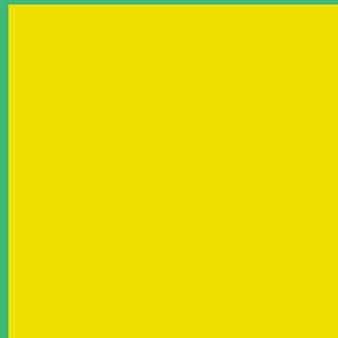


# 4

---



WHEN ENCOUNTERS BECOMES  
CONFLICT: JUST WAR AND  
JUST PEACE

---

## MODULE FOUR

# WHEN ENCOUNTERS BECOMES CONFLICT: JUST WAR AND JUST PEACE

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION OF THE VIDEO



Figure 4.1  
Video Clip

Ahmed goes to a boxing club after school. His father's best friend (Samir) is a boxing coach at Ahmed's boxing club. The boxing club is also a youth center where youngsters come together. They want to reach other youngsters through the boxing activity. The club helps young people get off the street by boxing in the club.

The club is open to everyone, including children and young people from disadvantaged areas. Even social workers are involved. The club also focuses on personal development in a space where they come into contact with other cultures. A boxing champion who belonged to the boxing club radicalized. He rejected the society in which he lived, and after many troubles, he radicalized and went to the 'Islamic State' to fight in the name of Jihad.

## 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...."<sup>1</sup>

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".

<sup>1</sup> 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 4.2  
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.”**<sup>2</sup> (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.

<sup>2</sup>. <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 strategy<sup>3</sup> :

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 4.3  
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)

<sup>3</sup> 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.”**<sup>4</sup> (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.

---

<sup>4</sup> <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.”***<sup>5</sup> (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.”***<sup>6</sup> (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.

---

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

<sup>6</sup>. 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?

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

## 4.3 SPIRITUAL JIHAD

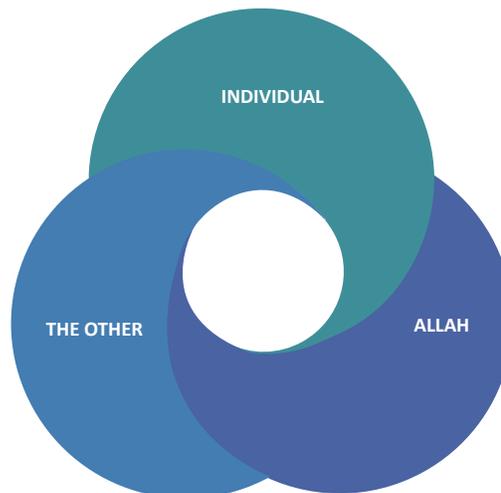
### 4.3.1 INTRODUCTION

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.”**<sup>7</sup> (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.

<sup>7</sup> <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..."	
Spiritual worship	
Healthy living "	
"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." <sup>8</sup>	
To donate food	
For those who follow a path of knowledge, Allah will facilitate the path to Paradise."	

## 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!*

## 4.7 REFERENCES

İbrahim Özdemir, "Towards An Understanding of Environmental Ethics from a Qur'anic Perspective", <http://islam-and-muslims.com/Environmental-Ethics-Quran.pdf> (access 14.05.2020).

I. Malik, *al-Muwatta*, Beiroe, Dar Iyha Attourat Alarabiya, 1985, p. 212.

Koran, <https://koran.nl/> (access 20.05.2020).

Marjorie Hope and James Young, "ISLAM AND ECOLOGY", <http://environment-ecology.com/religion-and-ecology/259-islam-and-ecology.html> (access 9.05.2020).

Saffet Catovic, "ISLAMIC SACRED TEXTS RELATED TO WATER.", [https://www.faithinwater.org/uploads/4/4/3/0/44307383/islamic\\_sacred\\_texts-water-greenfaith.pdf](https://www.faithinwater.org/uploads/4/4/3/0/44307383/islamic_sacred_texts-water-greenfaith.pdf) (access 8.05.2020).

S. Özkaya, *Islam en Ecologie: De ecologische ethiek van de islam gezien vanuit de visie op de relatie tussen mens en natuur*, Leiden, 2013 (access 9.05.2020).

# CiRRA

CENTRE OF EXPERTISE FOR INTELLECTUAL REFORMATION, RESEARCH AND ADVICE

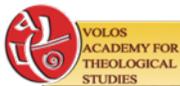


Brahim Bouzarif (1982) is lecturer in Islamic theology and philosophy and deputy director of CIRRA. He is graduate of the Islamic Faculty-Imam University in Riyadh and holds master's degree in religious studies at KU Leuven. He is Khatib Al-Jumu'a (imam of Friday prayer). He has preached in several mosques in Flanders (Belgium). Brahim Bouzarif has been extensively involved in de-radicalisation and assessment efforts in schools, prisons and probation in Belgium since 2017. He also gives training to teachers and principals on how to deal with religious diversity in secondary schools.

 **DUC8 Consortium**



Lapino Albino



This book was funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund – Police.

