

The Boston Bombing & the prohibition of killing innocent people

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At the outset, I must say that Islam is explicit in its prohibition of the killing, or harming of any innocent human being, whether Muslim or not, during times of peace or war.

Life is sacred in Islam and ought to be protected (*nafs m'asuma*). This protection is guaranteed in Sharia for any Muslim or non-Muslim who lives safely with Muslims, or with whom there is a peace treaty or a covenant. Contemporary Muslim jurists consider the issuing of a visa to a Muslim by a non-Muslim country, or citizenship, as covenant that must be upheld.

المقصود بالأنفس المعصومة الأنفس التي عُتيت الشريعة الإسلامية بحفظها بسبب الإسلام أو الجزية أو العهد أو الأمان

Second, Islam is a religion (*Dīn*) of mercy (*Rahma*). Allah Al-Mighty declares:

{ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ } [الأنبياء: 7]

And we have sent you as a mercy to humanity (21:7)

Prophet Muhammad is a messenger of mercy as he said:

فهو صلى الله عليه وسلم الرحمة المهداة، عن أبي موسى الأشعري رضي الله عنه قال: كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم

يسمي لنا نفسه أسماء فقال: ((أنا محمد وأحمد والمقفي والحاشر ونبي التوبة ونبي الرحمة))

I'm Muhammad...the Prophet of repentance and mercy (Narrated by Muslim)

He was merciful to animals and birds let alone humans as was demonstrated in his compassion towards the bird whose hatchlings were taken, or his admonition of those who burnt an ants' hill, and his concern for a camel whose owner overburdened it with weight and fed it little.

The higher objectives of Islamic law aim to protect the five essentials (*daruriyāt*) of humans: Religion, life, intellect, honour and wealth. The most important of these after religion is the protection of life.

In order to protect life, the Sharia placed guidelines including the prohibition of suicide and the severe punishment associated with it:

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ عُدْوَانًا وَظُلْمًا فَسَوْفَ نُصَلِّيهِ نَارًا
وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا

(Al-Nisa, 29-30)

And do not kill yourselves. Surely, Allah is Most Merciful to you. And whoever commits that through aggression and injustice, We shall cast him into the Fire, and that is easy for Allah (4:29-30)

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال

: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: ((من قتل نفسه بحديدة فحديده في يده يتوجأ بها في بطنه في نار جهنم خالدًا مخلدًا فيها أبداً، ومن شرب سماً فقتل نفسه فهو يتحساه في نار جهنم خالدًا مخلدًا فيها أبداً، ومن تردى من جبل فقتل نفسه فهو يتردى في نار جهنم خالدًا مخلدًا فيها أبداً

The Prophet said, "Whoever kills himself with an iron weapon, will be carrying that weapon in his hand and stabbing his abdomen with it in the (Hell) Fire wherein he will abide eternally forever; whoever drinks poison and kills himself with it, he will be carrying his poison in his hand and drinking it in the (Hell) Fire wherein he will abide eternally forever; and Whoever purposely throws himself from a mountain and kills himself, will be in the (Hell) Fire falling down into it and abiding therein perpetually forever." [Bukhari]

Narrated Jundab the Prophet said, "A man was inflicted with wounds and he committed suicide, and so Allah said: My slave has caused death on himself hurriedly, so I forbid Paradise for him." [Bukhari]

There are dozens of other *ahadith* that prohibit acts of suicide.

The severity of Killing innocent people

The Qur'an and Hadith are full of evidence about the prohibition of killing innocent people, and consider murder as a major sin send to *Shirk*, polytheism.

Allah has promised severe punishment for a murderer in this world and the hereafter:

قال الله تعالى: { قُلْ تَعَالَوْا أَنُؤْتِ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَلَّا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ مِمَّنْ إِمْلَقْنَا نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ذَلِكَمْ وَصَّكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ } [الأنعام:151]

Say: "Come, I will rehearse what Allah hath (really) prohibited you from": Join not anything as equal with Him; be good to your parents; kill not your children on a plea of want;- We provide sustenance for you and for them;- do not come close to shameful deeds. Whether open or secret; take not life, which Allah has made sacred, except by way of justice and law: thus does He command you, that you may learn wisdom (6:151)

وقال تعالى: { مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَلِكَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنَّهُ مَن قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُمْ بَعَدَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْأَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُونَ } [المائدة 32].

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

Prophet Muhammad said:

وعن أنس بن مالك رضي الله عنه عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: ((أكبر الكبائر الإشراف بالله وقتل النفس وعقوق الوالدين وقول الزور))

The most major of sins are: associating partners with Allah, murder, disrespecting parents and false testimony or perjury (Bukhari)

وعن عبد الله بن مسعود: قال: قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: ((أول ما يقضى بين الناس في الدماء))

The first to be judged between people [on the Day of Judgment] is blood [murder] (Bukhari)

Prohibition of murder applies to Muslims and non-Muslims, except in the case of direct war or the application of the *had* or penal code, which is the prerogative of an 'Islamic' state and its judiciary and not individuals. The Islamic penal code cannot be applied in non-Muslim countries, and is not applied today in majority Muslim nations.

Intentional Murder of a believer

In the case of the deliberate murder of a Muslim, Allah says:

قال الله تعالى: { وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاؤُهُ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيهَا وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعْنَهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُ عَذَابًا عَظِيمًا } [النساء: 93].

He who kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide therein (For ever): And the wrath and the curse of Allah are upon him, and a dreadful penalty is prepared for him (4:93)

The Prophet said:

وعن البراء بن عازب رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: ((لزوال الدنيا أهون على الله من قتل مؤمن بغير حق

The loss of the world is easier for Allah than the murder of a believer unjustly (Ibn Maja, Sahih)

The prohibition of killing a non-Muslim living under the protection of Islam or with whom there is peace and a covenant

The Prophet said:

عن عبد الله بن عمرو رضي الله عنهما، عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: ((من قتل معاهدا لم يرح رائحة الجنة، وإن ريحها توجد من مسيرة أربعين عاما

Whoever kills a mū'āhid [one with whom there is a treaty] will not smell the scent of paradise, although its fragrance can be smelt from a distance of forty years (Bukhari)

وعن رجل من أصحاب النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: ((من قتل رجلا من أهل الذمة لم يجد ريح الجنة، وإن ريحها ليوجد من مسيرة سبعين عاما

Whoever kills a person from ahl al-Zima [protected non-Muslim minority] will not smell the fragrance of paradise, although its fragrance can be smelt for a distance of forty years (Ahmad and al-Nasa'I, Sahih)

Furthermore, the killing of a non-Muslim who lives safely with a Muslim is an act of treachery:

The Prophet said:

سمعت النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول: ((من أمّن رجلاً على نفسه فقتله أعطى لواء الغدر يوم القيامة))،

He who kills a person in safety will be given the banner of treachery on the Day of Judgment (Ahmad and others, Sahih)

وفي لفظ: ((من ائتمنه رجلاً على دمه فقتله فأنا منه بريء وإن كان المقتول كافراً))

I'm innocent of a person who kills a person who trusted him with his life, even if the murdered is a disbeliever (Ahmad, Sahih)

These are just some of the textual evidence on the prohibition of murder.

There is no justification for the killing of innocent people, whether in Baghdad or Boston. Full stop!

Islam goes further by prohibiting during times of war the killing of children, women, the elderly, and priests in their churches and Rabbis in the Synagogues. It also prohibits during warfare rape, mutilation of the dead and the unwanted destruction of infrastructure.

The Ends do not justify the means in Islamic ethics!

Therefore, associating murder or the killing of innocent people and bystanders to 'Islam' is not only abhorrent, but goes against the clear text of Islam.

Western media, of course, was quick to associate the Boston murders to the brothers being 'devout Muslims.' This means, by extension, that Islam is to blame, again.

It is the absence of Islamic values and the ability to restrain one's negative emotions that lead to murder.

The tragedy, and hypocrisy, of western journalism (with some exceptions) is their hunger to associate such crimes with Islam.

Of course, no association to Christianity, or any other ideological convection, was ever made when James Holmes massacred 12 people and injured 50 others at the 2012 Colorado Dark Knight cinema shooting. This was the deadliest U.S. shooting since the Fort Hood massacre in 2009.

According to the police and the media, Holmes was, of course, "a deranged individual".

Other western media suggested that "the violence of the films be blamed for inspiring the massacre."

No mention of religion anywhere!

In 2011, Anders Behring Breivik massacred 77 people in cold blood. Breivik hated Muslims and Islam and subscribed to a fundamentalist, right-wing Christian ideology.

Of course, little to no mention was made by the media about Breivik's 'religious' association, or that he was 'devout' of any sort.

In the case of the Boston bombing the association was made, directly or indirectly, to the faith of the Boston brothers.

Contrary to the reporting about Holmes or Breivik who killed far more people than the Boston brothers, the media was quick to report that "Tamerlan is believed to have

instigated the attack after turning devoutly religious and possibly reading radical Islamic dogma.”

The hypocrisy in reporting is alarming. And ethical reporting demands a balanced approach to news coverage.

It is highly unethical, however, to implicate an entire faith and its followers for the evil actions of a few.

However, we must not lower our standards if others do.

Brothers and sisters:

Your anger for what happened in Iraq, Gaza or Abu Ghraib prison is legitimate but must be channelled in positive ways.

Violent extremism will not benefit our sisters walking with hijab down the street. Nor will it benefit the image of Islam and Muslims.

We must not use Islam for our own ulterior motives or to quench our anger against oppression.

The negative reporting of the media and the destruction of Iraq and Afghanistan is abhorrent but is not an excuse for anyone to kill innocent people.

Of course, you would be angry with media’s coverage and the double standards of western foreign policy, but we must learn to change this with civility and the confines of the law.

And in addition to being steadfast and patient let’s produce brilliant political writers and commentators to counter biased policies.

Let’s produce brilliant journalist who can write about human suffering and the plight of the oppressed.

Let’s work with others who share our concerns such as the many human rights organisations.

And, let’s educate our young people so that they are not susceptible to violent radical ideology.

Let’s also educate the Australian community about the beauty, benevolence, and relevance of Islam to people.