Al Haramain
ONLINE NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 3

DHUL-Q'IDAH 1420 [February 2000]

Sister's Pens

JIHAAD
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EDITOR
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Jihaad is an Arabic word, the root of which is *jahada*, which means to strive for a better life; endeavor; strain; exertion; effort; diligence, fighting to defend one's life, land, or religion. Jihaad should not be translated as 'Holy War'. Such an expression does not exist in Islam. Wars of this type constitute religious subjugation and genocide, an example of which is the Holy War of the Crusades.

The term Jihaad is simply an Islaamic legal term meaning fighting in the way of Allaah in order to establish a just system which upholds the laws of Sharee'ah and seeks to realize the aims of Islaam on earth.

During the period of Qur-aanic revelation Muslims were instructed to:

...hold back their hands (from fighting) and establish regular prayers. 4:77

The Muslims of that era patiently and obediently followed this injunction inspite of the fact that they had to endure terrible persecution for their new belief. It was wisdom from Allaah, for the early Muslims needed to build a strong foundation of faith from which to face all external obstacles and forces.

Years later, when the Muslims emigrated to Madeenah from Makkah, their faith and numbers had increased and they dwelled in a city to make a stance from. Permission was given to fight in self defense, in safe-guarding personal and human rights.

To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight) because they are wronged...and verily Allaah is Most Powerful for their aid. 22:39

Then another condition was added to the injunction of self-defense - defense of their beliefs and principles.

Fight in the cause of Allaah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allaah loves not the transgressors, 2:190

This second condition of Jihaad is unique compared to other wars in history. Most wars aimed at obtaining political or economic goals for a specific person or group. The goal of this second step in Jihaad was belief; the fighting for Allaah's religion.

Those who believe fight in the cause of Allaah, and those who reject faith fight in the cause of evil. 4:76

If the reason for Jihaad stopped here, by indicating that Jihaad was defensive in nature and attack was used only as a means of defending the Islaamic State from its powerful enemies, then Jihaad would seem acceptable to Western ideologies. But Jihaad doesn't stop here.

The third stage came when Muslims were ordered to fight the unbelievers and to initiate the fighting:

And fight them until there is no more persecution and religion becomes Allaah's in its entirety. 8:39

Fighting is prescribed upon you and you dislike it. But it is possible that you dislike a thing which is good for you. 2:216

Thus, Jihaad is a religious obligation in Islaam. Its aim is to fight oppression and injustice and to remove obstacles which prevent the spread of Islaam. This is accomplishing either by weakening or destroying the disbelieving prevalent political powers so that Muslims can prevent anyone from persecuting their brother Muslims wherever they may be.

There are numerous laws regulating Jihaad. The Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) is reported to have said: "Fight in the name of Allaah and in the way of Allaah: Go on military expeditions but do not plunder. Do not break your pledge, nor mutilate, nor kill children..." [hadeeth]

Islaam prohibits terrorism, kidnapping, harming women, children, and the elderly. It forbids vandalism of civilian buildings, cutting down trees, as well as other forms of environmental destruction. Islaam commands its followers to stand and fight bravely in the force of the enemy but never condones war tactics that involve suicide missions.

The distorted connection of Jihaad and forcing belief on people 'by the sword' is incorrect. It is true that the rule of Islaam was spread over vast areas through Jihaad yet Islaam prohibits coercion of belief.

There is to be no compulsion in religion. [Al-Qur'aan 2:256]

The Qur'aan makes it clear that people are free to either choose Islaam or to remain followers of whatever faith they hold. So what will explain the spread of Islaamic belief among those people? Men's hearts were pulled by lofty principles and by the moral excellence and non-aggressive rule displayed by the Muslims. This is the secret behind the spread of Islaam and the true victory of its forces when the...

...religion becomes Allaah's in its entirety." [Al-Qur'aan 8:39]

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