

Forms of *Jihad* as Recognised by Classical and Contemporary Scholars

Muslim scholars use the term *jihad* to refer to various forms, levels and categorizations of enjoining right, forbidding wrong and striving in Allah's cause (*fi sabilillah*) as used in the Qur'an and Sunnah. They have therefore come up with various ways of classifying the different forms of jihad that Muslims may or must be involved in. Regardless of the classifications, they all agree based on the clear texts on this issue, that the term *Jihad* has many meanings and forms, and it cannot be narrowly defined to, or reduced to only mean fighting or warfare.

Shaikh Abdullah bin Zaid explains that *jihad* can be made either by statement or action. It could be made using the tongue and argument based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. It can as well be made with the sword. It should however be known that *jihad* through beautiful exhortation and argument precedes that of the sword as that was the *jihad* God commanded Muslims to engage in while they were in Makkah before the permission to fight was granted. Allah said: “*And engage in jihad with them with it (i.e., the Qur'an) a great Jihad*” (Qur'an 25:52).¹

There are different forms of *jihad* according to some scholars of Islam. According to the great medieval jurist Ibn Qayyim, *jihad* is of 4 levels namely: *jihad* of the soul (*jihad al-Nafs*), *jihad* of the devil (*Jihad al-Shaitan*), *jihad* of non-believers (*Jihad al-Kuffar*) and *jihad* of hypocrites (*jihad al-Munafiqun*). Each of these 4 have also been explained with its levels according to Ibn Qayyim.²

¹ For more on *jihad* and specifically on types and forms of *jihad* in Sunnah, see: *al-Jihad al-Mashru'*, p.20 – 21

² Ibn Qayyim, Zaadul al-ma'ad, Maktabatu Al-Manar al-Islamiyyah Beirut, vol 3 page 9, 14th edition

The contemporary jurist Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi further conceptualized three other forms of *jihad* which are similar to that of Ibn Qayyim. They are as follows:

- a. **Military Jihad (*al-Jihad al-Askari*)**: This is where Muslims carry weapons and fight non-Muslims if they attack them or they are planning to attack. This is the type that is meant when the word '*jihad*' is used without any qualification and it is usually the focus of books of Islamic Jurisprudence.
- b. **Spiritual Jihad (*al-Jihad al-Ruhi*)**: This type is concerned about the human soul and its temptations and egos. In respect to this, the Prophet (p) said: "*the fighter (al-Mujahid) is he who fights (jahada) his whim and caprice*"³. This is the type of jihad that those who are concerned with spirituality and purification of the soul focus much more on. This form covers *jihad* of the soul (*al-Nafs*) and *jihad* of the devil (*Shaitan*) in the categorization of Ibn Qayyim.
- c. **Preaching Jihad (*al-Jihad al-Da'wi*)**: This type is about proclaiming or conveying the message of Islam to those who have not heard about it starting from the nearest people then the nearer. On this form of *jihad* Allah says: "*So obey not the disbelievers, but strive against them with the utmost endeavor, with it (the Qur'an)*" (Qur'an 25:52).

CIVILIAN JIHAD (*al-Jihad al-Madani*)

Aside from the above mentioned three forms of jihad categorized by Yusuf al-Qaradawi (and other classifications by other scholars), and in light of more contemporary realities in most nations, al-Qaradawi has also proposed other forms of classifying Jihad under what he refers to as "*civilian jihad*" (*al-Jihad al-Madani*).

³ Sunan al-Tirmidhi hadith no.1621; Musnad Ahmad hadith no.23958; Sahih Ibn Hibban hadith no.4862; Sunan bn Majah hadith no.3934

According to al-Qaradawi, *al-Jihad al-Madani* is the type that answers various needs of different societies in today's world, solves their problems and raises their status in all sectors. This is even of greater importance today, as most Muslim citizens would not be expected to participate in any form of military *jihad* due to the existence of government-funded professional full-time military and security personnel. Civilian *jihad* includes, but is not limited to the following:

- a. **Scientific or scholarly Jihad (*al-Jihad al-'Ilmi*)**: The importance of this form of *jihad* is evident in Surah al-Tawbah where Allah instructs the believers to let there be a group among them who will stay back learning while others go to the battle field for military *jihad*. Allah says: *"And it is not (proper) for the believers to go out to fight (Jihad) all together. Of every troop of them, a party only should go forth, that they (who are left behind) may get instructions in religion, and that they may warn their people when they return to them, so that they may beware (of evil)"* (Qur'an 9:122).

According to Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the word '*nafara*' (i.e. go forth) used in the verse which is sometimes used for the word *jihad* is an indication that going out for learning is also a form of *jihad* in Allah's cause – "*fi sabil Allah*". The Prophet (p) had also said: *"whoever set out seeking for knowledge is in the cause of Allah (Sabil Allah) until he returns."*⁴

- b. **Social Jihad (*al-Jihad al-Ijtima'i*)**: This form is concerned with taking care of the family such as parents, children, and relatives. Ibn Umar reported, "A man came to the Prophet of Allah (p) and said, 'Allow me to fight.' The Prophet (p) asked him,

⁴*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, hadith no.2647

'Are your parents alive?' 'Yes,' replied the man. 'Then go back and exert your utmost (jihad) in their service,' said the Prophet (p).⁵

Similar to this report is that of Mu'awiyah bn Jahimah, that Jahimah came to the Prophet (p) and said: "O Messenger of God, I wanted to fight and I am here seeking your advice? Then he (the Prophet) (p) said: *is your mother still alive?* He said: yes. The Prophet (p) said: *stay with her, indeed, paradise is beneath her feet.*"⁶

In another hadith reported by Anas bin Malik, a man came to the Prophet (p) and said: Indeed, I am yearning for jihad, but I am incapable. The Prophet said: "are any of your parents alive?" the man said: my mother (is alive). The Prophet said: "***fear Allah in your kindness to her, for if you do that, you have become a pilgrim (Hujaj) and Mu'tamir (the one who performed Umrah) and a fighter (Mujahid).***"⁷

- c. **Economic Jihad (*al-Jihad al-Iqtisadi*)**: This involves any struggle on the earth towards making money for the purpose of feeding oneself or family legitimately, or any effort being put towards economic growth of a society that will take the society from being a consumer to producer, from being an importer to an exporter, etc. It was reported by Ka'b bin 'Ujrah that one day, a man passed by the Prophet (p) whom the companions of the Prophet (p) perceived to be strong and energetic. They then said, 'O Messenger of God! How we wish that he (the man) uses his strength in *sabilillah* (i.e., fighting in the course of Allah). The Messenger of Allah (p) said: "*if he is out struggling in order to take care of his baby, he is in the cause of Allah (sabil Allah)! And if he is out struggling for his old parents, he is in the cause of Allah (sabil Allah)! If he is out struggling to take care of himself in order to prevent*

⁵*Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 3004

⁶*Musnad Ahmad*, hadith no. 155538.

⁷*Musnad Abu Ya'la*, vol.5, p.149; al-Tabarani, *al-Mu'jam al-Saghir*, hadith no.218

begging, he is in the cause of Allah (sabil Allah)! But if he is out to show off and for pride, he is in the cause of devil (Shaitan)”⁸

- d. **Educational Jihad (*al-Jihad al-Tarbawi*)**: This form of *jihad* involves building schools and learning institutions for Muslim children. This act has become among the necessities for whoever intends to build a generation that will be capable of carrying the message of God.
- e. **Health Jihad (*al-Jihad al-Sih’hi*)**: This form of *jihad* involves building hospitals and health centers well equipped with all necessary facilities that can raise their standards and cater for people’s needs.
- f. **Environmental Jihad (*al-Jihad al-Bi’i*)**: This form of *jihad* ensures safety of the environment and that it is free of pollution that can threaten people or cause damage to their lives. Islam is so concerned about all lives including plants. In Qur’an 7:56 Allah says: “*and do not spread corruption on earth after its reformation...*” Among numerous hadiths prohibiting any act that cause damage to lives is that where the Prophet (p) said: “none of you should urinate in stagnant water.”⁹

From all these categorizations of *jihad*, it becomes clear that any form of striving or effort that is necessary to protect a contemporary society from harm and destruction (*darurah* or *fasad*) is a form of *jihad* in Allah’s cause. The various community services to society that are critical to public interest (*maslahah*) in preventing the society, community or a portion of it from loss of life, harm (*darar*), insecurity and fear (*khawf*), lawlessness and anarchy (*fitnah*), corruption and destruction (*fasad*) are regarded as “Essential Services”. These are all collective or

⁸ Al-Tabarani, *al-Mu’jam al-Saghir*, hadith no 940; *al-Mu’jam al-Awsat*, hadith no. 6835; *al-Mu’jam al-Kabir*, vol.19, p.129

⁹ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith no.239

societal obligations (*fardu kifayah*) upon any society of Muslims and are the responsibility of the leadership. Depending on the society and situation, these could include occupations, sectors and services such as the police and armed forces, but also hospital and healthcare services, electricity services, water supply services, communication/telephone services, firefighting services, prison services, waste and refuse disposal services, air traffic control, educational services, etc.¹⁰ The short or long-term damage to a society that would result from a breakdown in any or some of these essential services can end in harm and destruction of life and property that may be similar or even worse than some forms of violent conflict or war. Hence their performance is regarded as another important form of *jihad* in Allah's cause - *fi sabil Allah*. This is in line with the maxim that "*the general need attains the position of special necessity*" (*Al-hajah al-aa'mah tunzil manzilah al-darurah al-khassah*)¹¹

It is clear from the above that a Muslim is expected to always be involved in one form of *jihad* or another, whether in times of war or in the more usual longer times of peace.

¹⁰ Depending on the society and situation, other important services include banking and financial services, taxation services, transport, agriculture, ambulances, government minting services, computer services, petroleum services, animal health, etc. In Islamic legal theory (*Usul al-Fiqh*), when a society is facing a difficult situation (*hajah*) that is not as serious as an emergency or crisis (*darurah*), it is still treated like a *darurah* in order to prevent a worse emergency. (For further discussions on this and other relevant legal maxims (*Qawa'id al-Fiqhiyyah*), see Abdullah bin Mahfuz bin Bayyah, *Sina'at al-Fatwa wa Fiqh al-Aqalliyyat*, Dar al-Minhaj, Beirut, 2007, p.193-231; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *I'lam al-Muwaqqi'in 'an Rabbi al-'Alamin*, Egypt: Maktabah al-Kulliyat al-Azhariyyah, 1968, vol.3, p.164; al-Qarafi, *al-Furuq*, vol.2, p.33; Muhammad Abu Zahrah, *Ibn Hanbal: Hayatuhuwa 'Asruhu, Arauhu wa Fiqhuhu*, Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, Beirut, p.370).

¹¹ Al-Juwaini, *al-Burhan fi Usul al-Fiqh*, vol. 2, p. 82, al-Maktaba al-Shamila 3.35; al-Zarkashi, *al-Manthur fi al-Qawa'id*, al-Maktaba al-Shamila 3.35, vol. 2, p.7.