



مجلس العلماء كرنالہ میچ

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POSITION PAPER # 22

**THE ISLAMIC POSITION ON  
FUNDAMENTALISM, EXTREMISM,  
TERRORISM & JIHAD**

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## **ABOUT THE MAJLIS UL ULAMAA (MAJLISTT)**

The Majlis ul Ulamaa is a forum to facilitate the collaboration of Islamic Scholars resident and active within Trinidad and Tobago. It seeks to define the authentic Islamic position as it relates to Islam and the Muslim community of the country, considering the various scholastic positions and schools of law. To this end, it deliberates on issues of importance, and defines the Islamic position. The due process is meticulous, spanning the issuing of a draft position paper, inviting stakeholders and public comment and consultations before a final position is issued.

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# **THE ISLAMIC POSITION ON FUNDAMENTALISM, EXTREMISM, TERRORISM & JIHAD**

## **INTRODUCTION**

MajlisTT notes the recurring association of a multitude of labels with negative connotations associated with Islam by some persons throughout the world. Labels include fundamentalism, fanaticism, extremism (especially violent or militant extremism), terrorism, radical Islam, Jihadism and the Jihad movement, amongst others. These labels, individually and collectively serve to cast Islam in a negative light, and paint with a broad-brush Muslims and Islamic ideology as one of violence, rooted in warfare and even barbaric in its approach to dealing with contemporary society and its issues.

This paper is an attempt to clarify the Islamic theological position to issues of fundamentalism, extremism, terrorism and related terms, and in so doing frame the context for acceptable forms of resistance (be it violent or not, physical or otherwise).

MajlisTT notes that, given the frequency, scope and consistency of the perception of the association of Islam of some persons to the aforementioned terms, this paper is only part of a much more necessary and elaborate program of dispelling false narratives and associations that the Muslim community as a whole must undertake, particularly in the minds of the younger and upcoming generations, whose worldview may be shaped by a mainstream message that can prove inconsistent with Islamic values.

## **1. FUNDAMENTALISM, EXTREMISM, FANATICISM, RADICALISM AND RELATED CONCEPTS**

### **1.1 FUNDAMENTALISM**

The term fundamentalism originates in reference to Christian sects, relating to “conservative religious movement[s] characterized by the advocacy of strict conformity to sacred texts.” (Britannica Encyclopedia of Religion).

Its use in reference to non-western religions has been seen as a form of conceptual imperialism by many, and a term that infers negative connotations of bigotry, zealotry, militancy, extremism, and fanaticism.

## The Islamic Position on the Concept

There is no relatable concept of fundamentalism in Islam. Muslims are enjoined to adhere to the directives contained in the Holy Qur'an and manifestly operationalized in the example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). Any deviation from these is considered disobedience, and for each of these acts Muslims would have to account to Almighty Allah individually on the Day of Judgement. We are told in the Qur'an:

“Say (O Muhammad): “I am only a human being like you. It is inspired in me that your God is only one God, therefore be steadfast upon the Straight Path to Him, and seek forgiveness of Him.” (Qur'an 41:6)

“So stand (O Muhammad) firm and straight as you are commanded – and those with you who turn in repentance unto Allah...” (Qur'an 11:112)

“Verily, those who say: “Our Lord is only Allah,” and thereafter they stood firm and straight, on them shall be no fear [when their soul is being removed at the point of death], nor shall they grieve [for the loved ones they have left behind]. They are the people of Paradise, there to remain as a reward for what they were doing.” (Qur'an 46:13-14)

### 1.2 EXTREMISM, FANATICISM, RADICALISM

**Extremism** refers to the adoption or advocacy of extreme measures or views as a position or in relation to a particular issue. It is often associated with a hardline stance that is inflexible or with an unwillingness to compromise, a **fanatic** outlook or behaviour “that exhibits excessive enthusiasm, unreasoning zeal or wild and extravagant notions” (Merriam-Webster) on matters. In a state where extremist views are not the norm or established basis of mainstream society, it is not uncommon for some extremists to display **radicalism**: adopting radical views and harboring the intent to transform or replace fundamental principles. We use these terms collectively under the label of Extremism or extremist ideologies hereinafter.

It is necessary to note that extremism can be on the basis of ideology (for example theology), or it can be driven by other motives (such as political, economic or otherwise), for which ideology can be used to justify conviction or mobilize support.<sup>1</sup>

### The Islamic Position on the Concept

Islam recognizes the propensity of some to be extremist, fanatical or radical in their views, and use theology as the basis for such positions and to support the resulting conduct. Muslims are cautioned against being overzealous or fanatical in following the principles and practices of Islam. The Qur'an tells us:

“There is among them a section who distort the Book with their tongues: (As they read) you would think it is a part of the Book, but it is no part of the Book; and they say, "That

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<sup>1</sup> This was introduced and developed in the MajlisTT paper ‘Unity in the Muslim Community’ (MajlisTT.com, October 2021)

is from Allah," but it is not from Allah: It is they who tell a lie against Allah, and (well) they know it!" (Qur'an 3:78)

"O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: Nor say of Allah aught but the truth." (Qur'an 4:171)

"O you who believe! do not forbid (yourselves) the good things which Allah has made lawful for you and do not exceed the limits; surely Allah does not love those who exceed the limits." (Qur'an 5:87)

"Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship." (Qur'an, 2:185)

"O children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer, eat and drink but waste not by excess, for Allah loves not wasters. Say: 'who has forbidden the beautiful gifts of Allah which He has produced for His servants and the things clean and pure which He has provided for sustenance.'" (Qur'an, 7:31-32)

"It is part of the mercy of Allah that you deal gently with them. If you were severe or hardhearted, they would have broken away from you'." (Qur'an, 3:159)

"...But the Monasticism which they invented for themselves, We did not prescribe for them: (We commanded) only the seeking for the Good Pleasure of Allah; but that they did not foster as they should have done..." (Qur'an 57:27)

In a Hadith, Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is reported to have said "Facilitate religious matters to people and do not make things difficult. Obey each other and do not differ amongst yourselves." (Al-Bukhari, 69)

In a Hadith, Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is reported to have inquired of Abdullah ibn Amr: "Have I heard right that you fast everyday and stand in prayer all night?" Abdullah replied: "Yes, O Messenger of God". The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Do not do that. Fast, as well as, eat and drink. Stand in prayer, as well as, sleep. This is because your body has a right upon you, your eyes have a right upon you, your wife has a right upon you, and your guest has a right upon you." (Sahih Bukhari 127)

In a Hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) sent for Uthman ibn Mazh'un and he came. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "O Uthman, do you not desire my practice?" Uthman said, "O Messenger of Allah, no by Allah. I seek your practice." The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Verily, I sleep and I pray, I fast and I break my fast, and I marry women. Fear Allah, O Uthman, for your family has rights over you and your guest has rights over you. Verily, your own self has rights over you, so fast and break your fast, pray and sleep." (Abu Dawood 1369)

In a Hadith, Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is reported to have said, "O people, beware of exaggeration in religious matters for those who came before you were doomed because of exaggeration in religious matters." (Ibn Majah 3029; An-Nisa'i 3057)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is reported to have said, "Religion is very easy and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way. So you should not be extremists, but try to be near to perfection and receive the good

tidings that you will be rewarded; and gain strength by worshiping in the mornings, the afternoons, and during the last hours of the night. (Sahih Bukhari 39)

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported, “Three men came to the houses of the wives of the Prophet (peace be on him) and asked how his worship was. When they were informed, they considered their own worship to be insignificant and said: 'Where are we in comparison to the Prophet (peace be on him) when Allah has forgiven his past and future sins?' One of them said: 'As for me, I shall offer prayer all night long.' Another said: 'I shall observe fasting perpetually, never to break it.' Another said: 'I shall abstain from women and will never marry.' The Prophet (peace be on him) then came to them and said: “Are you the people who said such things? I swear By Allah that I fear Allah more than you do, and I am most obedient and dutiful among you to Him, but still, I observe fasting (sometimes) and break it (at others); I perform (optional) prayer (at night sometimes) and sleep at night (at others); I also marry. So whoever turns away from my Sunnah (i.e., my way) is not from me.” (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

The Holy Qur’an guides us on the correct adherence to Islam. We are told:

“...And We have revealed to you the Book, an exposition of everything, and guidance, and mercy, and glad tidings for the Muslims” (Qur’an 16:89)

“...and We have sent down unto thee (also) the Message; that thou mayest explain clearly to men what is sent for them, and that they may give thought.” (Qur’an 16:44)

In a Hadith Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is reported to have said, “What is lawful is evident and what is unlawful is evident, and in between them are the things doubtful which many people do not know. So he who guards against doubtful things keeps his religion and honour blameless, and he who indulges in doubtful things indulges in fact in unlawful things, just as a shepherd who pastures his animals round a preserve will soon pasture them in it. Beware, every king has a preserve, and the things God has declared unlawful are His preserves. Beware, in the body there is a piece of flesh; if it is sound, the whole body is sound and if it is corrupt the whole body is corrupt, and hearken it is the heart.” (Sahih Bukhari and Muslim)

MajlisTT notes that being negligent is also an extreme position, for Muslims who do not obey the commands of Allah and fulfill their duties towards Him. The Qur’an tells us:

“...And proclaim a grievous penalty to those who reject Faith.” (Qur’an 9:3)

“And do thou (O reader!) Bring thy Lord to remembrance in thy (very) soul, with humility and in reverence, without loudness in words, in the mornings and evenings; and be not thou of those who are unheedful.” (Qur’an 7:205)

“Say, “O people, the truth has come to you from your Lord. So, whoever accepts guidance accepts it to his own benefit, and whoever goes astray does so to his own detriment. And I am not responsible for you.” (Qur’an 10:108)

“As for those who do not believe in meeting Us and are quite happy with the life of this world and are content with it, and those who are heedless to Our signs, they are the ones whose abode is the Fire, because of what they used to earn for themselves. As for those who believe and do good deeds, their Lord will guide them by virtue of their belief; rivers will be flowing beneath them in the Gardens of Bliss.” (Qur’an 10:7-9)

Islam does not encourage or support Muslims' extremist views against others. We are told in the Qur'an that differences in societies are from Almighty Allah:

The Qur'an says: "Unto every one of you, We have appointed a [different] law and way of life. And if God has so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but [He willed it otherwise] in order to test by means of what he has vouchsafed unto you. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works!" (Qur'an 5:48)

"Behold, We have created you [...] into nations and tribes so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him" (Qur'an 49:13).

"Unto you your religion, and unto me my religion." (Qur'an 109:6)

We as Muslims are guided to be a balanced and moderate nation:

"Thus We have appointed you a middle nation, that ye may be witnesses against mankind, and that the messenger may be a witness against you..." (2:143)

"There is no compulsion in religion" (Qur'an 2:256)

"As for you, will you force men to become believers?" (Qur'an 10:99)

### **1.3 VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM**

Within the concepts of Extremism, Fanaticism and Radicalism, there are those who chose to adopt a violent or aggressive stance in dealing with others of different positions or propensities. This is understood to be Violent Extremism, which refers to the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals amongst others. Such violence can include acts of terror targeted to certain individuals, communities or to society at large. It is noted that "[a]ll forms of violent extremism, no matter what their motivation, seek change through fear and intimidation rather than constructive democratic processes" (J. L. Striegler, 2015, Edith Cowan University)

Within the spectrum of Violent Extremism lies the concept of Terrorism, which relates to "the calculated use of violence to create a general climate of fear in a population and thereby to bring about a particular political objective. Terrorism has been practiced by political organizations with both rightist and leftist objectives, by nationalistic and religious groups, by revolutionaries, and even by state institutions such as armies, intelligence services, and police." (Britannica Encyclopedia of Religion).

When it comes to terrorism, it can be noted – especially in our recent past - that in order to attract and maintain the publicity necessary to generate widespread fear, terrorists engage in increasingly dramatic, violent, and high-profile attacks, including hijackings, hostage takings, kidnappings, mass shootings, car bombings, and, frequently, suicide bombings. (Britannica Encyclopedia of Religion).

## **The Islamic Position on the Concept**

While Islam allows for military engagement and warfare in certain circumstances, those situations do not fall under the gambit of, or encourage in any way, use of force and warfare for the purposes of Terrorism and Violent Extremism.

In the face of conflict, we are instructed in the Qur'an to strive for peace, and to refrain from excessive acts:

“If two parties among the believers fall into a quarrel, make you peace between them [...] with justice and be fair. For God loves those who are fair. The believers are but a single brotherhood; so make peace between your brothers....” (Qur'an 49:9-10)

The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah: for (Allah) loveth not those who do wrong. (Qur'an 42:40)

"Good and evil cannot be equal. Repel evil with what is better, and you will see that the one you had enmity with become as if he were a devoted friend." (Qur'an 41:34)

“Fight in the way of God against those who fight against you, but do not transgress the limits. Verily, God does not love aggressors” (Qur'an 2:190)

“And if anyone saved a life, It would be as if he saved the life of the whole people” (Qur'an 5:32)

“And We have not sent you, [O Messenger], except as a mercy to the worlds.” (Qur'an 21:107)

“O you who have believed, when you go forth [to fight] in the cause of Allah, investigate; and do not say to one who gives you [a greeting of] peace "You are not a believer"...” (Qur'an 4:94)

“But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah: for He is One that heareth and knoweth (all things).” (Qur'an 8:61)

In a Hadith, Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is reported to have said, “Do not be severe with yourselves, lest God be severe towards you. A people were severe with themselves and then God was severe towards them.”

In a Hadith, Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is reported to have said, “Be gentle and beware of violence and foul language” (Bukhari 6030)

## 1.4 JIHAD

The word Jihad has become commonly associated with Islamic terrorism in mainstream media and society. The Arabic word Jihad means ‘struggle’ or ‘great effort’, or etymologically from its root words, ‘work wholeheartedly’. In other connotations, it means ‘attacking the enemy in order to defend the religion’ – directly or indirectly.

The word appears in the Qur’an with multiple meanings. Essentially, the 2 types of Jihad are jihad-an-nafs (an internal spiritual struggle against baser desires) and jihad-al-sayf (physical combat with the sword). Jihad al-sayf is recognized by all Islamic scholars as a communal obligation (fard kifayah), not an individual obligation (fard al ayn) as espoused by those holding extremist views. (Qur’an 4:95)<sup>2</sup>. Jihad also does not apply to conflicts against any other Muslim.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is reported to have said:

“Shall I tell you about the best of all deeds, the best act of piety in the eyes of your Lord which will elevate your status in the Hereafter and is better for you than spending silver and gold and better than going up in arms against your enemy and striking their necks and their striking your necks? [The companions said, “yes”] The Prophet (peace be on him) said, “Remembrance of Allah” (Al-Haythami)

In relation to the use of force or warfare, Muslims are allowed to defend themselves, and allowed to fight in certain circumstances. The Qur’an tells us:

Permission (to fight) is given to those against whom fighting is launched, because they have been wronged’ (22:39),

The one who defends himself after having been wronged; there is no blame on such people (42:41) Blame, in fact, is upon those who wrong people and make mischief on earth unjustly (42:42) And if one observes patience and forgives, it is, of course, one of the courageous conducts (42:43).

Whoever kills a person not in retaliation for a person killed, nor (as a punishment) for spreading disorder on the earth, is as if he has killed the whole of humankind, and whoever saves the life of a person is as if he has saved the life of the whole of humankind. (5:32)

This permission to fight is limited to cases where they face oppression or for those who are unable to defend themselves (Qur’an 4:75), to maintain order (Qur’an 49:9), and where they act

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<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed treatment of this, see Open Letter to Baghdadi, at <http://www.lettertobaghdadi.com/>

in self-defence (Qur'an 22:39-40). Only the head of the Muslim state is allowed to declare jihad, and this is generally accepted to be in a defensive position.<sup>3</sup>

With regards to oppression, we recognise that in Islam fighting is one option mentioned in the Qur'an, amongst others:

“Indeed, those whom the angels take [in death] while wronging themselves<sup>1</sup> - [the angels] will say, "In what [condition] were you?" They will say, "We were oppressed in the land." They [the angels] will say, "Was not the earth of Allah spacious [enough] for you to emigrate therein?" For those, their refuge is Hell - and evil it is as a destination. [4:97] but not so the truly helpless men, women, and children who have no means in their power nor any way to leave- [4:98] God may well pardon these, for He is most pardoning and most forgiving. [4:99] Anyone who migrates for God's cause will find many a refuge and great plenty in the earth, and if anyone leaves home as a migrant towards God and His Messenger and is then overtaken by death, his reward from God is sure. God is most forgiving and most merciful. [4:100] (Qur'an 4:97-100)

“Say, "O My servants who have believed, fear your Lord. For those who do good in this world is good, and the earth of Allah is spacious. Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit]." (Qur'an 39:10)

“...And to be firm and patient, in pain and adversity; And throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing.” (Qur'an 2:177)

“The cause is only against the ones who wrong the people and tyrannize upon the earth without right. Those will have a painful punishment. And whoever is patient and forgives - indeed, that is of the matters [worthy] of resolve.” (Qur'an 42: 42-43)

Where fighting and conflict proves unavoidable, Islam has established rules of engagement that Muslims cannot transgress, and for which they will be held accountable on the Day of Judgement.

- Do not cut a tree
- Do not kill a child
- Do not kill the elderly
- Do not destroy places of worship
- Do not destroy buildings and farms
- Do not kill those who surrender
- Do not kill those who run away
- No one may punish with fire except the Lord of the Fire
- Do not kill emissaries
- Do not kill a woman
- Do not kill the sick
- Do not kill the monk or priest, or those sitting in places of worship
- Do not disfigure the dead
- Do not kill an animal except for eating
- Be good to prisoners and feed them
- Do not force Islam
- Accustom yourself to do good if people do good, and to not do wrong even if they commit evil.

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<sup>3</sup> See N.A. Shah, *Islamic Law and the Law of Armed Conflict: The Armed Conflict in Pakistan* (2011), at 66–67.

## **2. THE PERPETUATION OF EXTREMISM IN ISLAM**

### **2.1 THE PRESENCE OF EXTREMIST VIEWS**

Extremism has been present in Islam from its earliest years. The political differences in the Caliphate of the Muslim society escalated to the point of violent acts against Khulafa Rashideen, and even open conflict and breakaway factions such as the khawarij. From that time until the present, there have been notable scholars whose works have provided the ideological origins or basis for extremist activism in modern society<sup>4</sup>. They include Ibn Taymiyyah (13<sup>th</sup> century), Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (18<sup>th</sup> century), Syed Qutub, Abu'l Ala Maududi and Sheik Hassan al-Banna (20<sup>th</sup> century). These scholars (in particular those of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries) have escalated the view of a contemporary, transnational radical Islam, many strains of which call for violent revolution and social upheaval.

It should be noted that although the works of these scholars have been used as the justification for extremist activities, some scholars mentioned would have been opposed to the actions to which their works are associated, and others would be deliberate in their encouragement of hostility. It must also be stated that although these works are used popularly by extremist groups, some of the violence we see emanates from different sects and groups following other, more moderate Islamic theology.

### **2.2 HISTORY OF CONFLICT**

Warfare between European and Muslim forces have perpetuated since the Middle Ages. More recently, the Israeli invasions and wars with the Arab world, the partitioning of India and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Iranian Revolution and its repercussions have all fanned the flames of conflict, and maintained instability in the Levant, Middle East and Asian countries – serving to reinforce perception by some that Islam is a militant religion and ideology.

Of notable mention is the coincidence of decolonization, the rise of nationalism in countries throughout the Muslim world, and the resulting tension between those advocating for Islamic states versus those advocating for secularized society. The political tensions have in the past led to the rise of many extremist views and groups, spanning most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and creating spheres of influences throughout societies with each seeking for its agenda to dictate national policy. For example, the coining of the term ‘The Near Enemy’ referring to Muslim leaders-of-state unaccepting of ‘radical Islamist’ viewpoints was a means to frame the validity of Jihad attacks targeting heads of state, all towards establishment of an Islamic state. In particular, the emergence of doctrines that articulated abandonment of accepted positions by scholars of Fiqh,

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Read, Major John, *Charting a Course Through Radical Islam: Origins, Rise, Transformation and Prospects*, Defense Studies, Vol. 9, 2009, Routledge, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702430902958082>

and returning directly to core Islamic sources, opened the doors to many erroneous and misguided views of what Islam allows.

The mujahidin defeat of Soviet forces in 1989 would also have served as a signal of strength, and the resulting displacement of fighters and their diffusion throughout the Muslim world fed directly into the Iraq invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The amplified presence of foreign militaries in the Muslim world, the ongoing occupation of (and oppression in) Palestine and the spreading oppression of Muslims in other parts of the world (for example Kosovo 1998 – 1999, and the backlash against Muslims from the 9/11 2001 attacks, all seemed to galvanize sympathy to extremist groups by Muslims throughout the world – particularly those disenchanting and marginalized in their own society.

Today, the technologically advanced western military, along with oppressive measures in sensitive areas like Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, have all served to push radical Islamists to shift the theatre of warfare from the countries affected to other locations – embassies, metropolitan cities and modes of transport- enabled alongside extremists’ sanctioning of suicide bombing as a valid form of martyrdom, has brought the situation to where it is.

An Islamic jihadist ideology defined by scholars, alongside examples of provocation and oppression of Muslim populations globally, and individual and state difficulties with integrating into and succeeding in wider societies at home and international networks, respectively – over decades (and for many, their entire lifetimes) can well create ample breeding ground for sympathy to extremist ideologies and groups.

It is in part up to the mainstream Muslim society to dispel the misinformation associated with extremist doctrine; Muslim community leadership to develop support structures to integrate members and provide opportunities; and leadership of nation-states to work individually and collectively to foster conditions for tolerance, integration and contribution in ways that would advance collective human interests.

In the same vein, it is unacceptable that Muslim society be the ones to have to rectify or respond to emergent Muslim extremists who have trained under guidance and supported by interests foreign to the Muslim community. Their [extremist] training and positions are results of the policies and programs of other [foreign] interests, and not a product of Islamic theology. Those who created or triggered such results should be the ones to rectify and resolve the situations created. In many instances, these scenarios are towards geopolitical positioning and resource control, and the framing of the drivers of such scenarios as religious ideology is a false narrative worthy of strongest condemnation.

Within that context, we see the need to identify the root causes that feed the extremist movements and their motivations.

### 2.3. CORE ISSUES

In reviewing the lessons of history, and the triggers of extremist views, we can identify some recurring themes that drive the promulgation of extremism in societies throughout the world, and in particular in Muslim-dominant countries.

#### 1. The rise of nationalism and the disintegration of the Muslim Ummah

For some groups in Muslim society, the fragmentation of the unified Muslim world under a Caliph into different nation-states represents a regression and move away from the example of Muslim society established by Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). Some extremist groups and advocates have called for a re-unification of the Muslim world under a single Caliph.

#### 2. Foreign intervention in political, economic and/or military (and more recently socio-technological) affairs in Muslim-dominant countries.

This is particularly in the provision of military hardware, training and activism in a particular society. The adoption of policies, programs and priorities that favor foreign interests at the expense of the local population (and in some cases Islamic injunctions) has pushed some persons to become more extreme, or more aligned to extremist rhetoric. In some cases, the leaders of some countries were former allies of foreign interests – trained, funded and supported by them, to retain positions of authority. Persons seeking change may well have found sympathy and solidarity with otherwise insignificant extremist groups.

#### 3. The enforcement of adoption of policies that move away from Islamic values, beliefs and/or practices; the rise of secular agendas and related social machinery at the expense of Islamic values, and the accompanying moral degradation in Muslim-dominant countries

The promulgation of ‘western’ value-systems within a society, at the expense of Islamic beliefs and values, can serve to push persons further towards embracing extremist views and positions. The legislation against persons wearing Hijabs, or those having beards, or those adopting pro-GLB and Transgender stances, would represent an anti-Islamic thrust and serve to alienate persons holding Islamic value systems or concerned with the rise of anti-Islamic influences.

#### 4. Prevailing socio-economic and socio-political conditions that push people towards adopting extremist views or becoming sympathetic to extremist dogma

Population dynamics and its socio-economic impacts can result in marginalization of some groups in society, with poverty and social displacement in urbanized areas as an example, that creates breeding grounds for amplified extremist influence to take root.

## 2.4 USE OF QUR'ANIC VERSES THAT ARE USED TO JUSTIFY AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE

MajlisTT acknowledges that some verses of the Qur'an have been commonly referenced to justify the adoption of extreme measures and violent acts targeted groups and society in general. In many instances, the verses are misquoted or used out of context, with clauses extracted conveniently and not considered in its full reference. Islam recognizes the tendency of some persons, even today, to select references and use them for their own purposes. The Qur'an tells us:

“So do you believe in part of the Scripture and disbelieve in part? Then what is the recompense for those who do that among you except disgrace in worldly life; and on the Day of Resurrection they will be sent back to the severest of punishment. And Allah is not unaware of what you do.” (Qur'an 2:85)

“They distort words from their [proper] usages and have forgotten a portion of that of which they were reminded. And you will still observe deceit among them, except a few of them. But pardon them and overlook [their misdeeds]. Indeed, Allah loves the doers of good.” (Qur'an 5:13)

“Who have made the Qur'an into portions.” (Qur'an 15:91)

Some examples of these are listed following followed by the full context of their verses.

### 2:190 **“Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight you...”**

The context

Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight you, and do not transgress. Verily, Allah does not like the transgressors (2:190)

### 2:191 **“Kill them wherever you find them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you...”**

The context

“Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed. Allah does not like transgressors. [2:190] And kill them wherever you overtake them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you, and fitnah is worse than killing. And do not fight them at al-Masjid al- Haram until they fight you there. But if they fight you, then kill them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers. [2:191] **And if they cease, then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.** [2:192] Fight them until there is no [more] fitnah and [until] worship is [acknowledged to be] for Allah. **But if they cease, then there is to be no aggression except against the oppressors.** [2:193]” (Qur'an 2: 190-193)

### 4:89 **“...do not take allies from among them unless they migrate in the way of Allah. Then, if they turn away, seize them and kill them wherever you find them, and take not from among them any ally or helper.”**

The context

“They wish you would disbelieve as they disbelieved so you would be alike. So do not take from among them allies until they emigrate for the cause of Allah. But if they turn away, then seize them and kill them wherever you find them and take not from among them any ally or helper. [4:89] **Except for those who take refuge with a people between yourselves** and whom is a treaty or those who come to you, their hearts strained at [the prospect of] fighting you or fighting their own people. And if Allah had willed, He could have given them power over you, and they would have fought you. **So if they remove themselves from you and do not fight you and offer you peace, then Allah has not made for you a cause [for fighting] against them.** [4:90]

4:91 “...seize them, and kill them wherever you find them, and, we have given you an open authority against them”

The Context

“You will find others who wish to obtain security from you and [to] obtain security from their people. Every time they are returned to [the influence of] disbelief, they fall back into it. **So if they do not withdraw from you or offer you peace or restrain their hands, then seize them and kill them wherever you overtake them.** And those - We have made for you against them a clear authorization. [4:91] **And never is it for a believer to kill a believer except by mistake.** And whoever kills a believer by mistake - then the freeing of a believing slave and a compensation payment [diyah] presented to his [i.e., the deceased's] family [is required], unless they give [up their right as] charity. But if he [i.e., the deceased] was from a people at war with you and he was a believer - then [only] the freeing of a believing slave; and if he was from a people with whom you have a treaty - then a compensation payment presented to his family and the freeing of a believing slave. And whoever does not find [one or cannot afford to buy one] - then [instead], a fast for two months consecutively, [seeking] acceptance of repentance from Allah. And Allah is ever Knowing and Wise. [4:92] But whoever kills a believer intentionally - his recompense is Hell, wherein he will abide eternally, and Allah has become angry with him and has cursed him and has prepared for him a great punishment. [4:93] **So, you who believe, be careful when you go to fight in God’s way...**” [4:94]

5:33 “...**the penalty for those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive upon earth [to cause] corruption is none but that they be killed or crucified or that their hands and feet be cut off from opposite sides or that they be exiled from the land...**”

The context

“Indeed, the penalty for those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive upon earth [to cause] corruption is none but that they be killed or crucified or that their hands and feet be cut off from opposite sides or that they be exiled from the land. That is for them a disgrace in this world; and for them in the Hereafter is a great punishment.

[5:33] **Except for those who return [repenting] before you apprehend them.** And know that Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. [5:34]”

8:12 **“I [Allah] will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve, so strike off their heads and strike from them every fingertip”**

Context: a verse revealed at the battle of Badr, which follows numerous instances of the Quraish attacking the Muslims in Madinah. The chapter goes on to say “If you [disbelievers] seek the victory - the defeat has come to you. **And if you desist [from hostilities], it is best for you; but if you return [to war], We will return,** and never will you be availed by your [large] company at all, even if it should increase; and [that is] because Allah is with the believers.” (Qur’an 8:19)

9:5 **“And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush...”**

The Context:

“And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. **But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, let them [go] on their way.** Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.[9:5] **And if any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection** so that he may hear the words of Allah . Then deliver him to his place of safety. That is because they are a people who do not know. [9:6]

The specific context for these verses is further explained in the same chapter, 9:13-14, as follows:

“Would you not fight a people who broke their oaths and determined to expel the Messenger, and they had begun [the attack upon] you the first time? Do you fear them? But Allah has more right that you should fear Him, if you are [truly] believers. [9:13] Fight them; Allah will punish them by your hands and will disgrace them and give you victory over them and satisfy the breasts of a believing people [9:14]

9:29 **“fight those who do not believe in Allah or in the Last Day...”**

Context: This verse was revealed regarding the Tabuk, in which the Byzantine empire assembled troops to attack the Muslims. (Kitab al-Tabaqat, Ibn Sa’ad Vol 2 Pg. 203; Kitab Futuh Buldan Vol. 1 pg. 92)

22:39 **“Permission (to fight) is given to those against whom fighting is launched...”**

The Context

Permission (to fight) is given to those against whom fighting is launched, because they have been wronged’ (22:39)

42:41 **“And whoever retaliates after having been wronged - those have not upon them any cause [for blame].”**

The context

And whoever retaliates after having been wronged - those have not upon them any cause [for blame]. [42:41] but there is cause to act against those who oppress people and transgress in the land against all justice- they will have an agonizing torment- [42:42] **though if a person is patient and forgives, this is one of the greatest things.** [42:43]

### 3. COUNTERING EXTREMISM

#### 3.1 OBEDIENCE TO LEADERSHIP

Firstly, Islam instructs Muslims relative to obedience of our leaders in society. It is impermissible for Muslims to engage in hostile or aggressive acts (rebellion) against a leader who is not openly a disbeliever, and prohibits the establishment of prayer. We are told in the Qur'an:

“O you who believe, obey Allah, and obey His Messenger, and those in authority among you.” (Qur'an 4:59)

In ahadith, we are instructed further on this:

“Listen and obey even if an Abyssinian... is given authority over you” (Bukhari #693)

“The best of rulers are those whom you love and who love you, who invoke God's blessings upon you and you invoke His blessings upon them. And the worst of your rulers are those whom you hate and who hate you and whom you curse and who curse you.” It was asked, “Shouldn't we overthrow them by the sword?” He replied, “No, as long as they establish prayer among you. If you then find anything detestable in them, you should hate their administration, but do not withdraw yourselves from their obedience.” (Muslim #1855)

“There will appear after me rulers, they will not guide by my guidance, and they will not establish my Sunnah; there will be amongst them men whose hearts will be hearts of devils in the bodies of men!” He was asked: “How should I behave, O Messenger of Allāh, if I reach that time?” He replied: “Hear and obey the Amīr (i.e. the ruler), even if he beats your back and [illegally] takes your wealth – hear and obey!” (Muslim)

“Hear and obey the ruler in that which is difficult for you and in that which is easy for you, in times of invigoration and in times of dislike and weariness and when others are given preferential treatment over you – even if they take and consume your wealth and they beat your back – except that you do not obey them if it involves disobedience to Allāh.”

In regards to those leaders who are disbelievers, the Qur'an establishes different categories of such leaders – the disbelievers or Kufir (Qur'an 5:44), the evildoers or fusuq (Qur'an 5:45) and the wicked or dhulum (Qur'an 5:47). Of these, those who prevent Shariah from being practiced are disbelievers. The others fall into the category of evildoers and wicked, but do not fall into the category of disbelievers, or, as Ibn Abas described, 'disbelief short of disbelief'.

Imam Al-Ghazali (may God have mercy on him) said: "Whoever claims four out of four is a liar, whoever claims to love Paradise and does not act is a liar, and whoever claims to love the Prophet (peace be upon him), and does not love the scholars and the poor is a liar, and whoever claims to fear the Fire and does not leave disobedience is a liar, and whoever claims to love God and complains about The affliction is a liar."

Ibn Taymiyyah said<sup>5</sup>: "Ahmad [bin Hanbal] and his like did not declare these rulers to be disbelievers. Rather he believed them to have Imaan and believed in their leadership and he supplicated for them, and he was of the view that they were to be followed in the prayers and Hajj, and military expeditions were to be made with them. He prohibited rebellion against them – and it (i.e. rebellion) was never seen from the likes of him from amongst the scholars. Yet he still opposed whatever they innovated of false statements, since that was major disbelief, even if they did not know it. He would oppose it and strive to refute it with whatever was possible. So there must be a combination of obeying Allāh and His Messenger in manifesting the Sunnah and Religion and opposing the innovations of the heretical Jahmites, and between protecting the rights of the believers, the rulers and the Ummah, even if they are ignorant innovators and transgressing sinners."

Al-Albani, when asked, said: "Is that which is known nowadays as a military coup against the ruler mentioned in the Religion or is it an innovation?" So the Shaikh answered: "There is no basis for these acts in Islām. And it is in opposition to the Islamic manhaj (methodology) with respect to the da'wah (Islamic call) and creating the right atmosphere for it. Rather it is an innovation introduced by the innovators which has affected some Muslims. This is what I have stated and explained in my notes to al-Aqeedah at-Tahāwiyyah."

### **3.2 RESPONDING TO PROVOCATION AND DISBELIEVING COMMUNITIES**

We reiterate what we established in the paper 'Insulting Islam and the Muslim Response' in dealing with hostilities by those against Muslims:

- "Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits, for Allah does not love transgressors." (Qur'an 2:190).
- "And when you see those who engage in [offensive] discourse concerning Our verses, then turn away from them until they enter into another conversation. And if Satan should

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<sup>5</sup> Majmū' al-Fatāwā, 7/507-508.

cause you to forget, then do not remain after the reminder with the wrongdoing people.” (Qur’an 6:68)

- “Hold on to forgiveness, command what is right and turn away from the ignorant.” (Qur’an 7:199)
- “And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend. But none is granted it except those who are patient, and none is granted it except one having a great portion [of good].” (Qur’an 41:34-35)
- “And whoever is patient and forgives – indeed that is of the matters [requiring] determination.” (Qur’an 42:43)
- “And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them [harshly], they say [words of] Peace” (Qur’an 25:63)

Muslims are reminded that Islam directs us to show tact:

“invite (all) to the way of thy Lord, with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in ways that are best, and most gracious,” (Qur’an 16:125)

Muslims are reminded to recognise that religious belief is optional:

“Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from error: whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that never breaks. And God hears and knows all things.” (Qur’an 2: 256)

“The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills- let him believe; and whoever wills – let him disbelieve” (Qur’an 18:29).

“For you is your religion, and for me is my religion.” (Qur’an 109: 6)

### **3.3 ON RESPONDING TO ACTS OF AGGRESSION**

We reiterate what was published in our paper ‘Islam, ISIS and the Paris Attacks’, in which we make it clear what the Islamic theology establishes:

#### **1. Killing the innocent is wrong:**

“On that account: We ordained for the Children of Israel that if any one slew a person – unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land – it would be as if he slew the whole of mankind: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole of mankind. Then although there came to them Our apostles with clear signs, yet, even after that, many of them continued to commit excesses in the land.” (5:32)

And those who do not invoke with Allah another deity or kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed], except by right, and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse. And whoever should do that will meet a penalty. Multiplied for him is the punishment on the Day of Resurrection, and he will abide therein humiliated..." (25:68-69)

Other verses alluding to the same position include Qur'an 17:33; 6:151.

## 2. Muslims should avoid bloodshed:

"...if they remove themselves from you and do not fight you and offer you peace, then Allah has not made for you a cause [for fighting] against them." (4:90)

"Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes – from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly." (60:8)

## 3. Muslims should restrain their anger:

"And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous. Who spend [in the cause of Allah] during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people– and Allah loves the doers of good;" (3:133-4)

## 4. We must enjoin justice in our actions:

"O you who believe, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do." (5:8)

## 4. TAKFIRI IDEOLOGY – WARFARE AGAINST FELLOW MUSLIMS AND DECLARING PERSONS AS NON-MUSLIM

There is the tendency for extremists to label non-supporting Muslims as apostates, infidels, or generally disbelievers in Islam.<sup>6</sup> This – Takfir – is a serious accusation in Islam and must bear clear and indisputable evidence.

Anyone who declares the shahada is a Muslim and cannot be declared a non-Muslim<sup>7</sup>. The Qur'an gives specific guidance on this:

"O you who have believed, when you go forth [to fight] in the cause of Allah, investigate; and do not say to one who gives you [a greeting of] peace "You are not a believer," aspiring for the goods of worldly life; for with Allah are many acquisitions. You

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<sup>6</sup> As an example, see IS position on takfir in *Aqidah wa manhaj al-dawlah al-Islamiyah fi al-Takfir*; *Muqarrar fi Al-Tawhid Li Al-Mu'askarat*; and *Hazih 'Aqidatuna wa haza manhajuna*

<sup>7</sup> For further treatment on this, see MajlisTT paper *Unity in the Muslim Ummah*, <http://majlistt.com>

[yourselves] were like that before; then Allah conferred His favor upon you, so investigate. Indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted. (Qur'an 4:94)

It is unfortunately necessary to highlight that this verse applies to all those who adhere to the tenets of Islam,<sup>8</sup> and includes those groups that follow the guidance by the scholars of their different aqeedah and different schools of fiqh within Sunni Islam. These differences have no basis for disqualifying persons from being Muslim.

Muslims are forbidden from killing Muslims intentionally, nor is it permissible to kill anyone who is unarmed and a non-combatant unless condemned to death by a court of law (Hadd punishments). The Qur'an tells us:

“But whoever kills a believer intentionally - his recompense is Hell, wherein he will abide eternally, and Allah has become angry with him and has cursed him and has prepared for him a great punishment.” (Qur'an 4:93)

In a Hadith, Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is reported to have said, “If two Muslims confront each other with swords, both the killer and the killed will be in Hellfire.” It was said, O Messenger of Allah, we understand for the kiler, but why for the one killed?” The Prophet (peace be on him) said, “Verily, he intended to kill his companion.” [Bukhari 6672 and Muslim 2888]

The use of the term takfir to castigate non-supporting Muslims or those guilty of minor kufr, and incite acts against such persons, is against the teachings of Islam. In a hadith, Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is reported to have said:

“Abusing a Muslim is fusuq (an evil doing) and killing him is kufr (disbelief). (Al-Bukhari and Al-Tirmidhi)

To those who are inclined to hold extremist views on Islam and on Muslims who they may see as ‘not Muslim enough’, mimicking or associating with the disbelievers, we remind all of the hadith in which Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is reported to have said,

“My people will not be in agreement over misguidance. When you differ in opinions, be with the Al-Sawad Al-A'zam (the majority).

## 5. CONCLUSION

We conclude with the reminder to everyone that Islam seeks to inculcate peace and do good in its community and in wider society. The Qur'an tells us:

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<sup>8</sup> This was established in our paper ‘Unity in the Muslim Community’ October 2021)

“Allah invites to the Home of Peace, and guides whomever He wills to a straight path”.  
(Qur’an 10:25)

“The believers, male and female, are friends to each other. They bid virtue and forbid vice and establish [prayer] and pay [poor due] and obey Allah and His Messenger. Those are the ones whom Allah will bless with mercy.” (Qur’an 9:71).

“(They are) those who repent, those who worship, those who praise (Allah), those who journey (in Allah’s way) ... those who bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair and those who preserve the limits prescribed by Allah” (Qur’an 9:112).

“And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah.... (Qur’an 5: 2).

May Almighty Allah guide us to the Straight Path, to uphold the permissible and avoid the prohibited. Ameen.