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**MORAL TEACHINGS OF ISLAM NOT AS
SEEN BY AL QAEDA OR OTHER GROUPS**

by

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ABSTRACT

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Some individuals throughout the world have not heard of Islam. Others have heard of the word Islam, but know nothing about what it stands for. Some know only a little about the religion of Islam, some have received distorted ideas about Islam. They evaluate this religion by considering the actions of extremists who do not know the real Islam or its moral teachings. To all these individuals and to those interested in knowing more about the religion of Islam (Moral Teaching of Islam), it is hoped that this paper will be help.

This paper is written to assist and guide the people who do not understand the Islam to find many answers to their questions concerning Islam, and how does Islam view terrorism.

The first section discusses the background of Islam, and explains the origin of this religion, the Holy book, Prophet Muhammad, the five pillars as frameworks of the Muslim life, and the effect of that on our individual and social lines, and the spread of Islam (Jihad) by teaching and preaching. The second section will illustrate the major sects of Islam, and what does Islam say about civilization, peace, terrorism, and human rights, including the Islamic groupings in some Islamic states, and in last part of this section, I provide general information about moral teachings of Islam. The third section concludes with a summary of my paper's findings. Overall I will support my paper with some sayings from the holy book (Qur'an) and Prophet Mohammad sayings.

I hope that this humble effort has answered some of the important question in the reader's mind and helped him or her to see the truth about Islam from objective perspective.

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MORAL TEACHINGS OF ISLAM NOT AS SEEN BY AL QAEDA OR OTHER GROUPS

BACKGROUND

Say, He is God, the One. God to whom the creatures turn to for their needs, He begets not nor was He begotten. And there is none like unto him.

- Qur an, 112:1-4

While contemplating our being, the revitalization of human life, and the life of our world all provoke thought about the complex secrets and wonders of creation. Through the course of time, humanity has searched for a better understanding of these and many other bewildering issues. In order to assist humans in this endeavor, Allah sent messengers to instruct and explain his wisdom behind, and reason for, creation, including the secrets of the universe and of moral life. Furthermore, instructions were provided concerning the organization of human life, by establishing the proper relationship to oneself, to others, and to ones creator.

The term generally chosen to represent divinely mandated guidance is religion. The word religion is a noun. Translated into the Arabic language, it means submission and obedience. The root word of Deen is Dana, that is, to obey or to submit. When we say Deen is for Allah alone, we mean that judgment is in Allah's hands. When we say we submit to the Deen of Allah that means we take it as a way of life. The word itself indicates submission and obedience. Muslims perceive religion to be a system of divine regulations fore those who are mentally sound and who choose prosperity in status and success in the hereafter. It provides the individual with a clear creed, a comprehensive system of worship, a well established legislative system, and way of life by which one may direct the course of his or hers existence.

There are many people who think that the war between communism and the West is about to be replaced by a war between the West and Muslims. In fact, in the past few years, this concern about Islam has increased. Unfortunately, because of this concern that people have in their minds, there have been many attempts to distract people from this religion and misrepresent the religion as well. Some of these attempts have been clearly expressed by some groups and states, and writers who have advocated that Islam as a religion has grown and spread by the sword and have depicted the people who follow this religion as violent, barbaric, and/or brutal. Islam, as originally revealed, is not like this or is it like that which is seen in al Qaeda or other groups. Islam and its moral teachings, its nature as the true Religion, and traditionally spread through preaching and teaching. Therefore to understand the flexibility and the stability of Islam, I hope I will be able to respond to such a claim and to give a clear and accurate picture of Islam as a religion of peace, and explain the moral teachings of Islam.

THE ORIGIN OF ISLAM

The first thing that one should know and clearly understand about Islam is what the word "Islam" itself means. The religion of Islam is not named after a person as in the case of Christianity, which was named after Jesus Christ, or Buddhism which was named after Gotama Buddha. Nor was it named after a tribe like the religion of Judaism which is named after the tribe of Judah, or Hinduism which is named after the Hindus. Islam is the true, original form of religion which was revealed by Allah and taught by all previous prophets and messengers of Allah, and as such, its name represents the central, all pervasive, principle of God's religion. That is, the requirement that all human beings submit totally to the will of God (Allah). The word Islam in Arabic has two meanings: the first one, the linguistic meaning of the consonant roots of "peace" and secondly, the religious meaning, meaning submission to the will of Allah. The two meanings are intertwined because it is only through submission to the will of Allah that a person achieves true peace. When one reaches this stage, one knows how to react to Allah, to oneself, to other people, and to creation.

Some people characterize Islam as a restrictive religion that sets a long list of "do's and don'ts". They also view Muslims as emotional people that worship a different God than Christians and Jews and are secluded from others with their backward religion. In reality Islam is a comprehensive way of life. This way of life is guided by principles that harmonize peoples' internal beliefs with their personal and collective requirements. The guidelines for living are expressions of a very central and basic belief that nothing is worthy of worship except Allah, the one and only God, and that Muhammad is the last messenger of Allah. Just as Allah provides us with all requirements of our physical needs, he also provides guidance through worship and supplication to fulfill our spiritual needs.

Islamic history dates back to the time of Prophet Muhammad Ibn Abdullah who was born in Makka (Mecca) in the year 571. His mission commenced after the prophet Jesus who was born miraculously by the command of God, in the same manner by which He brought Adam into being, that is, without a father. Prophet Muhammad lived for 63 years. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) received the first revelation from Allah through the Angel Gabriel when he was forty years old, and for the next 23 years he received revelation and preached the message of Islam¹. He sacrificed everything for the cause of Islam. Muslims, like Jews and Christians, also trace the origin of their religious tradition (Islam) to the one true God through a long line of prophetic messengers. Thus Muslims emphasize that the Judeo-Christian tradition is more accurately, the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition because all three are from the descendents of Abraham, the first messenger to receive God's revelation. Thus, they share an Abrahamic faith

with its common belief in God, prophets, revelation divinely mandated community, and moral responsibility. While Jews and Christians trace their lineage through Isaac to Abraham and Sarah, Muslims do so through Ishmael, the first born son of Abraham and his wife Hagar. Much as the story of the Hebrew people records the triumph of the monotheism revealed to Adam, Abraham, and Moses to a polytheistic world. Similarly, Islamic history recounts a similar story of uncompromising monotheism, prophecy, and divine revelation within a tribal polytheistic social setting. As Jews have the Hebrew scriptures or Torah, and Christians the Gospels, so too the Muslims possess their sacred scripture, the *Qur'an*. Muslims believe that Allah first sent his revelation to the Jews and then to the Christians. But, as time and history marched forward, the original purity and accuracy of these revelations became distorted through human intervention and interpolation. Eventually, God sent down his revelation through the Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the last and final prophet. This, then, is the basis of the Muslim belief that the *Qur'an*, is the perfect, complete, and the literal word of Allah. Muslims further believe that Allah himself protects the accuracy and purity of the *Qur'an*. This divine protection, removes the necessity for further messengers or revelations as the possibility of corruption of the text is precluded. Furthermore, the collections of Hadith or those "reports of what the Prophet Muhammad said or did" when combined with the text of the *Qur'an* constitute the 2 immutable divine sources of law and personal conduct in Muslim life.

THE QUR'AN

The *Qur'an* is the book of Allah and is a book of guidance. Every word of the *Qur'an* is the word of Allah. It is preserved in its original form, not a single word of it has been changed or lost. It is today, exactly as it was revealed to the prophet Muhammad some 1425 years ago. Some Muslims learn the whole of the *Qur'an* by heart, but most Muslim's learn only parts of it by heart. The *Qur'an* has been revealed in the Arabic language, and it is a book of complete guidance and the true Guidance for all of mankind, and covers all aspects of life.

From the *Qur'an* and the Hadith, learned jurists interpreted the law. These individual interpretations were deemed too subjective or fallible to be left in the hands of individuals. Therefore, it was decided that the collective judgment of the greatest of the jurists would provide less chance for error. The collective wisdom of jurists representing the Islamic community emerged as a manifestation of God's will and were recorded as such. Thus the *Qur'an*: the Sunna, as recorded in the hadith; and the consensus of the jurists; are all considered to be part of the sharia, or straight path of sacred law. The sharia covers all aspects of life from, religion, to politics, to family life. Those who observe the tradition of the Sunna are called Sunnis, and

comprise approximately 90% of all Muslims today. Consequently, Islam embodies a complete way of life, that, when followed correctly, enables the human being to achieve his or her created purpose. There are five obligations on every Muslim. They are the testimony of faith, prayer (Salah), fasting (Siyam), charity (*Zakah*), and pilgrimage (Hajj).

THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

The five pillars of Islam are the frameworks of the Muslim life. They are the testimony of faith, the ritualized worship, the giving of *Zakat* (support of the poor and needy people), fasting during the month of Ramadan and performing the pilgrimage to Makka once in a lifetime for those who are able.

- The Testimony of Faith: the testimony of faith is saying with conviction *La ilaha ill Allah, Muhammadar rasool Allah*'. This saying means "there is no god but God (Allah). and Muhammad is the messenger of God". The first part, there is no god but God, that means that He has neither partner nor son. This testimony of faith is called *shahada*, a simple formula that should be said with conviction in order to convert to Islam. The testimony of faith is the most important pillar of Islam.
- Prayer: Muslim performs five prayers a day. Each prayer requires no more than few minutes to perform. Prayer, in Islam, is a direct link between the worshipper and God. There are no intermediaries between God and the worshipper. In prayer, a person feels inner happiness, peace, and comfort, and an undeniable feeling that God is pleased with him or her. The prophet Muhammad said, "O Billal, let us have our comfort with prayer." Billal was one of Mohammed's companions who was given the charge to call the people to prayers. Prayers are performed at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and night. A Muslim may pray almost anywhere, such as in fields, offices, factories, or universities. Prayer means to make supplication for good things that are beneficial to the individual, to ask God for forgiveness of sins, to give thanks for his gifts, to push away evil and bad things. To worship God is an honor and a duty and the most essential of all deeds. It recognizes the individuals need to relate to his Creator through thoughts, words, and deeds.
- Giving *Zakat* (support to the needy): All things belong to God, and wealth therefore is held by human beings as a trust. The original meaning of the word *Zakat* is both 'purification' and growth. Giving *Zakat* means giving a specified percentage on

certain excess properties to certain classes of needy people.. Islam says that the poor and needy people have rights in the wealth of the rich. All good causes have a claim on our wealth. Islam therefore commands every well-off person to pay the welfare money to the needy and for good causes. This makes all persons in society better off and happy. It is a great sin not to share one's wealth with the needy or let them suffer from hunger and disease.

- Fasting: every year in the month of Ramadan, all Muslims must fast from dawn until sundown, and between this time, eating, drinking, smoking, sexual relations, etc, are not allowed. Fasting is a blessing from God. It is a means of spiritual training and development. It enables one to resist temptations and to have self-discipline in life. It makes all men and women equal and gives to those who are well off, some experience of hunger. Fasting teaches a person to be honest with himself and truthful to his beliefs. It teaches patience and enables the individual to monitor his verbal behavior and actions. Fasting is prohibited when a person is too ill, as it may endanger his health. Also women are prohibited from fasting during their menstrual cycle.
- The pilgrimage: Muslims all over the world are one community. They have the same beliefs and follow the same principles in life. Therefore, the annual pilgrimage to Makka is a once in a lifetime obligation for those who are physically and financially able to perform it. The pilgrimage begins in the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar. Muslims are not joined together on the basis of color or race; they are joined together on the basis of Islam the way of faith and right action.

THE SPREAD OF ISLAM (JIHAD)

I will now attempt to describe the message of war in Islam and the rules of war. What is the true message given to Muslim leaders and Muslims soldiers before they were commanded to spread and convey the message of Islam to those who had not yet heard it. Abu Baker, who was the first caliph after Prophet Muhammad's death, succinctly communicated these Islamic "rules of engagement". He said to the gathered army: "O people! I charge you with ten rules; learn them well! Do not betray, or misappropriate any part of the booty; do not practice treachery or mutilation of the dead. Do not kill a young child, an old man, or a woman. Do not uproot or burn palm trees or cut down fruitful trees. Do not slaughter a sheep or cow or a camel except for food. You will meet people who have set themselves apart in hermitage; leave them

alone so that they may accomplish the purpose for which they have done this. You will come about people who will bring you dishes with various kinds of foods. If you partake of them, pronounce the name of God over what you eat. You will meet people who have shaved the crown of their head leaving a hand of hair around it, Strike them with the sword [those people were living in the area of Iraq; they were without any religion and were not one of the people of the book]. Go, in God's name, and may God protect you from sword and pestilence"².

Within one hundred years of the death of the prophet Muhammad, his successors had established an empire greater than Rome at its zenith. The Muslims became united, spilled out of Arabia, and overcame both the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) and Persian empires. By the end of the century they had created an Islamic caliphate extending from North Africa to India. There are many reasons for the rapid spread of the Islamic nation: the mutual exhaustion of the Byzantine and Persian empires after years of war, the dissatisfaction of indigenous population with their imperial rulers, and the skill of Muslims warriors. However, the major factors were the important role of Islam in uniting disparate tribes and providing a greater sense of purposes and meaning. Islam provided the ideological underpinning for this remarkable breakthrough in social organization, in fact the expansion was truly an Islamic movement. For it was Islam's set of religious beliefs as preached by Prophet Muhammad, with its social and political ramifications, which ultimately sparked the whole integration process and hence was the ultimate cause of the expansion's success? During subsequent centuries, Islam would spread across much of the world, which extended from Africa to Southeast Asia, from Timbuktu to the Philippines. In addition, great Muslim cities existed in what today are the Central Asia republics of the former Soviet Union, China, Eastern Europe, Spain, southern Italy and Sicily. The armies of Islam were its missionaries, bringing both Muslim faith as well as imperial rule. Islam was used to bind together, inspire, and mobilize the tribes as well as to provide a rationale for expansion. Jihad as a word means striving and self-exertion in the way or path of God. Jihad was the heart of each Muslim, was the central source of Muslim self-understanding and motivation. The term Jihad has a number of meanings which include "making an effort to lead a good life", "to make society more moral and just", to spread the truth of Islam through preaching, teaching, or, if and only if necessary, armed struggle. In this context, Jihad is an abbreviated way of saying "Jihad Fi Sabeel Allah". Which means Striving for the sake of God's cause? This includes such efforts as teaching, expounding the message of Islam to others, working against evil and corruption, and joining forces with individuals or groups in combating injustice, social inequity, illiteracy, poverty, disease and other human problems. God says in the Qur'an: "Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to that which is good. Enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong,

they are the successful "(3:104). Another aspect of striving in the path of God is emigration from a place where one is oppressed to such an extent that he cannot live and act as a Muslim to a place when this is possible. There are occasions, however, when it becomes necessary to take up arms against oppressors or aggressors. While Muslims are forbidden to commit aggression, God commands them to defend themselves against those who attack or oppress them. God says: "And fight in God's cause against those who wage war upon you; but do not commit aggression; verily God does not love aggressors" (12-190).

This is the true Jihad, and is the duty of every Muslim. It is to be fulfilled first by the heart, then by tongue, then by the hands, and only then, by the sword. It is to be done in order to spread and to defend Islam, to reform society and to raise the Word of God above all other words.

THE MAJOR SECTS OF ISLAM

Early on, major divisions within Islam developed as a result of political struggle, and as a result of differences in ideas and views between various Muslims. Initially, Abu Baker was selected by the companions of Prophet Muhammad to succeed him. This was decided by the companions due to the fact that the Prophet had given several indications that Abu Baker was to be his successor, the first Caliph of Islam. This choice supported the majority view that the Prophet Muhammad's successor should be chosen from the faithful, by Muhammad's senior adherents. Thus, the followers of the caliphs were called Sunni Muslims. The long tradition of the Islamic caliphate was ended after the First World War in 1924, and replaced by secular states, or secular leaderships. Within the first thirty years of the Caliphate, there arose a group of people that said the caliph should be selected from among the prophet's family. Those groups in fact argued that the prophet's son-in-law Ali must be selected as a caliph. This group of Muslims was called Shi'at Ali (the followers of Ali). But, in fact, Ali the son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad was a good Muslim, a true Sunni with pure faith. He believed in one God, and Prophet Muhammad as a prophet and messenger. Ali did not believe in the Shia' as concept of Imams. Under this concept, the Shia' Imam, in contrast to the office of caliph, enjoyed a very special religious status as a religiously inspired and sinless leader. These innovations contrasted with the Sunni school of thought in that the Sunnis recognized that revelation had ceased for all time with the Prophet Muhammad's death and that all human beings have faults and commit sins and therefore no one is sinless.

ISLAM AND CIVILIZATION

A commonly held belief among many is that science is the basis for human life and is the soul of human existence and civilization. That it is the only paradigms that eliminates affliction in human society and expands its functions bring happiness. They believe that through science alone, we can establish systems that facilitate the healthy life of any society. In other words, they believe that we should construct our educational, economic, political and social systems according to science alone. The history of civilization shows that no matter how educated or technologically advanced a society is, if the principles of morality are not present, the civilization will eventually collapse. This has been shown to be the case in the ancient civilizations of Sumeria, Egypt, Rome, and Greece. These cultures are often referred to as the cradles of civilization.

A major pitfall that leads civilization towards decline is a lack of knowledge with regard to understanding the purpose for human existence. This deficiency leads to a misunderstanding of self and extends further to a misunderstanding in interrelationships, which causes a collapse of values in general and specifically, a collapse of moral values. A fuller and more meaningful perspective, rather than the previous, in understanding civilization, its elements, meaning, function, and means of establishment is to be found in the *Qur'an*. The Qur'an gives a comprehensive and meaningful method to human personal and social values as well as society in general.

In the Qur'an, Allah first draws our attention to a general construction of civilization that is ingrained in our nature. In reading, we become aware of the causes of the rise of civilizations as well as the causes of its collapse. Allah instructs us to study and ponder the positive attributes in the factors that lead to the establishment of civilization and how to advance them to the best of our ability and to examine the factors involved in their collapse and to benefit from this knowledge whenever possible. Islam holds a broad vision of civilization that is not restricted to fleeting material advancement, but attends to the totality of human existence. Islam recognizes that the longevity and desirability of any society is not only measured by its scientific or technological advancement, but should also include advancement in human values such as justice, equality, compassion, cleanliness, selflessness, sacrifice, straight-forwardness, purity of ideas, appearance, behavior, etiquette and family, and interpersonal relations.

There are different principles in Islam that helps societies emerge and safeguards them from collapse. The first of these principles is that it must have a believing creed, which means to believe as Allah as the one and only God. In the Qur'an, God says: "He is God, the One. God, to whom all creatures turn for their needs. He begets not, nor was he begotten, and there is

none like unto Him" (Qur 'a 112: 1-4). The second principle is that it should not content itself with merely a verbal declaration of faith. Correct action must follow from this declaration. The third principle is the translation of this creed into practical/beneficial behavior. It must be relevant to daily life. In brief, the agenda for a successful society is a creed that is expressed through faith and work and where behavior is congruent with creed so that individuals overcome difficulties that have a direct affect their daily lives, their behaviors, and thus their society. Consequently, any civilized movement that is not ruled by these principles will not be built on a solid foundation and will thus, not stand the tests of time.

ISLAM CALLS FOR PEACE

To assert such a claim, and to give a clear picture of Islam as a religion of peace, we have to turn to the major sources of this religion, namely, the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. These sources show indisputably how the meaning of Islam is connected with peace and how from the beginning of the call to this religion, its overwhelming objective is to achieve peace among individuals, societies and nations. To begin with, Islam is a word derived from the consonant root of the word Islam, which means to submit or surrender, to give up one's soul. The word as salam is one of the 99 names or attributes of Allah. This is why Allah commanded Prophet Muhammad to make Muslims greet each other with the word salam, which means peace. In this sense, the meaning of the religion as well as the call to it, are both meant to be peace and to achieve peace. Islam, from beginning called people to peace. Before Islam, wars among people and tribes were very common. They started for very simple reasons such as personal revenge between tribal leaders or gambling where the loser fought with the winner and killed him just for the cause of gaining wealth or prestige or power. Thus, his whole tribe would defend him and ask for this blood and the honor of the tribe. Early in the chronology of the revelation, Islam declared that wars were not allowed even under strict conditions. Islam taught people that Allah had created everyone to be equal, to be nations and tribes. Peace, in Islam is the result of the individual efforts to contain one self and exhibit good manners. Peace comes as a result of individual responsibility in preventing those who have the power from harming or violating the rights of those who are powerless and defenseless. This Peace, as understood by the both terms "Islam" and "Aslama" implies a voluntary state of submission and acceptance. As Allah says in the Qur'an in chapter 2 verse 256 "La ikraha fi deen" (there is no compulsion in Religion). It is in this sense that Islam prohibits any war that compels people to accept the religion or forces someone to leave his religion for another religion or asks someone to adapt a new sect or a new way of life.

Islam has also prohibited war with the unbelievers unless they are the aggressors and are out to destroy or hinder either the Muslims or their faith. Otherwise, Muslims should deal with them kindly and wisely and explain the religion of Islam to them. Also, the Muslims must not be passive, but rather, they should prepare themselves for any war for the sake of defending the religion and not for the sake of power or prestige or tribe. Therefore, Allah did not want his religion to be spread by the “edge of the sword” as some people believe or claim.

Islam considers the life of the individual as the most valuable thing to that individual and to his society. This is why Islam considers the safety and peace of individuals to be the very core of the religion. In order to help the individual fulfill his duties he is to utilize everything in this world as prescribed by his creator to fulfill the purpose of his existence and thus, achieve his happiness. This is why Islam encourages people to stop others from spreading mischief or corruption, from violating people’s rights, from committing robbery, or creating fear in people’s minds or hearts. Moreover, Islam commands that Muslims be humble and exhibit good manners in all aspects of life including when they are engaged in this mission of peace, and not to be arrogant or disrespectful. Muslims should show their concern and have the best interest for the welfare of the human being and humanity in general. Islam directs people towards the achievement of peace in human life and society. This directive is not only theoretical advice but also a concrete establishment of principles, rules, and regulations, by means of a revelatory knowledge that can be counted on to lay down the right solution to solve all disputes between both individuals and societies. Through Islam, people learn to erase the foundations of injustice and establish justice in the society.

Thus, Islamic law shows Muslims how to establish agreements and contracts between themselves and with non-Muslims. Moreover, it recommends that Muslims respect these agreements and contracts, especially if they deal with security or with the ending of hostilities, or the establishment of peace among groups, states, or nations. It is for these reasons that some Muslims consider groups that deviate from these principles to be anti-Islamic or to be against the true teachings of Islam.

ISLAMIC GROUPS

Today, Muslim’s number more than 1.5 billion people and make up about one-fifth of the world’s population. They constitute a majority of the population in 55 nations and constitute significant portions of the population of 91 other nations³. As the conquered people absorbed in varying degrees the faith, culture, and language of the Arabs, so to, the Arab absorbed many of the social and cultural characteristics of the conquered. Therefore, those people became

Muslim but not Arab, and the Arab ways of those Arabs became less, as people of different views, ideas, and philosophies reflected the ways and customs of the differing localities. Many of these people became confused about their faith. When Muslims from these societies were re-exposed to the original traditional practices of Islam, a movement to return to Islam's origins arose

As the world sees what is happening in Algeria, Egypt, Afghanistan, Iraq, or in other places, and what few groups, individuals, or states did and are doing under the name of Islam, the world began to use some terms like fundamentalism, radical, or extremist. Therefore, these individuals and groups have given a bad picture about Islam. Thus, it is not surprising that groups termed, as Islamist should dominate the recently released list of organizations categorized by the American administration as terrorist⁴.

Among these Islamic groups are the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), Armed Islamic Groups (GIA), the Egyptian Gamaa Islami, Taqfir wal-Hijrah, the Lebanese Hizbollah, the Palestinian Hamas and Islamic Jihad, al Qaeda movement and others. These groups can be divided into two types. Those which are seeking to overthrow some Arab governments with the aim of establishing an Islamic states and encouraging Moslems to be against western societies, and those fighting foreign oppressors for the liberation of their land and people. The al Qaeda, Algerian, and Egyptian groups belong to the first type, while the Palestinian and Lebanese groups belong to the second type. What is significant about these two types is that they follow distinctly different strategies in pursuit of their objectives.

The first type which are less anti-Islamic because some individuals within them employ means, which are prohibited to Islam. The second types which are reluctantly and guiltily employ some means to secure national liberation.

Some individuals within the first type groups particularly al Qaeda increasingly resort to violence against innocent civilians like what happened in United States on September 11, 2001 and other places. Violence which can only be termed anti-Islamic because it violates not only the humane rules for warfare laid out in the *Qur'an*, but also the injunctions of the Prophet Muhammad who ordered his own troops not to kill old men who cannot fight, nor young children, nor women. The most murderous of these groups is al Qaeda, which specifically targets old men, women and children in its campaign of mass slaughter. In order to emphasize its power, and the helplessness of its victims, it employs particularly vicious means to dispatch its victims, cutting their throats, chopping off their heads. Indeed it would seem the roving hands of these killers set out to defy both the *Qur'an* and the Prophet Muhammad. This therefore, to the extent

that some individuals within this group employ these tactics makes these tactics anti-Islamic. This anti-Islamic behavior, however, cannot be assumed to be present in the entire group.

Some of them target intellectuals, sportsmen, professionals, teachers, students, and etc. This strategy is meant to terrorize and disturb the freedom of the human beings. In fact, this strategy is not the right way to achieve their objectives. The Prophet told his followers that "Acquire knowledge, it enables its possessor to distinguish right from wrong" and "seek knowledge even unto China".

Knowing full well the Prophet's injunctions about not killing innocent civilians, the Palestinian Hamas and Islamic Jihad movement employ suicide bombing against Israeli civilians as a means to achieve their goal of the liberation of Palestinian territory from Israeli occupation. They have adopted this strategy with regret, and only because they believe they have no other choice. They normally observe these prohibitions except when Israel attacks unarmed Palestinians in the occupied areas, or if they try to kill or assassinate their leaders or members. Their aim is to liberate their land. Regarding the Islamic groups in Palestine, we should listen to their demands and respect their rights. However, the majority of the people to include even the close friends of the U.S. understand that those groups who are fighting against Israel have good reasons, and can not be dismissed as just terrorists or extremists. We strongly believe that, those groups will stop their struggle as soon as Israel leaves their occupied land. I believe that, if the U.S. continues to support Israel against the Palestinians, even though it knows Israel has occupied their land by force, the result will be a continuing situation that puts U.S. interests at risk.

In addition to this, there were anti-Islamic groups in power in the Muslim world. One of these groups was the Taliban in Afghanistan which was harboring and supporting al Qaeda. If the Taliban forced men to attend prayers in the mosques, and if its members attacked and beat those who did not, or if they forced women into the burka, then this is wrong because all religion must be undertaken voluntarily, in a spirit of submission to God, not submission to man. So even though Islam considers all these things to be "required", it is a requirement of individual responsibility that must be respected.

Likewise, the violent dispute currently being pursued in bloody fashion between Sunni and Shias in Pakistan is wholly anti-Islamic because Islam as we have seen stresses the brotherhood of the Umma, or community of the faithful. What is most glaring about the anti-Islamic groups of today is the huge gap between the faith preached and practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and the behavior of those who claim to be Islam's adherents but lack true understanding of the Islamic faith.

TERRORISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN ISLAM

As we have shown, Islam is a religion of mercy and does not permit terrorism. In the Qur'an God said: "God does not forbid you from showing kindness and dealing justly with those who have not fought you concerning religion and have not driven you out of your homes. God loves those who deal justly." Also the Prophet Muhammad used to prohibit soldiers from killing women and children. He advised them "do not betray, do not be excessive, do not kill a newborn child." He also advised: "whoever has killed a person having a treaty with the Muslims, will not smell the fragrance of paradise, and though it's fragrance is found for a span of forty years". Also, the Prophet Muhammad prohibited the use of fire as a punishment. He listed murder as the second of the major sins, and he even warned that on the Day of Judgment, "The first cases to be adjudicated between people on the Day of Judgment will be those of bloodshed."

Muslims are even encouraged to be kind to animals, and it is forbidden to harm them. The prophet told a story of a man who once gave a very thirsty dog a drink and because of this act of kindness Allah forgave all his sins. He was once asked: "Oh! Messenger of God, are we to be rewarded for kindness towards animals?" He replied, "There is a reward for kindness to every living thing." Additionally, while taking the life of an animal for food, Muslims are commanded to do so in a manner that causes the least amount of fright and suffering.

In light of these and other Islamic texts, the act of inciting terror in the hearts of defenseless civilians, the wholesale destruction of building and properties, the bombing and maiming of innocent men, women, and children, are all forbidden and are blameworthy, detestable acts according to Islam. The vast majorities of Muslims follow a religion of peace, mercy, and forgiveness, and have nothing to do with the violent events that have become associated with some Muslims.

Islam provides many human rights for the individual. The following are some of the human rights which Islam confirms and is tasked to protect: the life and property of all citizens in an Islamic state are considered sacred, whether a person is Muslim or not. Islam also protects honor. In Islam saying harsh words to others or making fun of them is not allowed. Racism is not allowed. Islam forbids certain individuals or groups being favored above others because of wealth, power, or race. God created human beings as equals who are to be distinguished from each other only on the basis of their faith and piety. The prophet Muhammad said: "O people; your God is one and your forefather Adam is one. An Arab is no better than a non-Arab and a non-Arab is no better than an Arab, and a red person is not better than a black person and a black is not better than a red person, except in piety"⁵.

One of the major problems facing mankind today is racism. The developed world can send a man to the moon but cannot stop man from hating and fighting his fellow man. Ever since the day of the prophet Muhammad, Islam has provided a vivid example of how racism can be ended. The annual pilgrimage (Hajj) to Makka shows the real Islamic brotherhood of all races and nations, when about more than five million people from all races and all walks of life, from all over the world, come to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage .

The U.S. knows that terrorism did not begin on September 11, 2001. Its history is long and all too familiar. As far back as September 16, 1920 a major domestic terrorist attack occurred, when an anarchist exploded a horse cart filled with dynamite near the intersection of Wall and Broad streets⁶. Then as now, the financial heart of New York City. After that, U.S. history in the 20th century was punctuated by act of terror, which caused the U.S. and its friends abroad to wage the long and continuing struggle against terrorism.

President George W. Bush addressed a joint session of Congress and the American people September 20, 2001, shortly after the September 11 attack. He said "we have seen their kind before. They are the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions-by abandoning every value except the will to power-they follow in the path of fascism, and Nazism, and totalitarianism. And they will follow that path all the way, to where it ends: in history's unmarked grave of discarded lies"⁷.

The September 11, and other attacks on important U.S. economic and military centers highlighted the threat of terrorism from extremist Islamic Groups(al Qaeda), coming from the Middle East area, the very area of high U.S. national security concerns in the post-cold War World. The U.S. has considered some states in that area like Iran and Syria to be the source of state - sponsored terrorism, and has embarked on an ambitious - - but not yet successful policy to isolate these regimes from the international community. The U.S. has urged some states in the world to act against extremists Islamic groups (al Qaeda and others groups), claiming their behavior constitutes terrorist acts against U.S. interests and its allies and friends. Therefore, those groups and their supporters find themselves opposed by U.S. policies in the world.

Fighting AL Qaeda is another way to achieve U.S. objectives and national interest. If we look at the U.S. policies, we see them insisting to fight all forms of terrorism, and mobilizing all elements of national power and resources (means) and different courses of actions (ways) as in the war in Afghanistan, identifying and interceding the transfer of money to terrorist organizations, imposing sanctions, and so forth

In the wake of September 11, all right thinking people share with the U.S. in the resolution and policy against terrorism. We all should work together along with the international community

to face all forms of terrorism at any time any place, and not let extremists have the ability to terrorize and kill people, and disturb freedom and stability in the world. I think that, as the U.S. determines to get rid of this kind of threat in the World, it should work closely with all states.

THE MORAL TEACHINGS OF ISLAM IN GENERAL

We have been attempting to show the correct view of Islam as described by its two and only two sources, namely the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him). Therefore, I believe strongly that Islam is not a threat to the world in general, or to the Western countries in particular. We have to look at the stance that some Western leaders and officials have taken with regard to Islam. The Prince of Wales in a major address, "Islam and the West," noted that "the vast majority of Muslims, though personally pious, are usually moderate in their politics. That which binds our two Worlds together is so much more powerful than that which divides us"⁸. Also senior American foreign policy officials such as Edward Djerejian, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs during the former President Bush administration emphasized that the U.S. did not regard Islam or Islamic movements as the enemy. It recognized the right of movements to participate in the political process, provided that they do not use undemocratic means to seize power, that is, that they come to power motivated by the belief in one person, one vote.

We now turn to the Qur'an and Sunnah to investigate briefly what some of the moral teachings of Islam are in regard to the various aspect of man's life, that is, his personal character, interpersonal relationships, social responsibilities, economic and administrative affairs, and his striving in the cause of God.

First, let us consider personal character. According to the correct understanding of Islam, great emphasis is laid on God-consciousness, which is a personal characteristic. Since the quality of a society depends upon the quality of the approximate translation of the Arabic word *Taqwa*. *Taqwa* refers to a state of mind in which the awareness of God and consciousness of one's responsibility towards him is paramount. As such, it is mentioned in *Qur'an* as being the foundation of a Muslim's character. In the teaching of Islam, great emphasis is placed on humility, modesty, control of passions and desires, truthfulness, integrity, patience and steadfastness. We are enjoined to fulfill all promises and contracts, to keep all trusts, to meet our engagements, and to repay all our debts. Also, God has forbidden certain things that are indecent or hurtful. It is our responsibility to abstain from them, and we should in fact try to avoid situations, which lead us to temptation. We could summarize the moral behavior of a Muslim, using the Prophet Muhammad's words when he said "My sustainer has given me nine

commands; to remain conscious of God, whether in private or in public, to speak justly, whether angry or pleased; to show moderation whether poor or rich; to reunite friendship with those who have broken it off with me; to give to him who refuses me; to forgive him who has wronged me; that my silence should be occupied with thought, that my looking should be an admonition; and that I should command what is right.”

Regarding interpersonal relationships. If one were to summarize by one word the Islamic teaching regarding interpersonal relationships, it would be with the single Arabic work *Hilm*, which in English means forbearance, kindness, and forgiveness. In day-to-day affairs, one comes in contact with all sorts of human beings. Since all people have limitations, weaknesses, make mistakes and errors of judgment, it is both arrogant and presumptuous on anyone's part to pass judgment on others, to be intolerant, to treat people with contempt, or to mock or humiliate anyone. The Prophet Muhammad said: “the Muslim is he from whose tongue and hand fellow Muslims are safe.”

Social Responsibilities. The teaching of Islam regarding social responsibilities is based on kindness and consideration of others. Since such a broad injunction to be kind is likely to be ignored in specific situations, Islam lays emphasis on specific acts of kindness and defines the responsibilities and rights of various relationships. In a widening circle of relationships then, our first obligation is to our immediate family, our parents, husband or wife and children, then to other relatives, then neighbors, friends and acquaintances, orphans and widows, the needy of the community, our fellow Muslims, all our fellow human beings, and animals.

Respect and care for our parents is extremely important in Islamic teaching and is a very important part of a Muslim's expression of faith. God has made men responsible for their wives and children in certain matters such as providing them with the necessities of life, creating and maintaining a religious atmosphere in the home, and for their education and welfare. Likewise, women are responsible for the domestic well being of their husbands and children and for the training of children. On both, it is enjoined to have mutual love and trust, keeping private what is personal between them, forgiving each other's weaknesses. Providing affection, warmth and kindness to each other are enjoined on both husband and wife. Children are to be helpful, respectful and obedient to their parents. God said: “they (your wives) are your garments and you are their garments (2:187).

Relatives come next in the line of those for whom a Muslim has responsibilities. God says concerning blood ties: “And render to the relatives their due rights, as to those in need, and to the traveler, and do not squander your wealth in the manner of a spendthrift” (17-26) . A person's character is seen in its true light by his neighbors. It is the duty of Muslim to show

particular kindness to his neighbors and to offer them as much help as he can. The Prophet said: "He is not a believer who eats his fill while his neighbor beside him goes hungry, and he is not a believer from whose injurious conduct his neighbor is not safe." Orphans and widows, in every society need special care and provision. Although a widow may be averse to remarriage with the thought of remaining faithful to her husband's memory, it is still recommended that she should re-marry. It is the responsibility of the nearest relatives to take care of orphans, in the same manner as they would care for their own children. If there are no living relatives or if for any reason they do not assume their responsibility for the bereaved child, it is the obligation of some other Muslim individual or organization to take care of the child as tenderly as possible. The *Zakat* aims to the poor which is the fourth pillar of Islam, is obligatory upon every Muslim whose economic position qualifies him to pay it. It must be paid to those in need.

Apart from *Zakat*, charity is enjoined over and over again in the Qur'an and *Hadith*. This means that we must do what we can to help others who are in need. Acts of charity, whether involving assistance or some other sort of giving, should be done in a generous and kind spirit and not followed by words which humiliate or create a sense of obligation from the recipient. Relationships among people are of great importance for all Muslims throughout the world as they form one community of people, all submitting to God's laws and striving to please him. All Muslims are brothers and sisters to one another, and their behavior to each other should be similar to that of members of a family, full of kindness and consideration. God said: "Verily, the believer's are one brotherhood (49-10). The act of inciting terror in the hearts of civilians, the whole destruction of buildings and properties, the bombing and maiming of innocent people (men, women, and children) are all forbidden and detestable acts according to Islamic law.

CONCLUSIONS

The previous sections have attempted to portray the essential aspects of Islam in its original essence. The moral teachings of Islam may be viewed in terms of both individual rights and the rights and obligations in relation to other individuals. As a matter of style, we have emphasized the obligations, it is clear that what is seen as one person's obligation to another can also be seen as the latter's right on the former.

It ought to be emphasized, however, that according to Islam, the rights of the people derive their authority from God and his Prophet Muhammad and not from any man-made system of ethics.

In fact there is no separation of religion and states in Islam. The comprehensive sharia law of this religion covers all laws and needs concerning individuals, groups, and states. For this

reason, Islam deals with current issues that help people reach a higher understanding of themselves. We will ultimately find that the solution to our all our dilemmas is a heartfelt return to true religion. It is either this, or we may wake up some day and discover that God has substituted another people in our place who will understand and adhere to it.

For many Muslims, Islamic revivalism is a social rather than a political movement whose aim is a more Islamically minded and oriented society. For others, the establishment of an Islamic order requires the creation of Islamic states. Some individuals, groups, and states advocate violent revolution under name of Islam, but the implementation of this methodology are in fact far from Islam. They represent anti-Islamic teachings, and engage in behavior that indicates that they have precious little understanding of the Sunnah. In fact, Islam and true Islamic movements are not anti-western, anti-American, or anti-democratic. But, as part of the family of nations we must work to resolve our differences in order to secure our future. The challenge of the world is to better understand the history and realities of the true Islam.

In summary, then, the moral teachings of Islam is to define personal and group obligations and rights in relation to other persons and groups, whether Muslim or not Muslims. These teachings outline basic principles of conduct such as honesty, justice, kindness and charity, which are as applicable in this century or any time in the future as they were in seventh century Arabia.

In the *Qur'an*, concerning the very first murder in history, God said: "The selfish soul of the other led him to the murder of his brother; he murdered him, and became himself one of the lost ones" (5-30). It is the goal of all Muslims everywhere to ensure to the best of their ability that they are not among those who are described by God as the "lost ones".

In the wake of September 11, all right thinking people share with the U.S. in the resolution and policy against terrorism. We all should work together along with the international community to face all forms of terrorism at any time any place, and not let extremists have the ability to terrorize and kill people, and disturb freedom and stability in the world. I think that, as the U.S. determines to get rid of this kind of threat in the World and to win the war on terror, it should work closely with the International community.

WORD COUNT=8681

ENDNOTES

¹ Ibrahim.,L.A. A Brief Guide to Understanding Islam.1996. 54.

² Abdalati Hammudah. *Islam in Focus.*(Doha: Qatar, 2nd Pent, Decembe 1997), 7.

³ Clarence Hunter T. Jr. *The Islamic Fundamentalism Movement in Algeria.* Executive Research Project 1993. 7.

⁴ "The anti-Islamic." Jordan Times, 15 October 1997, sec. 1A, P.3.

⁵ Ibrahim ,L.A. 61.

⁶ Bush George W. *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism .* Washington, D.C.:The White House, February 2003.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸John Esposito, L. *The Islamic Threat. Myth or Reality?*(New York : Oxford University Press, 1992), 246.

GLOSSARY

ALLah (GOD):	the able, the Absolute, the Compete, the controller of benefit.
ALLI:	Cousin of Prophet Muhammad, and was caliph of Muslim
Agenda:	In Islam agenda is so comprehensive as to include every single act and deed that we perform in our life.
ALSalam:	Is one of the 99 names of ALLah.
Aslam:	To submit, to give one's self, the religious meaning of this word is to submit one's self to will of ALLah, follow his principle and know his attributes.
Dana:	That to obey or submit to.
Dar AL Salam :	The end result of believer's work.
Deen :	Submission and obedience.
Hajj:	religious pilgrimage to Makkah, to the sacred house the Kaa 'bah to worship ALLah in prescribe manner.
Hagar:	A woman who was the wife of Prophet Abraham.
Hadith:	The teachings of Prophet Mohammad.
Heliem:	Means charity.
Ibn:	It means the son.
Makka:	The city of the scared house in Saudi Arabia.
Prophet:	He is a human being, receives revelation, the Prophet Mohammad.
Salam:	Peace.
Salah:	Prayer.
Sarah:	A woman, who was the wife of Prophet Abraham.
Shar'aa:	To set forth for people to follow.
Shar'ia Linguistic:	meaning is the source of Water; the Arab used this word to mean a straight path or road.
Siyam:	Fasting.
Soul:	In the Qur'an, we find that word denotes the conscious side of humans.
Sunnah:	The teachings of Prophet Mohammad.
Surah:	Chapter in the Qur'an, when we see that (3-34), means the verse number 3 from chapter 34.
Teque:	Piety, the fear, respect, and awareness of Allah at all times.

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