

Ramadan Daily Quran Studies, compiled by Dr Zahid Aziz, 2026

Derived largely from the writings of Maulana Muhammad Ali

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## **Study 29: Jihād —**

# **When is war allowed for Muslims?**

- After the Muslims settled at Madinah, the Quraish at Makkah planned to attack and destroy them as a community or force them out of Islam back to idol-worship.
- Therefore the Quran gave Muslims permission to repel the attacks. The permission was as follows:

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقْتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلَمُوا<sup>ط</sup> وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾  
 الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ<sup>ط</sup>  
 وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَهَدَمَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدُ  
 يُذَكَّرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا<sup>ط</sup> ...

“Permission (to fight) is given to those on whom war is made, because they are oppressed. And surely Allah is able to assist them — those who are driven from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allah.

And if Allah did not repel some people by others, surely cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allah’s name is much remembered, would have been pulled down. ...”

— 22:39–40

- This permission was given to a people, i.e. Muslims, upon whom war was made by their enemies, and it was not a permission to make war against others in general but only against those who made war on them.

- The reason is stated plainly. It is: “because they are oppressed” and have been expelled from their homes “without a just cause”.
- There could be no war more justified than this one, because it was needed as much for the religious liberty of Muslims as for the principle of religious liberty itself, and it was as much to save mosques as to save monks’ cloisters and synagogues and churches.
- If there had ever been a just cause for war in this world, it was for the war that had been permitted to Muslims.

- No doubt, a war with such pure motives was a *jihād*, a struggle carried on simply with the purpose that truth may be allowed to exist and that freedom of conscience may be maintained.
- The second verse, in chronological order, giving to Muslims permission to fight runs as follows:

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿١٩٠﴾

“And fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, and do not be aggressive. Surely Allah does not love the aggressors.”

— 2:190

- This verse clearly lays down the condition that Muslims shall not be the first to attack. They had to fight — it had now become a duty — but only against those who fought against them; aggression was specifically prohibited.
- And this fighting in self-defence is called fighting “in the way of Allah” (*fī sabīl-illāh*) because fighting in defence is the most noble and just of all causes.
- Muslims were not fighting to force Islam on others; rather they were being fought by their opponents to force them to renounce Islam. The Quran says:

... وَلَا يَزَالُونَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ حَتَّى يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَنْ دِينِكُمْ إِنِ اسْتَطَاعُوا ط ...

“... And they will not cease fighting you until they turn you back from your religion, if they can. ...” — 2:217

- It is alleged that towards the end of the Holy Prophet’s life the condition of fighting *only in self-defence* was removed by the later revelations in the Quran in ch. 9 and that Muslims were told to attack all non-Muslims wherever they may be found. This view is entirely wrong. In fact, what Muslims were told in ch. 9 was that they could revoke agreements of peace made with those people who themselves violated those treaties.

- The **only** people to be fought against are described in the following words:

أَلَا تُقَاتِلُونَ قَوْمًا نَكَثُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ وَهَمُّوا بِإِخْرَاجِ الرَّسُولِ وَهُمْ بَدَءُوكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ...<sup>ط</sup>

“Will you not fight a people who broke their oaths and aimed at the expulsion of the Messenger, **and they attacked you first?** ...” — 9:13

- Even though Muslims were allowed to fight their opponents by war, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was told in the Quran to accept peace in the middle of war if the enemy wanted peace.

وَإِنْ جَاحُوا لِسَلْمٍ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٦١﴾  
وَإِنْ يُرِيدُوا أَنْ يَخْدَعُوكَ فَإِنَّ حَسْبَكَ اللَّهُ ۗ ...

“And if they incline to peace, you must incline to it also, and trust in Allah. Surely He is the Hearer, the Knower. And if they intend to deceive you — then surely Allah is sufficient for you. ...” — 8:61–62

- Peace is here recommended even though the enemy’s sincerity may be doubtful. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was so willing to make peace that, whenever the enemy showed the least desire towards peace, he did not hesitate to accept it, such as on the occasion of the Hudaibiyah truce.

- The following verses, revealed shortly before the conquest of Makkah, settle conclusively why Muslims fought, and exactly against whom they are allowed to fight:

عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَجْعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ عَادَيْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ مَوَدَّةً ۗ وَاللَّهُ قَدِيرٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٤﴾

لَا يَنْهَى اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٨﴾

إِنَّمَا يَنْهَى اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَأَخْرَجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ وَظَهَرُوا عَلَىٰ إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَنْ تَوَلَّوهُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٩﴾

“It may be that Allah will bring about friendship  
between you and those of them whom you hold as enemies.

And Allah is Powerful; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

**Allah does not forbid you**, with regard to those who do not fight you for religion,  
nor drive you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness  
and deal with them justly. Surely Allah loves the doers of justice.

**Allah forbids you only** with regard to those who fight you for religion,  
and drive you forth from your homes and help (others) in your expulsion,  
that you make friends of them; and whoever makes friends of them,  
these are the wrongdoers.” — 60:7–9

- This passage begins by prophesying that **friendship** will at last be established between Muslims and their enemies.
- Then it describes the **normal situation**, which is that Muslims will be dealing with people “who do not fight you for religion, nor drive you forth from your homes”. Towards such people, Muslims have a friendly attitude, marked by kindness and justice.

- Then comes the **exceptional, less common situation**, of dealing with people “who fight you for religion, and drive you forth from your homes and help (others) in your expulsion”.
- It is with such people, ***while their hostile behaviour continues***, that friendship is not allowed to Muslims.

***END OF STUDY 29***