

Knowledge Sheet – Peace and Conflict – Islam

Topic	Muslim View	Importance	Impact on Muslims Today
Peace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peace is linked with justice as it is the absence of oppression and injustice. The word 'Islam' derives from 'Salaam' which means peace. Sometimes war may be necessary for Muslims, but peace is the main goal in any case. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Islam is a religion of peace (despite the misinterpretations). The Qur'an and Muhammad all taught peace was crucial. Muslims believe Allah created and wants a peaceful world. The Qur'an teaches that the Ummah should be a vehicle for peace by teaching the importance of unity within it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muslims are focussed on the personal struggle within (Lesser Jihad) not conflict. Muslims work for peace to strengthen the Ummah. They greet each other Standing up for justice in the world can achieve peace. This might mean war.
Peacemaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peacemaking is the process Muslims follow to show their understanding of peace. They believe that Justice, Forgiveness and reconciliation are crucial in peacemaking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peacemaking is important to follow the teachings of Islam. The Qur'an contains many quotes relating to peace. Muslims apply this to helping others and charity work. It inspires Muslims to help others and strengthen the Ummah. 	Muslim Organisations working for peace include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Islamic Relief – Helping victims of war. Muslim Peace Fellowship – Promotes world peace.
Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conflict involves the breakdown of relationships and can be harmful to individuals and society. Muslims believe conflict should be avoided or overcome and resolve where possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ummah is an important focus in avoiding conflict. It deserves respect and people should be treated equally. Allah is merciful and forgiving and so should they be. Muslims aim for peace but sometimes conflict is inevitable. Muslims believe they shouldn't forgive those working against Islam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muslims try to reconcile groups who are in conflict in order to achieve peace + reconciliation. Muslims realise that peace is important but they feel like their war is sometimes necessary as a last resort.
Situation Ethics teaches that the action may differ from one situation to another.		Atheist view – Religion usually causes conflict due to divergent beliefs.	
Pacifism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pacifism is avoiding conflict and war. Islam is not an absolute pacifist religion but does have teachings which are in line with pacifism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muslims believe that Pacifism isn't always possible as they have had to protect their faith throughout history (Hijrah). Justice, forgiveness and reconciliation are tools for pacifism. 	Muslims enact passive resistance which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resisting oppression and strive for justice. If a political power is restricting rights or justice, this should be resisted peacefully -E.g Arab Spring
Just War	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A just war is fought for the right reasons. Just war theory is the set of principles which are used to identify if a war is fair. Sometimes war is necessary but must be just. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JWT provides a set of rules showing how to act in time of war. Offers a framework to decide if war is necessary. Aims to prevent war and unnecessary deaths. It is important to protect moral and religious values. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muslims try to avoid killing where possible. War is sometimes permitted and necessary but only as a last resort. Sunni and Shi'a sometimes interpret Jihad differently
Holy War	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harb al-Maqadis (Holy war) is war fought due to religious differences (or in defence of Islam) It is to protect the religious rights of Muslims. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muslims need to protect themselves against religious persecution and so this would condone Harb al-Maqadis. It can sometimes be to strengthen Islam when it is threatened 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muslims associate this with the lesser Jihad. Holy war has certain conditions including: for reasons of defence/ declared by a religious leader/ last resort, avoid harming civilians/ not to gain land/ to aim for peace.
Weapons of Mass Destruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) include Nuclear, biological or chemical weapons. 	Non-Religious views: Atheism – It is difficult to condone WMD as they cause so much unnecessary damage and threaten innocent life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muslims disagree with WMD as it causes unnecessary harm.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used to swiftly end conflict or as a deterrent. Considered morally unacceptable by many. 	Utilitarianism – WMD OK if peace is achieved in the long term.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It can threaten innocent lives. Hard to regulate under Islamic conditions of war.
Issues Surrounding conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conflict has always existed, but now there are new and complicated forms of war, violence and terrorism. This presents problems to the world and to Muslims. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muslims have divergent beliefs about conflict with some thinking peace should always be the way but others understanding that war is ok when protecting Muslims etc. <p>Non-religious people think increased conflict is dangerous for society and some blame religion for the rise in conflict.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Muslim Council of Britain runs education programmes to teach people how to reconcile. Rallies, marches and interfaith work to promote peace. Organisations like Mosaic work to bring people together within communities.

Key Quotes	Linked Topics
<i>The servants of the Lord of Mercy are those who walk humbly on the earth, and who, when aggressive people address them, reply, with words of peace (Surah 25)</i>	Peace, Peacekeeping, Pacifism
<i>Be a community that calls for what is good, urges what is right, and forbids what is wrong (Surah 3)</i>	Peacekeeping, Peace, Pacifism
<i>If two groups of believers fight, you should try to reconcile them (Surah 60)</i>	Peacekeeping – reconciliation
<i>Remember God’s favour to you: you were enemies and then He brought your hearts together and you became brothers by His grace: you were about to fall into a pit of Fire and He saved you from it (Surah 3)</i>	Conflict, Peacekeeping, Peace
<i>The horrors of war...have made many people question the existence of a benevolent and omnipotent deity (British Humanist Association)</i>	Humanist (non-religious) view on conflict and war
<i>If anyone kills a person, unless in retribution for murder or spreading corruption in the land – it is as if he kills all mankind (Surah 5)</i>	Peace, Pacifism, WMD
<i>If an act of disobedience (to Allah) is imposed (by a ruler), he (citizen) should not listen to or obey it (Hadith)</i>	Passive resistance
<i>Fight them until there is no more persecution, and all worship is devoted to God alone (Surah 8)</i>	JWT, Holy War, Jihad, WMD
<i>The believers fight for God’s cause, while those who reject faith fight for an unjust cause (Surah 4)</i>	JWT, Jihad, Holy War
<i>Prepare against them (disbelievers) whatever forces you (believers) can muster (Surah 8)</i>	WMD, Holy War, Jihad

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Key Words	Meaning
Al-Salumu 'Alaykum	Muslim greeting which means 'peace be upon you'
Peace	Being in harmony with oneself and others; opposite of war
Peacekeeping	The process of making peace by preventing or settling disputes
Reconciliation	Restoring harmony after relationships have broken down
Conflict	A serious disagreement that may lead to disunity and war
Pacifism	The belief that disputes should be settled peacefully and war and violence are always wrong
Pacifist	Someone who does not believe in war
Passive resistance	Non-violent opposition to authority, including civil disobedience or non-co-operation with the government
Sanctity of life	The belief that life is holy and it is God-given
Just War Theory	A set of conditions that need to be met in order for a war to be justified
Harb al-Maqadis	Usually translated as 'holy war', where the conditions for lesser jihad are fulfilled
Holy war	A war fought in support of a religious cause
Weapons of Mass destruction	(WMD) Nuclear, Biological or chemical weapons that cause widespread devastation and loss of life
Terrorism	The unlawful use of violence, including against innocent civilians, to achieve a political or religious goal
Jihad	Struggling or Striving
Lesser Jihad	Physically resisting evil by defending Islam by use of conflict and war if necessary
Greater Jihad	Spiritually resisting against temptation within oneself (this is not necessary for this topic but helps when understanding Jihad)