

Defence and Jihad in the Qur'an

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كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا ۖ وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا ۖ وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

Fighting is enjoined on you, though it be hateful to you. Yet it may happen that you dislike a thing which is good for you, and it may happen that you love a thing which is evil for you; Allah knows, and you know not. (2:216)

The subject of the present discussion is the system of defense and *jihad* (holy war) in the Holy Qur'an. We will begin by explaining these two terms, after which we shall turn to the problem related to them.

'Defense' means compelling the aggressor to retreat in order to safeguard belief, life, property, honour, freedom and so on from being violated. From a legal viewpoint, defense is a human right that allows a man to defend himself at times when in absence of a lawful authority or away from its protective power, he is attacked by an aggressor who takes the opportunity of the absence of a law enforcement authority to violate the life, reputation, property or honour of the people.

Defense, a Natural Right

Defense of a legitimate right is a natural right which belongs not only to man but also to every living creature. Every living thing, for its survival, is forced to make use of the necessities of life by influencing

other creatures to remove the obstacles which threaten its course of life and to break through barriers which prevent it from deriving benefits from its environment.

In other words, continuation of life rests on the actions and reactions which exist in the order of creation, necessitating conflicts and struggles. If a living being cannot defend itself, it is doomed to destruction. For this very reason, God has provided all creatures with the means of defense, which enable them to survive and defend their legitimate rights.

In brief, unless there exists the right of defense by the side of every legitimate right, that right, having no guarantee of fulfillment, is eventually useless. Therefore, the right of defense is innate, and all members of the human race have accepted it. Every individual, society, school of thought and code of law regards opposition to an aggressor as legitimate.

On the other hand, no lawgiver and no code of law has considered defense of a legitimate right to be illegitimate and illegal. Islam, too, has given this right to man, and considers it to be the chief guarantee for survival of humanity and life of monotheistic religions. It is clearly pointed out by the Qur'an that the right of defense is something innate and natural:

وَلَوْ لَا دَفَعْنَا عَنْ اللَّهِ الْنَّاسَ بَعَثَهُمْ بِنِعْمَتِ اللَّهِ لَفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ ضُرًّا

... Had God not driven back the people, some by means of others, the earth had surely been corrupted ... (2:251)

وَلَوْ لَا دَفَعْنَا عَنْ اللَّهِ الْنَّاسَ بَعَثَهُمْ بِنِعْمَتِ اللَّهِ لَهَدِمَتِ صَوَامِعُ وَيَعُوبُ وَصَلَوَاتُ وَمَسْجِدُ يُذَكَّرُ فِيهَا أَسْمَاءُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا

...Had God not repelled some people by others, certainly the cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, in which Allah's name is much remembered, would have been destroyed.. (22:40)

In the above-mentioned verses defense has been regarded as the cause of averting corruption of the human world and as the major cause of survival of values and continuity of existence of centers of Worship of God, and consequently continuity of monotheism.

The Meaning of Jihad

Literally, *jihad* means 'to strive', 'to struggle' and implies use of force. This meaning has repeatedly been applied in the Holy Qur'an:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ أَلْمُحْسِنِينَ

And [as for] those who strive hard in Our [cause], We will most certainly guide them in Our ways; and God is indeed with the good-doers. (29:69)

In its second usage, *jihad* denotes armed confrontation and war against the enemies of Islam, and sacrificing of one's life and property in the cause of Allah. The Holy Qur'an says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

Surely those who believed and migrated, and struggled. in Allah's way with their property and their souls. (8:72)

In Islamic jurisprudence, *jihad* in this sense is sometimes taken to mean initial war against disbelievers, as against defense, so as to make them abstain from polytheism, accept monotheism and submit to the Divine order. At other times, *jihad* is applied in the general sense of war against disbelievers, which includes defense as well. In the Holy Qur'an *jihad* is used in its general sense, which in most instances is equivalent to 'defense'.

Types of Jihad

Jihad is classified into several types, most of which pertain to defense.

1. Defense of the existence of Islam and its sanctities, against an enemy who intends to demolish the basis of the religion and replace it by some form of disbelief such as Magianism, Christianity or Judaism. An example of it is the case of Spain.

2. Resistance against an enemy who transgresses on the life and territory of Muslims; the enemy's main aim is to encroach on the lives, property and territories of Muslims, rather than the destruction of Islam.

3. Defense of Muslim brethren engaged in conflict with unbelievers in a certain region where there is a danger of the domination of unbelievers over them. In such a condition, in accordance with the norms of Islamic brotherhood and solidarity, Muslims are obliged to defend their oppressed brothers and to fight their common enemy.

4. Expulsion of an aggressor who has occupied Muslim lands or established religious domination over Muslims. In such circumstances, it is incumbent upon all Muslims to fight the enemy's domination and restore the independence and authority of Muslims.

5. Jihad with unbelievers so that they may abandon their false beliefs and incline towards Islam. This

type of *jihad* is referred to as *al-jihad al-ibtidai* (a case when fighting is initiated by Muslims) and has its own particular conditions and involves elaborate discussion.

Significance of Jihad

According to my own brief study, the word *jihad* has been mentioned in 17 surahs of the Holy Qur'an, most of which were revealed in al Madinah. These surahs are: *al Baqarah*, '*Al-Imran*, *al Nisa'* *alMaidah*, *al- Anfal*, *al-Tawbah*, *al Nahl*, *al Hajj*, *al Naml*, *al Ahzab*, *al Shura*, *Muhammad*, *al Fath*, *al-Hadid*, *al Hashr*, *al Mumtahanah*, *al-Saff*.

There are about 404 verses in the Holy Qur'an regarding *jihad* (of course, it is difficult to give the exact number of verses related to *jihad*, as with other subjects of the Qur'an; since, the Qur'an usually begins with some preliminaries before entering a subject. The other relevant matters are often woven together with the main subject at hand.

At the end of a group of verses other relevant matters are touched upon. For example, in verses concerning *jihad*, topics of *infaq* (voluntary charity) and *wilayah* have been mentioned in the beginning or at the end of the verses. Therefore, it is obvious that we cannot classify the Qur'anic verses according to subjects in a precise order).

However the recurrent emphasis of the theme of *jihad* in the Qur'anic verses, with their powerful, and decisive tones, loaded with promise and threat, and their deliberate emphasis on this theme are indicative of the unique importance and significance of *jihad*. For example, consider the following verses:

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ يُقَاتِلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتٌ أَوْ قُتِلُوا ۚ بَلْ أَمْوَاتٌ ۚ وَلَا تَشْعُرُونَ

And call not those who are slain in the way of Allah dead'. Nay, they are living, only ye perceive not. (2: 154)

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُدْخَلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ ۚ مَسَّتْهُمُ الْبَأْسَاءُ وَالضَّرَّاءُ وَزُلْزَلُوا حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مَعَهُ ۚ مَتَى نَصْرُ اللَّهِ ۚ أَلَا إِنَّ نَصْرَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ ۚ

Or think ye that ye will enter paradise while yet there hath not come unto you the like of that which came to those who passed away before you? Affliction and adversity befell them, they were shaken till the messenger [of God] and those who believed along with him said: `When cometh Allah's help?' Surely Allah 's help is nigh. (2:214)

وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا ۚ وَأَنْتُمْ أَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ۚ إِنْ يَمَسُّكُمْ إِحْسَاءٌ فَقَدْ فَتَنَّاكُمْ ۚ فَتَنَّاكُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ قَرِحَ ۚ مَثَلُهُ ۚ

Faint not, neither sorrow; you shall be the upper ones if you are believers. If a wound touches you, a like wound already has touched the heathen (3: 139 – 140)

وَلَا تَهِنُوا فِي أَبْغَاءِ الْكُفْرِ ۚ إِنَّ تَكُونُوا تَأْلَمُونَ فَانَّهُمْ ۚ يَا لَمُونَ كَمَا تَأْلَمُونَ ۚ

Faint not in the pursuit of the enemy. If you are suffering, they are also suffering as you are suffering.. (4: 104)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَنْ يَرْتَدَّ مِنْكُمْ ۚ عَن دِينِهِ ۚ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ ۚ يُحِبُّهُمْ ۚ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ ۚ أَذِلَّةٌ عَلَى الْكُفْرِ ۚ أَعِزَّةٌ عَلَى الْكُفْرِينَ ۚ يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

O believers, whoso of you turns from his religion, (know that in your stead) God will bring a people whom He loveth and who love Him, humble towards the believers, stern towards the unbelievers, men who strive in the way of God, not fearing the reproach of any reproacher. Such is the bounty of God, He gives it unto whom He will; Allah is All-embracing, All-knowing. (5:54)

إِلَّا تَنْفَرُوا يُعَذِّبَكُمُ ۚ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ۚ وَيَسْتَأْتِبَكُمُ ۚ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ۚ

If you go not forth (for jihad), He will chastise you with a painful chastisement, and instead of you He will substitute another people... (9:39)

Jihad: A Legal and Natural Right

As pointed out, among the five types of *jihad*, four have a defensive aspect. Defense being a natural right, no one can deny or doubt it, and no logic can deprive Muslims of it, as the verses of the Qur'an affirm and emphasize. Following verses of *Surat al Hajj* were the first to be revealed about *jihad*

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقْتَلُونَ بِإِثْمِهِمْ ۚ ظَلِمُوا ۚ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ ۚ لَقَدِيرٌ ۚ الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ۚ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ۚ وَلَوْ لَا دَفَعُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ ۚ لَفُتَّتِ صَوَاحِقُ الْأَرْضِ ۚ وَالصَّلَواتُ ۚ وَمَسْجِدُ يُذَكَّرُ فِيهَا ۚ أَسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا ۚ

Permission is given to those who fight because they have been wronged surely God is able to help them –who were unjustly driven from their homes for their mere affirming `Our Lord is God'. Had it not been for God's repelling some men by others, certainly cloisters, churches, synagogues and mosques, wherein the Name of God is much mentioned, would have been destroyed (22:39 –40)

These verses give permission to Muslims to fight those who have oppressed them. Muslims are ordered to repel aggressors and oppressors in order to preserve and protect the manifestations of Divine Shari'ah, and religion of monotheism. There is also another verse concerning *jihad* which has been regarded by some to be the first verse on this subject:

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ ۖ

Fight in the way of God against those who fight against you.. (2: 190)

This verse explicitly orders Muslims to fight oppressors and aggressors, and most of the verses on this subject relate to defensive *jihad*. There is only one verse which exclusively refers to *al jihad al-ibtida'i* (and perhaps some other verses as well may be interpreted as referring to it):

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ يَلُونَكُمْ مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ وَلَا يَجِدُوا فِيكُمْ غِلَظَةً ۚ وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

O believers, fight the unbelievers who are near to you, and let them find harshness in you, and know that God is with the God-fearing. (9: 123)

The above-mentioned verse calls for *jihad* against unbelievers who live in vicinity to Muslims; and it is natural that their efforts at propagating Islam should begin with nearby regions and then spread gradually to distant ones. In the ensuing discussion, regarding the aims of *jihad*, we will explain how the starting of war against unbelievers (*al jihad al-ibtida'i*) is also a natural right.

Goals of Jihad

The various goals which the Holy Qur'an attributes to *jihad* are as follows:

1. Defense:

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ ۖ

Fight in the way of God against those [unbelievers] who fight against you., (2: 190)

2. To stop sedition or intrigue (*fitnah*), which in its common sense involves defense as well:

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ ۖ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةً ۖ

And fight them until sedition is no more.. (2: 193)

3. Consolidation of Divine rule and forcing the opponents to submission:

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ ۚ حَتَّىٰ لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ ۚ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ كُلُّهُ لِلَّهِ ۚ

And fight them, till sedition is no more, and the religion is God's entirely.. (8:39)

الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتَ مِنْهُمْ ۚ ثُمَّ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَهُمْ ۚ فِي كُلِّ مَرَّةٍ ۚ وَهُمْ لَا يَتَّقُونَ

...those of them with whom thou hast made compact then they break their compact every time, not being God fearing. (8:56)

وَإِنْ نَكَثُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ ۚ وَطَعَنُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ ۚ فَقَاتِلُوا أَلِيَّةَ الْكُفْرِ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ لَا أَيْمَانَ لَهُمْ ۚ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُونَ

But if they break their pledges after their treaty, and assail your religion, then fight the heads of unbelief; they have no binding oaths; haply they will desist. (9:12)

4. Consolidation of a Divine system and procurement of security from the attacks of potential enemies:

فَقَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ ۚ وَلَا يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَتَّىٰ يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَن يَدٍ ۚ وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ

Fight those who believe not in God and the Last Day and do not forbid what God and His Messenger have forbidden –such men as practice not the religion of truth, being of those who have been given the Book –until they pay the tribute out of hand and have been humbled. (9:29)

5. Stopping corruption on the earth:

وَلَوْ لَا دَفَعُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ ۚ لَفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ ۚ

And if God had not repelled some men by others, the earth would have been corrupted..(2:251)

6. Preventing the manifestations of religion and centers of worship from being destroyed:

لَوْ لَا دَفَعُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ ۚ لَهَدِمَتِ الصُّوفُوعُ مَعَ وَبِيعُ ۚ وَصَلُّوا ۚ وَمَسْجِدُ

Had it not been for God's repelling some men by means of others, cloisters, churches,

synagogues and mosques would assuredly have been destroyed.. (22:40)

7. Establishment of truth and justice and destruction of falsehood and injustice:

لِيُحِقَّ الْحَقَّ وَيُبْطِلَ الْبَاطِلَ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُجْرِمُونَ

That He might verify the truth and prove untrue the untrue, though the guilty were averse to it. (8:8)

8. Uprooting oppression and supporting the oppressed:

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْضَاعِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ

What is (wrong) with you that you do not fight in the way of God, and of the weakened among men, women and children?(4:75)

The above are some of the goals of *jihad* as can be deduced from the Qur'an. However, some of them can be grouped together, or rather all of them can be taken as referring to one basic natural right: the right of Muslims to defend against any encroachment on their lives, property, territory, honour and sanctities. It is on this basis that *al-jihad al'ibtida'i* can also be explained as being a part of defense.

As the great exegete of the Qur'an, the late `Allamah Tabataba'i, has pointed out, monotheism, and socio-political systems based on it, are based on human nature and constitute the sole way for betterment of the condition of humanity. He cites the following verses for the support of his statement that it is the most important of natural rights that man should strive to establish, preserve, revive the natural religion of monotheism and struggle for the establishment of a monotheistic socio-political system:

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَٰلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

So set thy face to the religion, a man of pure faith – God's nature upon which He originated mankind. There is no changing God's creation. That is the right religion, but most men know it not. (30:30)

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ

He has laid down for you a religion that He charged Noah with, and that We have revealed to thee, and that We charged Abraham with, Moses and Jesus: `Perform the religion, and scatter not therein...(42: 13)

From a sociological viewpoint, the most important of natural rights is the right of human beings to lead wholesome lives under the protection of a system of laws which guarantee individual rights. As said before defense of this right is also a natural right without which an undefended monotheistic system will fall a prey to ambitions of tyrants.

The verse (22:40) explicitly states that if it were not for a defensive power that may stop aggression against monotheistic societies, religion as a natural right of men, whose outward manifestations are mosques, churches and synagogues, would have been totally annihilated.

The verse of Surat al-Anfal (8:8) explicitly refers to the unrighteous who sit in ambush on those who seek the Truth, and who make attempts to destroy the Truth. If monotheists do not defend the Truth, oppressors will replace the Truth by falsehood.

Accordingly, it is *jihad* which serves as a protector and safeguard of Truth. Also, the survival of the Muslim society is also tantamount to survival of monotheism; therefore, *jihad* in the way of God is the prime guarantee of survival of monotheism itself

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ءَاسِئْتَجِيبُوا لِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ ؕ

O believers, respond to God and the Messenger when He calls you into that which will give you life.. (8:24)

Here, *jihad* is described as a life-giving source, and it does not make any difference whether it is waged for defense of Islam or Muslims, or if it is a war initiated by Muslims in order to revive the Divine and natural religion of monotheism, to liberate human beings from pressures imposed upon them by tyrants and evil forces rebellious against God, to restore to humanity its lost dignity, and to destroy polytheism, which is the agent of the destruction of man's primordial nature and corruptor of all manifestations of monotheism including human morals.

From the above discussion it becomes clear that Islam has permitted its followers to purify the earth of the pollution of polytheism and its manifestations in all forms and shapes, and to revive the religion of monotheism. The Holy Qur'an promises the ultimate victory of monotheists, and calls them to strive to replace polytheism by the worship of the One God:

وَلَقَدْ ءَكْتَبْنَا فِي الزُّبُورِ مِّنْ ءَبَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ ءَللّٰهَ ءَارِضٌ بِرِثْمِهَا ءَعِبَادِي ءَلصّٰلِحُونَ

And verily We have written in the Psalms after the Remembrance, 'The earth shall be the inheritance of My righteous servants.' (21: 105)

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنكُمْ ۖ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسِّرَنَّ لَهُمْ ۖ وَيَخْرُجُنَّ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي كَفَرُوا فِيهَا مِنكُمْ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنكُمْ ۖ وَيَعْمَلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أُمَّمًا أُخِيصُوا بِهَا دِينَهُمْ ۖ وَنَنصَرُهُمْ بِالَّذِينَ أَرَادُوا كَيْدَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عِندَ ذَاكَ عَلِيمٌ ۚ
قَبِيْلِهِمْ ۚ وَلَيُنصَرُنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ ۖ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أُمَّمًا أُخِيصُوا بِهَا دِينَهُمْ ۖ وَنَنصَرُهُمْ بِالَّذِينَ أَرَادُوا كَيْدَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عِندَ ذَاكَ عَلِيمٌ ۚ

God has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will surely make you successors in the earth, even as He made those who were before them successors, and that He will surely establish their religion for them that He has approved for them, and will give them in exchange after their fear security: 'They shall serve Me, not associating with Me anything. -' (24:55)

The above verses bear clear prophecy as to complete annihilation of polytheism with all its manifestations, and its replacement by monotheism. The following verse refers to a nation of *mujahidun* who struggle sincerely and bravely, undertaking the duty of purging the earth of polytheism. They are a people who are not deterred by any reproach or blame in their *jihad* and in their struggle to universalize the word of Truth.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مَنْ يَرْتَدَّ مِنكُمْ ۖ عَن دِينِهِ ۖ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ ۖ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ ۚ أَذَلَّةٌ عَلَىٰ
الْأُمَمِ ۚ مَنِينٌ أَعَزَّةٌ عَلَىٰ الْكَافِرِينَ يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ ۚ

O believers, whoso of you turns from his religion, (know that in his stead) God will bring a people whom He loveth and who love Him, humble towards the believers stern towards the unbelievers, men who strive in the way of God, not fearing the reproach of any reproacher (5:54)

From this it can be concluded that *al jihad al-`ibtida'i* as a call to the polytheists for return to monotheism is a legitimate and natural right, which is used when logical and rational approaches, peaceful invitations, communication of the Divine message, warnings, good tidings, proofs, and presentation and explanation of the Qur'anic verses prove of no avail.

This approach is not exclusive to religion, rather it is a method adopted by all nations. In all social orders and systems where the people accept and honour a law for the development and welfare of society, it is considered a right to take steps to make the rebels and the guilty, submit to the law after attempts at their guidance have failed on account of their obstinacy.

This is an innate right of every system. Then, why must a Divine system based on monotheism should be deprived of it?

In the light of the above discussion, the verse "Fight the unbelievers who are near to you, and let them

find harshness in you”, is not confined to defensive *jihad*. In the story of the prophet Solomon (A), mentioned in *Surat al Nahl*, Solomon threatens the polytheists of Sheba with these words:

فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّهُم بِجُنُودٍ ۖ لَا قِبَلَ لَهُم بِهَا وَلَنُخِذَنَّ مِنْهُم مِّنَ هَاهُنَا آذَانًا ۖ وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ

...so we will most certainly come to them with hosts which they shall have no power to resist, and we shall expel them from there, abased and utterly humbled. (27:37)

In this case there existed no aggression or provocation. Solomon's threat is in response to the un-acceptance of his invitation to monotheism addressed in his letter to the Queen of Sheba. Therefore, this Qur'anic story indicates the lawfulness of starting war against unbelievers.

Jihad in the History of the Prophets

The approach of the prophets, as testified by many verses of the Qur'an, was based on the fact that they called people to their religion by warning, good tidings, arguments, proofs and by awakening their inner human nature and their sleeping intellects.

The prophets started the propagation of their message in a gentle and sympathetic manner. Their message was accepted wholeheartedly by those who had pure hearts, whereas others whose hearts were dead, whose spirits were polluted, and who rebelled against God rejected it.

The powerful among the latter stood in strong opposition against the prophets and were prepared to extinguish the Divine light.

When the advocates of Truth were unable to resist and confront the forces of evil due to lack of supporters and other handicaps, they only tried to protect their lives and awaited God's help, which was bestowed upon them after severe hardships. When the confrontation became a matter of life and death for them, God's promise to help the believers was fulfilled.

God sent chastisement upon unbelievers in the form of lightning, tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, storms, and so forth, destroying the unbelievers and delivering the monotheists. The Qur'an refers to this pattern in the stories of Noah, Shu'ayb, Lot, Abraham and Moses.

فَدَعَا رَبَّهُ ۖ أَنِّي مَغْلُوبٌ ۖ فَأَنْتَصِرْ ۖ فَفَتَحْنَا أَبْوَابَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَاءٍ ۖ مُّنْهَمِرٍ ۖ

Therefore he [Noah] called unto his Lord, saying, Yam vanquished; do Thou succour me!' Then We opened the gates of heaven with water pouring down. (54: 10 – 11)

قَالَ لَوْ أَنِّي لِي بِكُمْ قُوَّةٌ أَوْ إِيَّاوِي إِلَىٰ رُكْنٍ ۖ شَدِيدٍ ۖ قَالُوا يَلُوطُ إِنَّا رُسُلُ رَبِّكَ لَن يَصِلُوا إِلَيْكَ ۖ فَاسْرِرْ

بِأَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتُ مِنْكُمْ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا أَمْرًا تَرَأَتْكَ إِنَّهُ مُصِيبُهَا مَا أَصَابَهُمْ إِنَّ مَوْعِدَهُمُ الصُّبْحُ أَلَيْسَ الصُّبْحُ بِقَرِيبٍ فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةً مِّنَ السُّجَّالِ مَنضُودٍ

He [Lot] said: `O would that I had power against you, or might take refuge in a strong pillarso when Our command came, We overturned it [the city of Sodom] uppermost nethermost, and rained on it stones of baked clay, one on another. (11:80-82)

قَالُوا حَرِّقُوهُ وَانصُرُوا آلِهَتَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرًا دَأْبًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَخْسَرِينَ

They [the polytheists] said: `Burn him [Abraham], and stand by your gods, if you would do aught.' We said: `O fire, be coolness and peace for Abraham.' They wished to set a snare for him; but We made them the great losers. (21:68-70)

However, whenever the monotheists became powerful and felt capable of overpowering their enemies, they took up arms in order to achieve the goals of the Divine prophets, to level the way of true knowledge of God, and to remove all barriers from its way. At this stage, there was no more any compulsion to tolerate polytheism or its supporters.

This is attested by the history of Mosaic movement, that of Saul and Goliath, and that of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Moses and his people, oppressed by the Pharaoh, leave Egypt under his tyrannical pressure without resorting to arms. However, once out of Egypt, when his people are confronted with the polytheistic Moabites in southern Palestine, sensing sufficient power to overpower the enemy, he wages war against them.

In summary, it is an undeniable fact that prophets of the old waged *jihad* and struggled in the cause of God; and we read in the Qur'an:

وَكَايِنٍ مِّن نَّبِيٍّ قَاتَلَ مَعَهُ رَبِّيُونَ كَثِيرًا

And many a prophet there has been, with whom thousands manifold have fought (3:146)

Jihad, a Duty for All Times

Bearing in mind the fact that *jihad*, in its general sense of the defense of Islam and Muslims, is confirmed by reason, and is regarded by the Holy Qur'an as the most important religious duty and as the foundation of survival of monotheism and Divine order, its necessity is also demonstrated by historical experience.

There is no room for the slightest doubt that this obligation is not restricted to early Islamic era or the days of the Holy Prophet of Islam, and that there is no condition for *jihad* except the capacity of Muslims to resort to armed confrontation.

Any attempt to restrict the application of this duty to some specific time and conditions (besides the condition of sufficient power for armed struggle) cannot be explained as anything but as a product of love of physical comfort, lack of understanding of the Qur'anic message, jurisprudential torpor, indifference to the interests of Islam and Muslims, fear and timidity—all of which are a hangover of centuries of seclusion from real problems of life and prevalence of the spirit of Sufism and dervishhood.

Had it not been so, how could an Islamic scholar or jurist consider more than four hundred Qur'anic verses about *jihad*, with their characteristic fiery tone, as being exclusively applicable to the first few years of the Islamic era?

How else could Islam, this eternal religion, be left defenseless in the midst of its sworn enemies? What else could have opened the doors to influence of enemies to enter Muslim lands and encroach on the life, property, territory and honour of Muslims, and allowed them to establish their pagan domination over the sanctities of Islam?

Is it possible that the verse:

وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسَاطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ

Make ready for them whatever force you can (8:60)

which bears an everlasting guarantee of Muslims' power and prestige should be relevant only for a few decades of the Islamic civilization? When treaties made with Muslims were broken, why did we fail to act according to the Qur'anic injunction:

وَإِنْ نَكَثُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ وَطَعَنُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ فَقَاتِلُوا أَلَمَّةَ الْكُفْرِ إِنَّهُمْ لَا أَيْمَانَ لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُونَ

But if they break their oaths after their covenant and thrust at your religion, then fight the leaders of unbelief; they have no secret oaths; haply they will give over. (9:12)

Can one believe that the following assurance of the Qur'an is restricted to the first few decades of the Islamic era?

وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَنْتُمْ أَلَعَلَّوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

Neither be disheartened, nor be sad; you shall be the upper ones if you are believers. (3: 139)

If we can permit ourselves to doubt the validity of *al jihad al'ibtidai*, is it possible for us to deny even the necessity of defense?

The greatest problem of Muslims throughout the past ages has been indifference toward their own defense, and today if the enemies of Islam have ranked themselves against Islam and Muslims, and do not desist from hatching every manner of vicious plots against them, there is, more than ever before, the need for Muslims to cooperate with one another and engage in *jihad* with all their energies and resources.

This is so true that even if—God forbid we were not Muslims, it was our natural and rational duty to defend our rights, and not to yield to every manner of disgrace and abasement. Isn't it a matter of shame that one billion Muslims should be put to disgrace at the hands of three million Jews of whom the Qur'an says:

وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّلَّةُ وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ وَبَاءُوا بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ
النَّبِيَّ بْنَ بَغِيٍّ الْاَلْحَقِّ

And abasement and poverty were pitched upon them, and they were laden with the burden of God's anger; that, because they had disbelieved in the signs of God and slain the Prophets unrightfully?... (2:61)

Israel, encouraged and supported by the U.S., does not desist from committing fresh aggressions against us every day. If U.S. supports Israel, isn't God our supporter and wouldn't He support us if we fight in His way and defend ourselves and the honour of Islam?

The Divine promise of help is true, but we have not only lost belief in that promise but also have lost the primary condition of faith:

إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

Now we have become such that this warning of the Qur'an has become a fact of our life:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَا لَكُمْ إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ انْفِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ اثَّاقَلْتُمْ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ أَرْضَيْتُمْ بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ
فَمَا مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ إِلَّا تَنْفِرُوا يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا وَيَسْتَبْدِلَ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ وَلَا تَضُرُّهُ شَيْئًا وَاللَّهُ
عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

O believers, what is amiss with you, that when it is said to you, 'Go forth in the way of God,' you

sink down heavily to the ground? Are you so content with this present life, rather than the world to come? Yet the enjoyment of this present life, compared with the world to come, is a little thing. If you go not forth, He will chastise you with a painful chastisement, and instead of you He will substitute another people; and you will not hurt Him anything, for God is powerful over everything. (9:38-39)

It is the goal of the Islamic Republic of Iran to show that *jihad* is a sacred duty on which all other duties are based. With the revival of this sense of duty, it is possible to resurrect the practice of God's religion. It was under the influence of a strong sense of this duty that Muslims were able to subdue the great empires during the early days of Islam.

However, this sense of duty – and there is no power in – the world which can resist it – originates from faith (*iman*). The Islamic Republic is determined to show the truth carried in these words:

﴿وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ آل عمران: ١٣٩

It is determined to prove that if the sacred Islamic values of martyrdom (*shahadah*) and sacrifice (*ithar*) are revived, the glory once experienced by the Islamic civilization in the past will become a current affair for Muslims for once again. The Islamic Republic has based its programme of training its youth so that they may cultivate the character to fulfil these sacred words of the Holy Qur'an:

بِقَوْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ أَذِلَّةٌ عَلَى الْأَمْمُونِ أَعِزَّةٌ عَلَى الْكُفْرِينَ يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ

....a people whom He loveth and who love Him, humble towards the believers stern towards the unbelievers, men who strive in the way of God, not fearing the reproach of any reproacher(5:54)

Accordingly, it is the religious obligation of all Muslims to support this Islamic system and assist its Divine ideals; and disregarding all kinds of geographical, racial, national, and linguistic factors to rise for defense against the enemies of Islam under the shadow of its sacred flag, cementing their ranks with the heavenly glue of Islamic solidarity.

It is now the call of the faith to prefer honour to disgrace and to prefer a heroic martyrdom to a life of abasement. If they do so, they will taste the sweet flavour of the fruits of *jihad*, and feel the power of Divine assistance within their powerful arms; because these are the words addressed to sincere *mujahidun*

يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ

The hand of God is over their hands.. (48: 10)

This will indeed be a practical step towards realization of the Divine promise:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ ۖ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظَاهِرَهُ ۖ عَلَىٰ الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ ۖ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ

It is He who sent His Messenger with the guidance and religion of truth, that He may uplift it above every religion, though the polytheists may be averse. (9:33)

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