

Islam, Terrorism and Sep 11

Islam is frequently misunderstood in some parts of the world today. Perhaps this is because religion no longer dominates everyday life in Western society; whereas, for Muslims, Islam is life. Muslims make no distinction between the secular and the sacred.

The impact of various global events involving Muslims has also meant that Islam and Muslims are more frequently covered in media news reporting. The result is that Muslims everywhere are seen through the same negative stereotypes that have somewhat clouded the reality of the situation, where Islamic terms such as 'jihad', 'fatwa' and 'fundamentalist' are now part of popular vocabulary, albeit with a new 'media-ised' meaning.

Part of this has seen the worrying development of linking of Islam and Muslims with terrorism. Whilst September 11th proliferated this through inappropriate media coverage attributing the attacks indiscriminately against Muslims, it was noticeable prior to this one date where the use of 'Islamic terrorist', 'militant Islam' and 'Muslim extremist' were all quite common. In some respects, the term 'Islamic fundamentalist' had become popularly but quite incorrectly interchangeable with 'Islamic terrorist'.

With regards terrorism, Islam respects the sacredness of life, and rejects any express statement or tacit insinuation that Muslims should harm innocent people: "If one takes a life, it is as if one has taken the life of all humanity. If one saves a single life, it is as if he has saved the life of all humanity" (Inspired by Qur'an 5:32).

FAIR therefore, as do the vast majority of peace-loving Muslims here in the UK and elsewhere, wholeheartedly condemns all terrorism and has sought to make this very clear message at every opportunity. FAIR also believes however that the actions of an individual or a small group do not necessarily represent the beliefs of a particular religion nor its many adherents, and the religion itself cannot be held responsible for such actions. In reality, Islam not only condemns terrorism and suicide missions, but also prohibits them completely.

Fatwa

The opinion, under Islamic law of a pious or knowledgeable Islamic scholar. The fatwa is only relevant to those who follow or are taught by that particular scholar - it is NOT for ALL Muslims.

Fundamentalist

A term originally coined to describe certain Christians in America. The inappropriateness of its popular usage is highlighted by the fact that most Muslims would describe themselves as fundamentalist, due to their belief in the fundamentals of Islam. It is NOT the case that ALL Muslims are engaged in conflict or war.

Jihad

Meaning self purification and derives from the term for the need to strive, struggle, exert oneself and to be willing to overcome evil for good. This is commonly misinterpreted where jihad is inaccurately used only to mean a 'holy war'.

Further Resources

ALI, A. Y. (1989) *The meaning of the Holy Qur'an*. (Islamic Foundation).

AHMED, A. (2000) *Islam today*. (I B Tauris).

HAMID, A. (1996) *Islam the natural way*. (Muslim Education and Literary Services).

POOLE, E. (2002) *Reporting Islam*. (IB Tauris).

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