence as in the recent terrorist attacks, but rather means impressing the opposing party to gain respect.

² <https://koran.nl/soera-8-al-anfal-de-buit/>

4.2.3 USING FORCE FOR CHANGE

There are Islamic groups who are convinced that they can reach social change only through violence. For them, the purpose justifies using all necessary means, such as terror attacks on the innocent. However, such acts are absolutely prohibited and in no way prescribed in the Quran. Yet the supporters of those groups pretend that various Islamic regulations justify this violent behavior. They use the following strategy³ :

First, they try to undermine the legitimacy of a head of state. If the head of state is a Muslim, they label him as a non-Muslim. Then they claim that the head of state is not applying Islamic laws. The strategy is even easier if the head of state is not a Muslim. In that case they declare with even more conviction that Islamic laws are not being applied: such as the fact that they are allies of Western countries. This, they say, is enough to deny the authority of a head of state and to even demonstrate against it. The main aim then is to depose the head of state in any way, even by use of force.



Figure 4.2
Source: © pict rider /
Adobe Stock

In Islamic theology this subject is called “Takfir”. It is a very sensitive issue where a Muslim gets labelled as non-Muslim. It is not the job of any Muslim or just any person to judge someone else’s religious experience. There are situations in which people openly admit that they no longer (want to) be a Muslim. In that case, it is clear that a person himself no longer wishes to be considered a Muslim, but it must be emphasized that there are no consequences. Again, it is not a Muslim’s job to judge or sanction another’s religious experience. Moreover, the Quran provides for the freedom of religious choice, it says: **“There is no compulsion in our religion.”** (Al-Baqara: 256)

³ Y. ALQARDAWI, Fiqh Aljihad, Dirasat Muqaranatu Li-Ahkamihi wa Falsafatihi di daw al-Quran wa As-Sounna, Cairo, Dar Al-Koutboub Al’Imiya, 2009, p. 16-18.

Secondly, they incite the broad population to depose the head of state. Again, they justify violence to achieve the goal of deposition. The process of deposition causes chaos and a camp of supporters and non-supporters within society arise. The head of state is labeled as “apostate” who may be murdered because of the non-application of Islamic law. This is a very vehement view in contrast with the Quranic referred above emphasizing that there is no compulsion in religion. Therefore, there is no deposition or killing allowed. Also in a Quran verse is stated: **“The Truth is from your Lord. Anyone who wants to believe, let him believe. Anyone who doesn’t want to believe, let him not believe.”**⁴ (Al-Kahf: 29). We must respect everyone’s freedom to believe or not believe what he/she wants.

Use of violence is therefore by no means a justified manner of bringing change in society. Violence must always be condemned. However, there are specific situations where violence is allowed like war for protection. When a Muslim country is threatened and all alternatives to stop violence have been exhausted, one may resist with violence, if the strict rules of war within Islam are still respected. The rules are:

- 1) No violence until all alternatives to stop violence are exhausted.
- 2) No violence unless a country is wronged.
- 3) No violence unless people are driven from their homes.
- 4) Do not kill women, children, the elderly or sick people (only use of force against soldiers in a war).
- 5) Always respect nature and animals.
- 6) Always respect people’s homes.
- 7) Looting is never allowed.

As we see, the rule that allows violence refer purely to protection. These rules are included in the following verse and the sunnah of the prophet:

“Go both (Moses and his brother) to Pharaoh, for he has transgressed. Speak both to him softly. Maybe he will take it to his heart.” (Ta-Ha: 43.44). The scholars conclude from this verse that one must first choose the diplomatic path to stop violence. For Pharaoh is known as a great tyrant and yet Allah commands Moses and his brother Haroon to speak softly to him.

⁴ <https://koran.nl/soera-18-al-kahf-de-grot/>

The other rules are to be found in the following verse:

“To those who are fought [the fight] is permitted because they have been wronged; God has the power to help those who have been unjustly expelled from their homes just because they say, “Our Lord is God” - and if God had not let men restrain one another, then there were hermits, churches, synagogues and mosques in which God’s name often mentioned is certainly destroyed. But God will certainly help those who help Him; God is powerful and mighty.”⁵ (Al-Hajj / 39: 40)

This is also emphasized by Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, a close companion and successor of the Prophet Muhammad - pbuh -. He said to one of his military commanders: ***“I advise you the following ten things (regarding the rules of warfare). Do not kill women or children, the elderly or the sick. Do not cut down or burn trees, especially if they are fruit-bearing trees. Do not destroy uninhabited places. Do not kill animals except for food. Do not burn or disperse bees. Do not steal any of the items seized during battle. And do not act cowardly.”***⁶ (Al-Muwatta, Volume 21, Hadith 10)

In another hadith, Abu Bakr added not to attack priests and monks and not to destroy their places of worship. Buildings must also remain intact. Even consuming the animals’ milk is strictly prohibited, except with the permission of the owners.

Thus, waging war is subject to strict regulations based on the Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Mohamed.

⁵ <https://koran.nl/soera-22-al-hajj-de-bedevaart/>.

⁶ Ima. MALIK, al-Muwatta, Beiroet, Dar Iyha Attourat Alarabiya, 1985, p. 212.

4.2.4 EXERCISES

Exercise 1

Underline the correct meaning of the term

1. Linguistically, jihad means:

War - Make an Effort - Violence

2. Al-Qital means:

War - Fighting - Terrorist

3. Al Harb means:

War - Extreme – Islam

Exercise 2

Answer the following questions.

1. How can you apply the linguistic meaning of jihad in your daily life?

For example, you can make efforts for justice, for a well-functioning society.

2. Can any person apply Al-Qital and Al Harb. Explain why or why not.

No. This is only reserved for heads of state and there are many rules attached to it. The rules are:

- 1) No violence until all alternatives to stop violence are exhausted.
- 2) No violence unless a country is wronged.
- 3) No violence unless people are driven from their homes.
- 4) Do not kill women, children, the elderly or sick people (only use of force against soldiers in a war).
- 5) Always respect nature and animals.
- 6) Always respect people's homes.
- 7) Looting is never allowed.

4.3 SPIRITUAL JIHAD

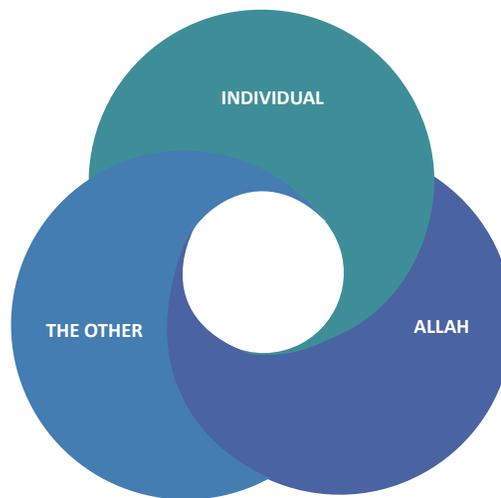
4.3.1 INTRODUCTION

Spiritual jihad is the highest rank of jihad and means that the Muslim must do his utmost to be a good person. He does this by fulfilling his religious obligations such as the obligations towards Allah, towards himself and towards others.

4.3.2 TRIANGLE RELATIONSHIP

In Islam there is always an important triangular relationship between:

1. An individual
2. The fellow man or the other
3. Allah



It is up to every Muslim to maintain balance between these different relationships. This is part of spiritual jihad, which is to fulfill its religious obligations in order to achieve and maintain harmony within the triangular relationship. Compliance with this obligation is not so easy. That is why jihad means making a great effort. According to Islamic rules, a person should cleanse the soul because the soul is the core of man. By cleansing his core, a person will be able to maintain a harmonious relationship with himself, with others and with Allah. In the Quran it is quoted as follows: **“Surely he who cleanses it (the soul) (from sins) will succeed. And surely the one who spoils it, will lose.”**⁷ (Ash-Shams: 9 and 10).

Clearing the soul of desires and always maintaining harmony within the triangular relationship requires a lot of effort. It is therefore part of the spiritual jihad.

⁷ <https://koran.nl/soera-91-ash-shams-de-zon/>.

EXERCISE 1: Triangle Relationship

In the Islam there is always an important triangular relationship between the individual (me), the fellow man (the other) and Allah. In the relationship with which of these three actors does one try to achieve harmony in the examples below?

Fill in the column and choose between: Me – The other - Allah

Description	Who?
Jareer Ibn Abdullah, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated: "The Prophet Sallallahu 'alaihi wasalam said: Whoever has no mercy towards men will not have a merciful..."	The Other
Spiritual worship	Allah
Healthy living "	Me
"The best way to remember Allah is to recite the Shahada. This is Laa illaaha illa Allah and means there is no god but Allah." ⁸	Allah
To donate food	The Other
For those who follow a path of knowledge, Allah will facilitate the path to Paradise."	Me

4.4 THREE TYPES OF CREATURES

4.4.1 ANGELS, ANIMALS, AND PEOPLE

Allah has created three types of creatures that can be distinguish based on their soul and the capacity not to blindly follow desires:⁸

1) The first category of creatures are the **angels**. They have a purely rational soul. Moreover, they have no desires or needs whatsoever which makes them obey Allah in every action. For example, in the Qur'an it is written about the angels: "**Over whom are appointed stern and hard-working angels, who do not disobey Allah in what He commands them and do what they are commanded to do.**"⁹ (66: 6).



Figure 4.3
Source: © pict rider /
Adobe Stock



Figure 4.4
Source: © adogslifephoto
Adobe Stock

2) The second category of creatures is the **animals**. They have a sensitive soul and many desires. In addition, there is no reason and ratio which make animals follow their needs and desires.



Figure 4.5
Source: © Dmytro /
Adobe Stock

3) The third category of creatures is **humans**. Islam describes man as having a reason, but at the same time also having a sensitive soul. We therefore speak of both a rational and sensitive soul.

⁸ Y. ALQARDAWI, Fiqh Aljihad, Dirasat Muqaranatu Li-Ahkamihi wa Falsafatihi di daw al-Quran wa As-Sounna, Cairo, Dar Al-Koutboub Al'Imiya, 2009, p. 159, 160.

⁹ <https://koran.nl/soera-66-at-tahrim-verbod/>.

Spiritual jihad for humans means not to always blindly follow their needs, but also to act with reason. More concretely, it means that man maintains his soul and tries to raise it to the ranks of the angels instead of using it like animals. If you, as a human being, succeed in balancing your desires and reasonableness, you are fulfilling spiritual jihad.

4.4.2 THE DIFFICULTY OF SPIRITUAL JIHAD

The soul of man, according to Islam, naturally tends to desires, needs and passions. If a Muslim does not make effort (no spiritual jihad) to keep those passions balanced, he will never attain ultimate wisdom or hikma. However, a wise person knows how to handle his passions reasonably well. Reasonably dealing with its passions and desires does not mean that the soul should not enjoy the passions, but that the soul cannot completely depend on them.

4.4.3 THREE TYPES OF HUMAN SOUL

In the Quran, a distinction is made between three types of human souls ¹⁰:

1) The sensitive soul or An-Nafs Al-Ammara: This is the soul that completely surrenders to desires and passions. About the desirable soul, the Prophet Yusuf said the following in the Quran: **“And I do not declare myself free. Verily, the soul tends towards evil.”**¹¹ (Yusuf: 53)

2) The warning soul or An-Nafs Al-Lawama: This is the soul that constantly reminds man of Allah and the Islamic principles. It takes great effort or spiritual jihad to keep reminding oneself of Islamic principles instead of blindly following desires. The Quran refers to this type of soul as follows: **“And I swear by the admonishing soul ...”**¹² (Al-Qiyama: 2,3)

3) The stable / calm soul or An-Nafs Al-Mutma-iena. This is the soul that has overcome a long struggle with passions and has finally come to rest. The stability of this soul ensures that people no longer experience inner tensions. It is very difficult and it takes a lot of effort from man to reach this quality of the soul. Due to the effort required and the difficulty to achieve stability and reasonableness, reaching a stable this soul is considered the highest rank in spiritual jihad. The Quran refers to this soul as follows: **“O calmed soul! Join My (righteous) servants.”**¹³ (Al-Fajr: 27.28)

¹⁰. Y. ALQARDAWI, Fiqh Aljihad, Dirasat Muqaranatu Li-Ahkamihi wa Falsafatihi di daw al-Quran wa As-Sounna, Cairo, Dar Al-Koutboub Al’Imiya, 2009, p. 159, 160.

¹¹. <https://koran.nl/soera-12-yusuf-jozef-zoon-van-jakob/>.

¹². <https://koran.nl/soera-75-al-qiyamah-de-wederopstanding/>.

¹³. <https://koran.nl/soera-89-al-fajr-de-dageraad/>.

4.4.4 EXERCISES

Exercise 1: The characteristics of types of creatures

Allah has created three types of creatures. Fill in the characteristics below under the matching creature.

Purely reasonable soul - Sensitive soul - Never disobey Allah - No desires - Always following basic needs - Ratio - No ratio - Sensitive and rational soul - Soul maintained by spiritual jihad

Angels

- * Purely reasonable soul
- * Never disobey Allah
- * No desires

Animals

- * Sensitive soul
- * Always following basic needs
- * No ratio

Humans

- * Ratio
- * Sensitive and rational soul
- * Soul maintained by spiritual jihad

Exercise 2

Explain in your own words

1) Spiritual jihad

Spiritual jihad is the highest rank of jihad and means that the Muslim must do his utmost to be a good person.

2) The stable/calm soul or An-Nafs Al-Mutma-iena

This is the soul that has overcome a long struggle with passions and has finally reached inner peace and stability.

Exercise 3: Do spiritual jihad by yourself!

Self-reflection is part of jihad. By reflecting for a moment on your own personality, feelings, strengths, weaknesses, behavior, ... you are doing spiritual jihad.

Think of 5 questions on self-reflection. Some examples are: "What are my points for improvement?" "What am I grateful for?" "Am I making mistakes?"

You may then answer your questions.

EXERCISE 4

How can you practice spiritual jihad in the situations below in order to improve your behavior?

Case	Spiritual Jihad
<p>Your mother is a hardworking woman. After she gets home from work, she starts making dinner. You lie on the couch and do not want to help.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thinking about ways to help my mom by setting the table for example. -Ask my mom if she needs help. -Putting myself in the place of my mother: How would I experience never getting some help? ...
<p>You always start your schoolwork when it is too late. This means you have to work extra hard in a short period of time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thinking of ways to spread out and plan my school assignments - Schedule when to do schoolwork and when to do whatever I like - Reward myself when I stick to the schedule. - Dare to ask for help when I feel the need to get some help in learning how to make a planning, in doing my schoolwork, ...
<p>Your best friend gets better grades than you. You're secretly jealous.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ask myself why I am jealous of my friend and wonder if this feeling is helping me. -Setting goals for myself: working hard for my school assignments to get good grades too.

4.5 DIFFERENT DOMAINS OF JIHAD

As already discussed, the basic meaning of jihad is that one makes efforts to achieve a certain goal. The goal to be achieved can be different. Jihad, for example, occurs in various domains, such as the jihad against injustice, the jihad on conflict of ideas, social jihad, economic jihad and jihad for the environment .

4.5.1 THE JIHAD AGAINST INJUSTICE

Justice is one of the basic Islamic principles that requires action against any form of injustice. In a hadith the Prophet says, **“Help your brother who commits the bad as well as the victims of bad.”** A companion of the Prophet also asked the question: **“O Messenger of Allah. We can help the victim of injustice, but how should we help the person doing wrong?”** The prophet replied: **“By keeping him from his wrongdoing.”**



Figure 4.6
Source: © zendograph / Adobe Stock

4.5.2 THE BATTLE OF IDEAS OR JIHAD OF IDEAS

The jihad of ideas involves making efforts to refute incorrect, violent or wrong ideas. Consider the ideology of certain extremist groups that openly incite violence against people of different faith and proclaim that changes can only be reached by use of violence.



Figure 4.7
Source: © vegefox.com / Adobe Stock

4.5.3 THE SOCIAL JIHAD

Social jihad means making efforts to take care of yourself and others in society. This starts from the simple things such as maintaining your relationship with family and friends, respecting the elderly, relatives, neighbors, colleagues, teachers, ...

Social jihad thus does not include demanding acts and is clarified in the following story from the hadith: A man visited Prophet Muhammad and asked his permission/approval to go to war. The Prophet asked: **“Are your parents still alive?”** To this the man replied: **“Yes, my parents are still alive.”** The prophet then answered: **“Your jihad is then to maintain and care for your parents.”**



Figure 4.8
Source: © Good Studio / Adobe Stock

From this, scholars deduce that the relationship with blood relatives is essential in Islam and makes part of social jihad. Not only blood relatives or Muslims among themselves, but all people regardless of background, philosophy, gender, ideology... must wage a social jihad against each other by respecting each other.

4.5.4 THE ECONOMIC JIHAD

Economic jihad means the financial support and support of the family, relatives, loved ones and all for whom one is financially responsible. Moreover, Islam incites people to work so that everyone can do economic jihad. Working and contributing to society, to yourself and to those close to you is itself a form of economic jihad.



Figure 4.9
Source: © suriyapong /
Adobe Stock

In Islam it is also strongly recommended to contribute to a strong economy of a country. It is also encouraged not to be economically dependent on others. Prophet Muhammad said about this: “The upper hand is better than the lower hand. The upper hand is the person who gives, and the lower hand is the person who receives.”

4.5.5 JIHAD FOR ENVIRONMENT

In the Quran, every Muslim is seen as a khalifa or responsible for environmental harmony. Doing jihad for the environment means making all necessary efforts to protect the environment in a broad sense.



Figure 4.10
Source: © beeboys /
Adobe Stock

EXERCISE 1

Under what type of jihad do the following actions fall?

**Jihad against injustice – Jihad of ideas - Social jihad - Economic jihad -
Jihad for the environment**

Type of Jihad	Act
Jihad against injustice	To help a victim of an act of injustice.
Economic jihad	Seek for a job in order to maintain myself and my loved ones.
Social jihad	Regularly visiting my grandparents.
Jihad of ideas	Entering into dialogue with someone who spreads violent ideas.
Jihad for the environment	Try to reduce my ecological footprint.

4.5 GLOSSARY

Jihad

Linguistically, jihad means making an effort.

Al-Qital

Linguistically means fighting.

Al-Harb

Literally means war.

Al-Unf

Literally means violence.

Al-Irhab

Al-Irhab stands for terrorism.

Takfir:

Declaring someone as a non-Muslim.

Spiritual Jihad

A Muslim must do his utmost to be a good person.

Hikma

Ultimate wisdom.

An-Nafs Al-Ammara

The desirable soul.

An-Nafs Al-Lawama

The warning soul.

An-Nafs Al-Moetma-iena

The stable/calm soul.

Jihad of ideas

A figurative battle of different ideologies.

Social jihad

Making efforts to take care of yourself and others in society.

Economic jihad

The financial maintenance and support of one's family, relatives, loved ones and everyone for whom one has financial responsibility.

Jihad for the environment

Make all necessary efforts to protect the environment.

4.6 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

Ahmed starts sparring with his sparring partner. He is extremely aggressive today. After the spar session:

Sparring partner: Hey Ahmed, what's going on? You are full of aggression! I've never seen you sparring like this.

Ahmed: Pfff I don't want to talk about it.

Sparring partner: Tell me, you shouldn't keep your problems for yourself, talk about it. You can share it with me.

Ahmed: I'm really mad! I was on my way to the club after school. The police stopped me. AGAIN. They were looking for me and started investigating my sportbag and even my schoolbag.

It all happened close to my school. People I know from school looked at me as if I had stolen something. I felt so humiliated. They really treated me without respect. I'm so done with these situations happening so often.

Sparring partner: I know what you're going through. I've also experienced it many times. They hate Muslims. They are actually our enemies because they are not muslims.

A friend of mine recently said that even the Quran speaks about our "enemies" and that jihad is even allowed. "And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good."

Ahmed: Wow yes bro...I don't know if it's true but it is not the first time I have heard about these Quranic verses.

Trainer Samir hears the boys talking to each other. He interrupts them

Trainer Samir: Guys, these are recognizable stories. This is called "racial profiling". It is unfair to experience this kind of injustice. On the other hand, we should not generalize the problem. It often concerns a few individuals. This type of frustration can generate so much anger and I understand that. It can even lead you to dangerous ideas. But please don't quote Quranic verses in such a situation and don't take them out of their specific context. The word jihad has much more meanings than the one often used by everyone.

Ahmed: Really? How can we understand jihad then?

Trainer Samir: According to well-known scholars, spiritual jihad is the highest form of jihad. In this concrete situation, it would imply to control your frustrations and don't generalize whole groups by criticizing an individual's behavior. It is very difficult, I know, but that's why it is also called jihad. Because jihad originally means making a great effort.

Ahmed: Samir... I feel like the society doesn't want us to be part of it, no matter how hard we try. I will forever remain the 'on of the other ones'. I'm so tired of that feeling.

Trainer Samir: Ahmed listen up. Just look at the diversity within our boxing club. This diversity reflects the reality in our society. It doesn't matter who you are or where you come from. We share the same passion, in this case boxing, and that is what is binding us.

I'll tell you something. I have been a trainer of a very talented champion boxer. He had a lot of potential to break through. The problem was that he was full of frustrations. He even didn't show up to the boxing club and in the end lost his motivation. Boxing means fighting back. You might be knocked down 10 times but you have to get up 11 times. You have to stay dedicated if you want to achieve your goals and create changes. And what do you think the talented boxer did to achieve changes and to reach his goals?

Ahmed: No idea trainer, what did he do?

Trainer Samir: He stopped believing in himself. He has given up on himself. He no longer believed in our society or in the possibility of change. He went to Syria believing he could change our society here by fighting there. He dealt with the wrong people that made him believe that he could change society through violence. He and his group of extremists made a strategic call to jihad. They considered the leaders of Islamic countries as non-believers because they were partners Western countries.

Ahmed: Really?

Trainer: Their vision on the use of violence is totally wrong. To consider a muslim as an non-believer or takfir is dangerous. Besides, there is no compulsion in our religion. As indicated in surat al baqarah verse 256: "There is no compulsion in our religion". Therefore, this form of violence is by no means legitimate even if someone is a non-believer, that would be her or his choice.

Ahmed: Hmmm okay...

Trainer Samir: Muslimscholars have also attached conditions to the use of violence: The conditions are:

- 1) When all alternatives to stop violence are exhausted.
- 2) When a country is wronged.
- 3) When people are driven from their homes.
- 4) You may never kill women, children, the elderly or sick people
- 5) When using violence, always respect nature and the animals.
- 6) Respect people's homes.
- 7) Looting is not allowed.

None of these rules were respected by the jihadi extremists. While Islam commands us to peacefully arrange everything, they go directly to violence. Like the example of Pharaoh and prophet Moses in the Quran: "Go both (Moses and his brother Aaron) to Pharaoh, for he has transgressed. Speak to him both softly. Maybe he will take it to heart.

The scholars conclude from this verse that one must first choose the diplomatic path to stop violence. Pharaoh is known as a great tyrant and yet Allah commands Moses and his brother Haroon to speak softly to him.

Ahmed: It is certainly not a matter of them against us, nor is it that non-Muslims are our enemies. So they are using jihad in a wrong way?

Trainer: : Exactly. Set goals in life and be ambitious. I learned how to accept failures and to move on without losing hope. Courage is the willingness to face fear. Also as Muslims, we are responsible for our contribution to society. Everyone is welcome here. WE ARE ONE TEAM. We are in this together.

Ahmed: I really look up to you trainer. Your words are so inspiring!

Trainer Samir: Thanks kiddo. By the way, A friend of mine is giving a lecture to the police and social workers about cultural and religious awareness. The lecture can be held in our club, maybe? In that way we can have a dialogue with them and share our daily experiences with racial profiling. What do you think?

Ahmed: I would love to share my frustrations with them.

Trainer Samir: Ok great! Let's organize a meeting with the club members and brainstorm together. I'll invite my friend!

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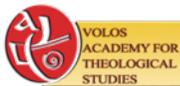


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