

High Level Consultation on World's Religious Communities on Nuclear Disarmament

United Nations, September 25, 2013

Islam Inspired Ethical Imperative for Nuclear Abolition

For over 14 centuries the Qur'an and the actions of the Prophet Muhammad, have become the foundation of divine guidance and moral direction for Muslims and Islamic jurisprudence. Centuries have passed since the death of the Prophet; mankind has modernized, technology advanced, science developed and the world transformed into a fast-paced, inter-connected and globalized network. The moral issues that confront mankind today are thus of a different caliber than the issues from over a thousand years ago.

What every man and woman of the Islamic faith must challenge themselves with, is how to confront issues that have only recently surfaced – issues that aren't given any specific guidance from Islamic jurisprudence. In these occasions, Muslims must refer to Islam's moral standards as dictated by the Qur'an and hadiths and carefully apply them to the issues of today. One of those issues is the proliferation of Nuclear weapons and other forms of WMD, including biological and chemical weapons.

In order to understand Islam's stand on this issue, it is incumbent to understand first the rules of war in Islam. The nature of WMD and the way it may be used in war bring us to a conclusion on how is it placed within the Islamic law.

It is indeed a historical fact, that prior to the revelation of the Quran, there was no concept of civilized behaviors in war, neither towards the rights of civilian non-combatants, nor of the rights of combatant enemies. Yet Islam decreed humane rules of war, long time before such ideas were put into conventions and agreements in the West.

We are all aware, that in any war, the potential for aggression and violence is very high and the stress of the situation sometimes leads soldiers to commit terrible atrocities and destructions. In a situation such as this, Islam provided comprehensive rules to prevent atrocities, genocide, and the destructions of our natural environment.

In the Islamic religious sources, either verses of the holy Quran or prophet's statements, one can easily find the enunciation of killing non-combatants. Take as an example Ch. 2: 190: *"Fight in the way of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for God loveth not transgressors"*

Muslim scholars are in agreement that the prohibition of transgression (I'tidaa) in this verse is a clear guideline for Muslim combatants to not violate the humane rules of war, such as killing innocent non-combatants, attacking children and women, dishonoring worshippers and houses of worships, and destroying natural environment, such as burning trees or poisoning wells.

In fact, the Muslims scholars also view this verse as a guideline on how should Muslim combatants deal with their combatant enemies. That for them there are certain

rights to be observed, such as:

- *No one should be burned alive or tortured with fire;*
- *Wounded soldiers should not be attacked;*
- *Prisoners of war should not be killed;*
- *Residential areas should not be plundered or destroyed;*
- *Muslim soldiers must not take anything from the general public;*
- *Dead-bodies must not be disgraced or mutilated.*

These solid principles and rules of conduct was also referenced by the first Caliph, Abu Bakr, in a speech delivered to his army in the year 632:

“Do not commit treachery, you must not mutilate dead bodies. Neither kill a child, nor a woman, nor an aged man. Bring no harm to the trees, nor burn them with fire. Slay not any of the enemy’s flock. You are likely to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic services, leave them alone!”

On the other hand, we all know that the nature of nuclear weapons lies in their capability for mass killing and destruction. Scientists have concluded that if 100 nuclear weapons the size of those used in Hiroshima were detonated, less than 0.5% of the world’s existing nuclear weapons, would be enough to destroy over a billion lives and result into unimaginable disasters to our natural environment. Which means, that by the use of less than 10 % of the current existing nuclear weapons, would we be able to wipe out all inhabitants of this planet.

Upon understanding the rules of conducts of war in Islam, and being aware of such disastrous nature of nuclear weapons, I come to a conclusion with full confidence that Islam does not only inspire ethical imperative for nuclear abolition, Islam strongly rejects the proliferation and the possibility of any use of nuclear weapons and all WMD, including biological and chemical weapons.

This conclusion is based on the following reasons:

First: All forms of WMD do not permit any level of discrimination between combatants and non-combatants, which strongly required by Islamic rules of war;

Second: Even if WMD could be employed strictly against military targets, they kill and destroy in such horrible ways that violate Islamic teachings of fighting humanely;

Third: The use of nuclear weapons and all forms of WMD would afflict lasting damages to the natural environment, which in fact constitutes what the Qur’an labels “*Fasaadun fil-ardh*” (corruption in the land) which is strongly condemned by Islam;

Fourth: The proliferation and the use of nuclear weapons and all forms of WMD is inherently contradicts the very spirit of Islam, Peace (*salaam*) and Compassion (*rahmah*)

Fifth: It clearly opposes the divinely revealed scripture of Islam, that displays an extraordinary respect for human’s life: “...if anyone kills a person –it is as if he kills all mankind, while if any one saves a life it is as if he saves the lives of all mankind” (5:32).

Sixth: Development and proliferation of nuclear weapons, and all forms of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) lead into world-wide poverty and human sufferings that certainly against spirit of Islam for prosperity (*rafahiyah*) and happiness (*sa 'aadah*).

Finally, let me again remind all that the destructive capabilities of nuclear weapons and all forms of WMD, which were beyond anyone's scope of imagination in the 7th century, raise such questions of morality in today's time. What Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, Buddha or Ghandi would say about the weapons of the 21st century?

With that let me conclude, that the goals and the spirit of Islam in one hand, and the nature and the goals of nuclear weapons on the other hand, are incompatible. And it is incompatible with any moral standards. Not with my morals, and I hope that they're not compatible with yours either.

Thank you!

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