



# **Coexistence** between Muslims and Non-Muslims in Light of Qur'an and Sunnah



E-Da`wah Committee



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## Introduction

Indeed, the final message of Islam was sent down to the inhabitants of the earth in such an era which recognized neither justice nor kindness nor the contemporary concepts of freedom, pluralism or peaceful co-existence.

As a matter of fact, such an age was characterized by extremism, fanatic-

icism and persecution. Only one religion, even one doctrine, was allowed in a given locality. A country could hardly accommodate more than one faith. Minorities had no rights so that they could have the freedom of religion. They had rather to adapt to the very likely tyranny, coercion, and compulsion.

However, Muslims' relations with non-Muslims have been based on justice and kindness though the world adopted those values only numerous centuries later. In the Qur'an, we read:

**Indeed, Allah orders justice and kindness and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded.** (An-Nahl 16:90)

We also read:

**Verily! Allah commands that you should render back the trusts to those, to whom they are due; and that when you judge between men, you judge with justice. Verily, how excellent is the teaching which He (Allah) gives you! Truly, Allah is Ever All-Hearer, All-Seer.** (An-Nisaa' 4:58)

God commanded his Prophet Muhammad to do justice among all people even if they were non-Muslims. In the context of the command to engage in dialogue with the People of Scripture, especially Jews and Christians, Prophet Muhammad was commanded to do justice among them.



## In the Qur'an, we read:

... And remain on a right course as you are commanded and do not follow their inclinations but say, "I have believed in what Allah has revealed of the Qur'an, and I have been commanded to do justice among you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord. For us

are our deeds, and for you your deeds. There is no [need for] argument between us and you. Allah will bring us together, and to Him is the [final] destination."

(Ash-Shura 42:15)



Prophet Muhammad was also commanded to be just when judging among non-Muslims. We read:

**[They are] avid listeners to falsehood, devourers of [what is] unlawful. So if they come to you, [O Muhammad], judge between them or turn away from them. And if you turn away from them – never will they harm you at all. And if you judge, judge between them with justice. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.** (Al-Ma'idah 5:42)

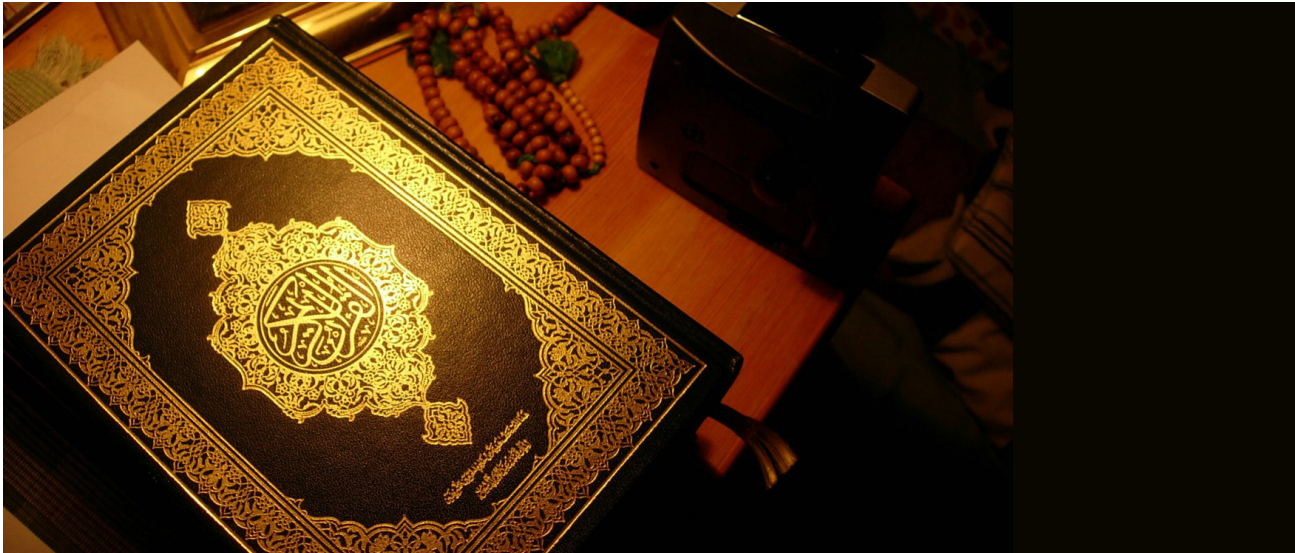
Just as Prophet Muhammad was commanded to be just towards non-Muslims, ordinary Muslims are also commanded to be Just towards non-Muslims despite any likely hatred. The Qur'an indicates that justice towards non-Muslims

is nearer to righteousness. We read:

**O you who have believed, 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.** (Al-Ma'idah 5:8)

The command to Muslims is not restricted to justice and fairness but also righteousness and kindness. We read:

**Perhaps Allah will put, between you and those to whom you have been enemies among them, affection. And Allah is competent, and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. 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. Allah only forbids you from those who fight you because of religion and expel you from your homes and aid in your expulsion – [forbids] that you make allies of them. And whoever makes allies of them, then it is those who are the wrongdoers. (Al-Mumtahanah 60:7-8)**

Actually, there is no difference between justice and kindness to non-Muslims residing among Muslims inside the Muslim world and justice and kindness to those outside the Muslim world.





## Coexistence between Muslims and Non-Muslims inside the Muslim World

There are several forms of justice and kindness towards non-Muslims inside the Muslim world. One of those forms is giving them security for themselves. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad prohibited killing a Mu`ahad (a person who is granted the pledge of protection by the Muslims)

**`Abdullah ibn` Amr reported that the Prophet said: "Whoever kills a Mu`a-**

**had shall not smell the fragrance of Paradise though its fragrance can be smelt at a distance of forty years (of traveling)." (Al-Bukhari)**



Another form of justice and kindness towards non-Muslims is defending and protecting them and showing them clemency. Amr ibn Maymoun reported that `Umar (after he was stabbed), instructed (his would-be-successor) saying, "I urge him (i.e. the new Caliph) to take care of those non-Muslims who are under the protection of Allah and His Messenger in that he should observe the convention agreed upon with them, and fight on their behalf (to secure their safety) and he should not over-tax them beyond their capability." (Al-Bukhari)

The forms of justice and kindness towards non-Muslims include preserving their human dignity. Qais ibn Sa'd reported: A funeral passed by the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, and he stood up. It was said to him, "It is a Jew." The Prophet said, "Was he not a soul?" (Al-Bukhari)



Another form of justice and kindness towards non-Muslims is giving them the freedom of religion and refraining from compelling them into Islam.

About this the Qur'an says:

**There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong...** (Al-Baqarah 2:256)

We also read:

**And had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed – all of them entirely. Then, [O Muhammad], would you compel the people in order that they become believers?** (Yunus 10:99)

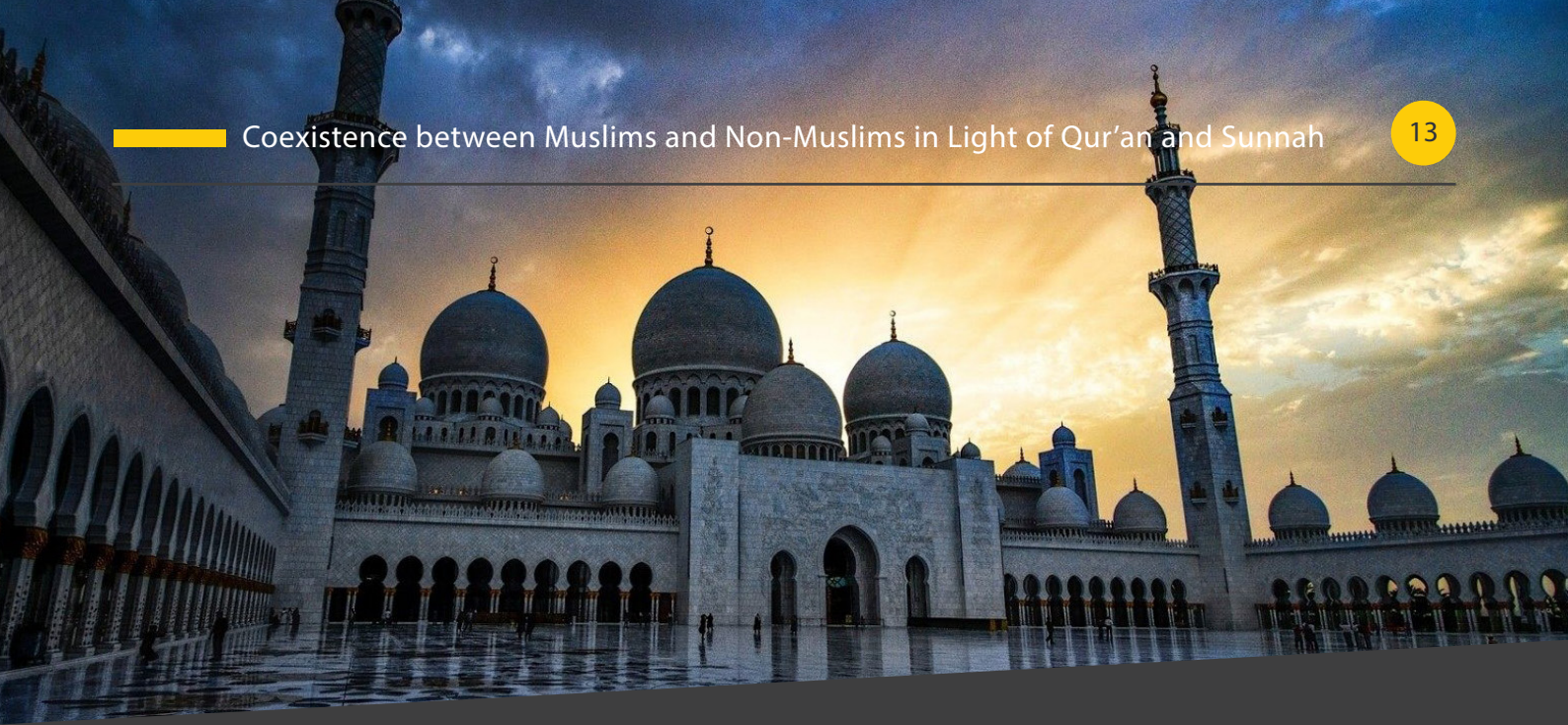


We further read:

**And say, "The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills – let him believe; and whoever wills – let him disbelieve." (Al-Kahf 18:29)**

As a form of justice and kindness towards non-Muslims, Muslims are commanded to respect the other religions and faiths so that non-Muslims will be more likely to respect Islam and Muslims. Indeed, Islam prohibits cursing non-Muslims or even the false gods they worship. In the Qur'an, we read:

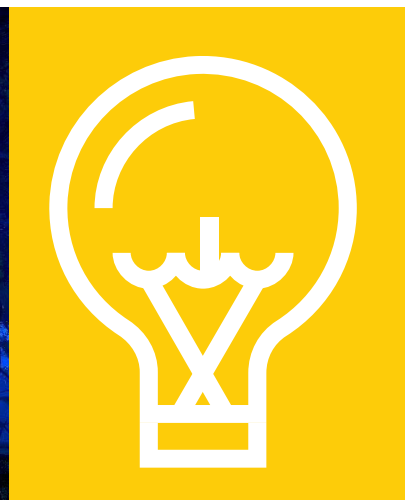
**And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge. (Al-An'am 6:108)**



Moreover, politeness and courtesy in dialogue in matters of religion also constitute a form of justice and kindness towards non-Muslims.

About this the Qur'an says:

**And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them, and say, "We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you. And our God and your God is one; and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him." (Al-` Ankabut 29:46)**



We also read:

**Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided.** (An-Nahl 16:125)

Mixing and socializing with non-Muslims, especially Jews and Christians, may also serve as a form

of justice and kindness. Muslims are permitted to eat from the foods of non-Muslims and let non-Muslims eat from their foods. Also, Muslim men are allowed to marry decent women from the People of Scripture. In the Qur'an, we read:

**This day [all] good foods have been made lawful, and the food of those who were given the Scripture is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them. And [lawful in marriage are] chaste women from**



**among the believers and chaste women from among those who were given the Scripture before you, when you have given them their due compensation, desiring chastity, not unlawful sexual intercourse or taking [secret] lovers. (Al-Ma'idah 5:5)**

Another form of justice and kindness towards non-Muslims is offering non-Muslims refuge if they seek refuge in Muslims. In the Qur'an, we read:

**And if anyone of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the Word of Allah (the Qur'an), and then escort him to where he can be secure, that is because they are men who know not. (At-Tawbah 9:6)**

## Coexistence between Muslims and Non-Muslims outside the Muslim World

In the previous part, we saw how Muslims should coexist with non-Muslims inside the Muslim world. In this part, let us see how Muslim countries should coexist with non-Muslim countries.

We will see how Muslim countries' relations with non-Muslim countries should be based on peacefulness, harmlessness and good neighborly relations and, in case of war, how war

has such etiquette and ethics in Islam, to which Muslims have to adhere. So let us know how Islam is unique in the tolerant relations it prescribes for Muslims with non-Muslims.

There are several forms of justice and kindness towards non-Muslims outside the Muslim world. The first and foremost form of such justice and kindness involves peacefulness and harmlessness except when repulsing aggression. We read:

**And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah. Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing. (Al-Anfal 8:61)**



We also read:


**Except those who join a group between whom and you there is a treaty (of peace), or those who approach you with hearts restraining them from fighting you as well as fighting their own people. If Allah had pleased, He could have given them power over you, and they would have fought you: Therefore if they withdraw from you but fight you not, and (instead) send you (Guarantees of) peace, then Allah Hath opened no way for you (to war against them). (An-Ni-saa'4:90)**

We further read:

**Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed. Allah does not like transgressors. (Al-Baqarah 2:190)**

Muslims' obligation to display justice towards non-Muslims is not waived even in times of war. For Muslims, wars do not justify injustice, oppression or transgression. According to the Islamic concept, war is just a state where Muslims have to carry and use weapons for self-defense purposes either inside the Muslim world or outside, in case of marching for the call to God.

Therefore, fighting wars has such etiquette in Islam which ensures adherence to justice towards non-Muslims. Such etiquette involves the prohi-



bition of killing women and children. `Abdullah ibn `Umar reported that a woman was found killed in one of the expeditions of the Prophet. So the Messenger of God condemned the killing of women and children. (Al-Bukhari)

The stated manners include the prohibition of pillage and the mutilation of dead bodies. Abdullah bin Yazid Al-Ansari reported: "The Prophet prohibited pillage and mutilation" (Al-Bukhari)

The above-mentioned etiquette also includes the prohibition of treachery and the call to belief in God and His Messenger before fighting. It is reported from Sulaiman bin Buraida through his father that when the Messenger of Allah appointed anyone as a leader of an army or detachment he would especially exhort him to

fear Allah and to be good to the Muslims who were with him. He would say: Fight in the name of Allah and in the way of Allah. Fight against those who disbelieve in Allah. Make a conquest, do not embezzle spoils, do not break your pledge, do not mutilate (the dead) bodies, do not kill children. When you meet your enemies who are polytheists, invite them to three courses of action. If they respond to any one of these, you also accept it and withhold yourself from doing them any harm. Invite them to (accept) Islam; if they respond to you, accept it from them and desist from fighting against them. Then invite them to migrate from their lands to the land of the Immigrants and inform them that, if they do so, they shall have all the privileges and obligations of the Immigrants. If they refuse to migrate, tell them that they will have the status of Bedouin Muslims and will be sub-

jected to the Commands of Allah like other Muslims, but they will not get any share from the spoils of war or Fai' except when they actually fight with Muslims (against the disbelievers). If they refuse to accept Islam, demand the Jizya from them. If they agree to pay, accept it from them and hold off your hands. If they refuse to pay the Jizya, seek Allah's help and fight them. When you lay siege to a fort and the besieged appeal to you for protection in the name of Allah and His Prophet, do not accord to them the guarantee of Allah and His Prophet, but accord to them your own guarantee and the guarantee of your companions for it is a lesser sin that the security given by you or your companions be disregarded than that the security granted in the name of Allah and His Prophet be violated. When you besiege a fort and the besieged want you to let them out in accordance with Allah's

Command, do not let them come out in accordance with His Command, but do so at your (own) command, for you do not know whether or not you will be able to carry out Allah's behest with regard to them. (Muslim)

Prophet Muhammad reaffirmed the prohibition of treachery and betrayal. Amr ibn Al-Hamiq reported that the Messenger of God said: "Whoever gives a man security for himself and then kills him, I disown the killer even if the one killed is a disbeliever." (Recorded by Al-Bukhari in At-Tarikh and At-Tabarani in Al-Mu`jam As-Saghir)





The above etiquette also includes the prohibition of any attack on the places of worship. Prophet Muhammad prohibited attacking the places of worship, specifically hermitages, or the worshippers therein. Ibn `Abbas reported that if Prophet Muhammad dispatched an army, he would instruct: "Go out in the name of God to fight in the cause of God against those who disbelieve in God, but do not act treacherously or dishonestly, do not commit mutilation, do not kill children or hermits." (Recorded by Imam Ahmad)

The directives to protect and not to attack the places of worship and worshippers therein lasted even after the demise of Prophet Muhammad, especially during the caliphate of the four rightly-guided caliphs.

Upon dispatching Usamah ibn Zayd in command of an army to the Le-

vant, Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, the first Muslim caliph, instructed: "... do not kill a young child, an old man or a woman. Do not chop down or burn palm trees. Do not cut down a fruitful tree. Do not slaughter an ewe, cow or a camel except for eating. You will pass by peoples retiring at hermitages. So leave them to what they are retired for." (Ibn `Asakir 50/2)

The war etiquette also includes adherence to treaties and abstention from fighting except after the declaration of war and the abrogation of the treaty already concluded in case of the fear of betrayal.

About this, the Qur'an says:

**If you [have reason to] fear from a people betrayal, throw [their treaty] back to them, [putting you] on equal terms. Indeed, Allah does not like traitors. (Al-Anfal 8:58)**

In the Qur'an, we also read:

**Excepted are those with whom you made a treaty among the polytheists and then they have not been deficient toward you in anything or supported anyone against you; so complete for them their treaty until their term [has ended]. Indeed, Allah loves the righteous [who fear Him]. (At-Tawbah 9:4)**

Sulaym ibn `Amir, a man of Himyar, reported: There was a covenant be-

tween Mu'awiyah and the Byzantines, and he was going towards their country, and when the covenant came to an end, he attacked them. A man came on a horse, or a packhorse saying: Allah is Most Great, Allah is Most Great; let there be faithfulness and not treachery. And when they looked they found that he was `Amr ibn Abasah. Mu'awiyah sent for him and questioned him (about that). He said: I heard the Messenger of Allah say: When one has covenant with people he must not strengthen or loosen it till its term comes to an end or he brings it to an end in agreement with them (to make both the parties equal). So Mu'awiyah returned. (Abu Dawud)

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#### References:

- 1- The Glorious Qur'an
  - 2- Sahih Al-Bukhari
  - 3- Sahih Muslim
  - 4- Musnad Ahmad
  - 5- Sunan Abu Dawud
  - 6- At-Tarikh by Al-Bukhari
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