



Misunderstood narrations about Jihad

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Polemics against Islam [and even some Muslim groups] argue that Allah instructs his followers to spread the Islamic message by war. The next narration is often quoted in support for this view:

It is narrated on the authority of Abu Musa that a man came to the Prophet and asked, "...a man fights for war booty; another fights for fame and a third fights for showing off; which of them is in Allah's Cause ?.." The Prophet said, "...He who fights that Allah's Word be superior, is in Allah's Cause.." ¹

If one isolates this narration from all the other narrations and quranic verses related to Jihad, one get's indeed the impression that Muslims are instructed or encouraged to fight both peacefull and hostile non-Muslims, in order to make Allah's word superior. The Holy Qur'an however clearly states that Muslims should not show hostility towards non-Muslims who are peacefull, neutral and friendly [see Quran 2:190 ², 60:8 ³]. This fact is also confirmed in the next authentic narration:

1: Sahih al-Bukhari 2810

2: In verse 2:190 Allah says: "...Fight in the way of God against those who fight you, but do not commit aggression. Truly, God does not love the aggressors ...". Dr. Louay M. Safi points out that the verse starts by commanding Muslims to fight those who initiate war against them, emphasizing that Muslims should never be the aggressive party. The term فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ, translated here as in the way of Allah, is used in the Qur'an to indicate the instigation of hostility. This meaning is demonstratable in verse [2:194] : "...whoever then commits aggression against you, commit yet aggression against him accordingly.." [Louay M. Safi, "Peace and the limits of War : Transcending Classical Conception of Jihad", Institution of Islamic Thought , second edition 2003 , p. 9]. Prof. Abdel Haleem also states that: "...The Arabic command لَا تُجَادِلُوا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا (but do not overstep the limits) is so general that commentators have agreed that it includes prohibition of starting hostilities, fighting non-combatants, disproportionate response to aggression, etc. ..." [see: "The Qur'an: A New Translation", Oxford University Press, 2004 , p. 21]. Some jurists claim that the verse, "...fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you.." [2:190] is abrogated by the verses of Surah al-Tawbah , a claim rejected by other jurists, including Ibn 'Abbas, Mujahid and others, who assert that it is "firm rule" [see al-Qurtubi, "Jami Ahkam al Qur'an" , Cairo: Matba'ah Dar al Kutub al Masriyyah, 1935, Vol. 2 , p. 348]

3: In verse 60:8 Allah says: "...and He (God) does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with anyone who has not fought you for your faith or driven you out of your homes: God loves the just..." [M. A. S. Abdel Haleem: "The Qur'an: A New Translation", Oxford University Press, 2004 , p. 369]. Al-Tabari in his Tafsir criticizes those Muslims who say that this verse was later abrogated by the verse of the sword [9:5]. Imam Al-Tabari says that the most proper interpretation of the verse [60:8] is that God commanded kindness and justice to be shown "amongst all of the kinds of communities and creeds" and did not specify by His words some communities to the exclusion of others. Al-Tabari says that here God speaks in general of any group that does not openly fight against the Muslims or drive them out of their homes, and that the opinion that this kindness was abrogated by later Qur'anic statements (verses) makes "no sense" [see: Imam Al-Tabari, "Jami' al-bayan 'an ta'wil ay al-qur'an" (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1995) , Vol. 14 , p. 84]

It is reported the Prophet said: "...Leave the Abyssinians alone, as long as they leave you alone, and do not engage the Turks, as long as they do not engage you..." [Abu Dawud 3748, Sahih al-Jami, no. 3384]

At the time of the Holy Prophet, most areas that surrounded the Islamic territory [4](#) posed a serious threat to the Muslim community [since they were allies of the Byzantine or Persian Empire [5](#)]. The Abyssinians and the Turks however did not pose any threat to the Muslim community, and for this reason the Prophet instructed his followers not to attack these people [as long as they would not show hostility towards them]. So here we have a clear authentic narration that disproves the view that Muslims are instructed by Allah to fight peaceful non-Muslims in order to make Allah's word superior. In Islam it is not permitted to commit violence towards neutral, friendly and peaceful non-Muslims. The quranic verse that gave Muslims to fight confirms this conclusion:

To those against whom is made, permission is given [to fight] , they are wronged ; and verily, God is most powerful for their aid; [They are] those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right , [for no cause] except that they say, "our Lord is God". Did not God check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure. God will certainly aid those who aid his cause - for verily God is full of Strength, Exalted in Might [Qur'an 22:39]

Muhammad Asad points out that this verse: "...according to all available traditions, constitutes the earliest [and therefore fundamental] Qur'anic reference to the question of jihad..." [6](#) It is very important to note that in the first verse about warfare, Allah clearly mentions why he gave Muslims permission to fight ! The text of the verse clearly states that Muslims were given permission to fight because they had been wronged for their religion ! In the second verse that was revealed about warfare Allah states: "...Fight in the way of God against those who fight you, but do not commit aggression. Truly, God does not love the aggressors.." [2:190]. Here again we see that fighting non-Muslims is conditional on their aggression against the Muslim community ! This fact is very important, since there is a scholastic rule that when both an unconditional and a conditional command exist, i.e. when there is an instruction that in one place is unconditional but in another place has a condition attached, then the unconditional must be interpreted as the conditional. [7](#) In the Qur'an, a few instructions about jihad against the disbelievers are unconditional, which means they only state this: "...O Prophet ! Make Jihad against the unbelievers (with the sword) and the hypocrites (with words) , and be firm against them.." [9:73]. If we were to pay attention only to this verse, we would say that Allah instructs Muslims to fight all non-Muslims ! Further we would get the impression that this verse commands Muslims to be firm against all non-Muslims. But, as we mentioned earlier, there is a rule in the exegesis of the Qur'an, as well as in other scriptural interpretations, that when two commandments, one , and the other or , are found on the same subject, then the unconditional must be interpreted as the conditional, because the latter is more expressive of the views of the author than the general which is considered as vague in its expression. Thus it becomes clear that where the Quran says: "...O Prophet ! Make Jihad against the unbelievers (with the sword) and the hypocrites (with words).." [9:73] , it means that we must fight those non-Muslims who are fighting us , since we read in another quranic verse

[4](#): The Arabian Peninsula.

[5](#): Professor Hilmi M. Zawati states: "...the Byzantine and the Persian Empires, opposed Islam and plotted against it revolutionary rhetoric.." [See: Professor Hilmi M. Zawati: "Is Jihād a Just War ? War, Peace and Human Rights under Islamic and Public International Law" (The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001) , p. 49]

[6](#): See: Muhammad Asad, "The Message of the Qur'an" , (The Book Foundation, 2003) , Volume 1 , p. 51

[7](#): Muhammad bin Ali Asy-Syaukani, "Irsyad Al-Fuhul Ila Tahqiq Al-Haq Min Ilm Al-Usul" (Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah, 1999) Vol. 1, pp. 532-4 ; al-Shatibi, "Al-Muwafaqat Fi Usul Al-Figh" , Vol. 3, pp. 97-8 , pp. 233-5

that fighting non-Muslims is conditional on their aggression against the Muslim community or hostility towards Islam [2:190] ! ⁸ Those jurists who said that the Qur'an unconditional instructs Muslims to fight all non-Muslims, argued that the verse of the sword [9:5] abrogated, canceled and replaced all earlier verses that state war should only be carried out against those who are violent or pose a serious threat to the Muslim community ! And so these jurists did not interpretate the unconditional verses about physical Jihad against non-Muslims as conditional. However great authorities like Ibn Abbas, Mujahid and others, rejected the view that the conditional verse, "...Fight in the way of God against those who fight you, but do not commit aggression. Truly, God does not love the aggressors..." [2:190] , is abrogated by the verses of Surah al-Tawbah. ⁹ Shayk Sayyid Sabiq agrees with these authorities, and concludes that the verse prohibits attacking those who did not commit aggression against Muslims. This is because when Allah states that He dislikes something, it is a type of news that be abrogated [Fiqhu as-Sunnah, Vol. 3, p. 79]. Therefore we need to interpretate the unconditional verses about physical jihad against non-Muslims as conditional [i.e. fighting non-Muslims is conditional on their aggression against the Muslim community]. The Quran also states that Muslims should fight in order to free people from tyranny:

Why should you not fight for God's sake when men, women and children who are considered helpless say: "Our Lord, lead us out of this town whose people are so oppressive, and grant us a patron from Your presence and grant us a supporter from Your presence" [Qur'an 4:75 , English translation by T.B. Irving]

In Sahih Muslim we further read:

The Prophet said: "...This religion will continue to exist, and a group of people from the Muslims will continue to fight for its until the Hour is established.." [Sahih Muslim, Book 20, Nr. 47165]

All these facts demonstrate that Muslims are instructed to fight those who: 1. are trying to destroy Islam 2. pose a serious threat to the Muslim community and 3. oppress others for their religious

It is narrated on the authority of Abu Musa that a man came to the Prophet and asked, “a man fights for war booty; another fights for fame and a third fights for showing off; which of them is in Allah’s Cause ?” The Prophet said, “He who fights that Allah’s Word be superior, is in Allah’s Cause” [10](#)

The above narration should be read and understood in the context of other narrations and verses about physical Jihad. As we clarified earlier, Muslims are instructed to fight against those who are hostile towards Islam or persecute others for their religious beliefs etc. In other words Muslims who fight in order to defend their faith or religious community against any form of aggression, are fighting in Allah’s cause [since they are fighting in obedience to Allah’s instructions in the Holy Qur’an]. In the above narration however we read that he who fights in order make Allah’s Word superior, is also fighting in Allah’s cause [i.e. in obedience to Allah’s instructions]. To understand what is ment by fighting in order to make Allah’s Word superior, we need take a look at other quranic verses related to this topic, and the historical context in which this statement was made. In the Quran we read that the Prophet was instructed to convey Allah’s Message [Word] to mankind:

O Messenger ! deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message, and Allah will protect you from the people .. [Source: Holy Qur’an 5:67]

Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching .. [Source: Holy Qur’an 16:125]

In addition we read in another source:

It is reported that Messenger of Allah said: “...Listen, O people, Allah has sent me as His Messenger and a Prophet of mercy for all the world, Mind that you do not fall into dissension like the disciples of Jesus. Go and convey the divine message from me...” [Muhammad Yusuf Kandhlawi, “Hayatus Sahaba, The lives of the Companions of the Prophet” , (New Delhi: India , 1987) , Volume 1, p. 134]

All these quotes clearly demonstrate that Muslims are instructed by Allah to convey His Message [His Word] to other peoples and nations. The obvious reason behind this duty, was off course to guide mankind, and to prepare them for the life in hereafter. Like Christianity and Judaism, Islam views its message as the divine truth. Islam, like Christianity and Judaism, also teaches that only those who follow the truth will reach salvation. Therefore those who belief to have the divine truth in their hands, wish off course to see that this truth [divine message] prevails over all other belief systems [religions] that are not in agreement with it [since we wish salvation for everyone]. For this reason, Allah states, “..He it is Who hath sent His messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all religion..” [Qur’an 48:28]. In another verse we read how the Prophet was instructed to perform this religious task, “...Say: This is the truth from your Lord. Let whosoever will, believe, and whosoever will, disbelieve it...” [Qur’an 18:29]. A similar instruction is found in the next verse, “...Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching..” [Qur’an 16:125]. These quranic verses clearly demonstrate that Muslims

10: Sahih al-Bukhari 2810

are not permitted to make Allah's Word [i.e. His religion] superior by force. The Qur'an clearly states that is forbidden to force non-Muslims into Islam [Qur'an 2:256 ; 18:29]. Allah teaches us in the Qur'an that Muslims should strive to make His Word superior through [i.e. beautiful preaching and wisdom]. In submission to Allah's instruction, the Holy Prophet started to invite non-Muslims in a peaceful way [i.e. through dawah] to Islam. In various sources we read that most of the non-Muslim tribes or nations reacted in a violent or aggressive manner to the Prophet's invitation. The meccan mercantile aristocracy opposed the Prophet's message violently, because they saw it as a double threat to their interests. First, it threatened their idol worship, particularly the idols stored in the Ka'abah ¹¹ that were the object of Arab pilgrimage. During this annual pilgrimage, Meccans earned a great deal of money from the pilgrims ; and they feared losing this source of income if Prophet Muhammad succeeded in his preaching. Second, the aristocracy were threatened by the Prophet's insistence that the rich take care of the poor. These people disliked Islam so much, that they even tried to kill the Prophet several times. Shayk Jalal Abuelrub writes:

the powerful Arab tribes of Makkah, Taif, Najd and the rest of Arabia were hostile combatants against Muslims... The pagans of Quraish oppressed and persecuted Islam and Muslims since the dawn of Islam and conspired to kill the Prophet (peace be upon him) ... Muslims were forced to migrate to Madinah ¹²

In another source we read:

the fighting between the Islamic state and both Byzantium and Persia was commenced not because the Muslims wanted to extend the dominion of the Islamic state, or dar al Islam, using the classical terminology, but rather because both the Byzantines and the Persians either assailed Muslim individuals and caravans or of the Islamic message. For example, the Prophet sent al Harith ibn Umayr to the governor of Busrah. Upon reaching Mu'tah, al Harith met with Sharhabil Amir ibn al Ghassani, who asked him, "Are you a messenger of Muhammad?" Al Harith answered: Yes. Then Sharhabil ordered his men to kill him, and he was executed. ¹ The Prophet also sent five men to Banu Sulayman for the sole purpose of teaching them Islam, and he endured their cold-blooded murder by their hosts. Only their leader managed to escape, and he did so purely accidentally. He also sent fifteen men to Dhat al Talh on the outskirts of al Sham in order to call its people to Islam. Therefore, too, the messengers of Muhammad and the missionaries of faith were put to death in cold-blood. ² It was also reported that the northern killed those among them who had professed Islam, ³ .. ¹³

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- 1: Al-Daqs, Kamil Salamah, "Al- 'Ilaqat al-Dawliyyah fi al-Islam" [Jeddah: Dar al-Shuruq 1904], p. 287
 - 2: Muhammad Haykal, "The Life of Muhammad" [North American Trust Publications 1976], p. 387
 - 3: Al-Daqs, pp. 287-88, citing Ibn Taymiyya "Risalah al-Qital" in , pp. 126-28

The above quotations confirm that many non-Muslim tribes and nations prevented the peaceful spread of the Islamic message. However as we earlier we pointed , Muslims were instructed by Allah to convey His message [His Word] to other peoples and nations. Yet here , they were prevented by many non-Muslim tribes and nations from doing so. In Islam we belief that every human being has a right to know the truth, i.e. every human being has a right to know Allah's final Message [i.e. His Word]. It would cruel to prevent other people from hearing Allah's final message, which teaches us how to reach salvation ! For this reason Allah made it permissible for Muslims to fight back against those who tried to prevent the peaceful spread of Allah's Word, and

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- 11: The cube-shaped sanctuary in Mecca.
 - 12: Shayk Jalal Abualrub, "Holy Wars, Crusades, Jihad" [Madinah Publishers and Distributors 2002], p. 117
 - 13: Louay M. Safi, "Peace and the limits of War : Transcending Classical Conception of Jihad"(2003) p. 22-23

posed a threat to the Islamic religion and its followers. Allah states in the Holy Qur'an, "...Fight in the way of God against those who fight you, but do not commit aggression. Truly, God does not love the aggressors ..." [2:190]. In other words, Muslims were given permission to fight, because they were attacked by non-Muslim tribes and nations, who prevented to peaceful spread of Allah's Word [His religion]. It was in this historical context and situation that the Prophet said, "...He who fights that Allah's Word be superior, is [fighting] in Allah's Cause.." [Bukhari 2810]. In this narration the Prophet simply clarified that Muslims should not fight against those who are hostile towards Islam, with the intention of collecting war booty from these people, but with the intention of making these dangerous people powerless, so that Allah's Word can be introduced and spread in other nations [without forcing anyone to accept it ¹⁴]. If Islam can be freely preached to other peoples and nations, then many will eventually see the truth in the Islamic message, and embrace the religion freely. If more and more people embrace Islam freely, then one day Allah's Word [His religion] will become superior in contrast to other religions [by having the largest group of followers]. Those who fight hostile non-Muslim tribes or nations with the intention of achieving this, are fighting in Allah's cause, since they fight in order to be able to carry out Allah's instruction, the spread of the Islamic message through means, so that Allah's Word will eventually become superior one day [by having the largest group of followers]. In other words, if non-Muslims are not hostile towards Muslims, and allow Muslims to peacefully introduce their religion to others in their nation, then it is not permissible for Muslims to attack these non-Muslim nations. Allah clearly states in the Holy Qur'an that he does, "...not love the aggressors..." [Qur'an 2:190], which according to one narration attributed to Abdullah Ibn Abbas means, "...He does not love those who initiate fighting whether in the Sacred Precinct or in other locations..." ¹⁵ The claim that the narration under discussion [Bukhari 2810] demonstrates that Muslims are instructed to fight neutral and peaceful non-Muslims, in order to make Allah's word superior, is also refuted by the fact that the Prophet clearly prohibited his followers to attack the Abyssinians, since these people did pose any threat to the Muslim Community, nor were they hostile towards Islam. The Prophet's peaceful attitude towards the Abyssinians, also rebuts the notorious claim that Muslims are instructed by their religion to impose Islamic law forcefully over every non-Muslim nation or state, who prefers or chooses to be governed by a different set of religious or secular laws. From the beginning, Abyssinians showed their goodwill to the early Muslims who, escaping the persecution of Quraysh, had sought refuge in Abyssinia. Muslims could freely practice their religion there. The Prophet invited Negus Al-Asham ibn Abjar [the King of Abyssinia] and his successor [in another letter] to Islam in a very friendly and peaceful manner. Negus Al-Asham ibn Abjar accepted Islam in his individual capacity but he could not convert other people of his country. His successor did not accept Islam and wrote no reply back to the Prophet. ¹⁶ Despite this, and the fact that Islamic law had never been exacted in Abyssinia, the Prophet strongly forbade his followers to attack the Abyssinians. ¹⁷ Had it been a religious obligation for Muslims to conquer the whole earth, and to impose Islamic law over every non-Muslim nation or state, they would have been commanded by the Prophet to attack Abyssinia [The Ethiopian Empire]. The fact that he didn't, rebuts this view.

Hadith Nr. 2

Prophet Muhammad said: "...I was sent with the sword just before the Last Hour, so that Allah alone is worshipped without partners, and my sustenance was made under the shadow of my spear, and disgrace and humiliation were placed on whoever defies my matter [religion]." [Ahmad 4868, English trans. by Shayk Jalal Abuelrub, see "Holy Wars, Crusades, Jihad" (Madinah Publishers , 2002), p. 101]

¹⁴: Allah states: "...Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error:..." [Qur'an 2:256]

¹⁵: See: "Tafsir Ibn Abbas", [Fons Vitae , 2008] English trans. by Mokrane Geuzzou, Commentary verse 2:190

¹⁶: See: S. Ahmed Qureshi, "Letters of the Holy Prophet" [International Islamic Publishers , 1983] p. 66

¹⁷: It is reported the Prophet said: "...Leave the Abyssinians alone, as long as they leave you alone, and do not engage the Turks, as long as they do not engage you.." [Source: Sahih al-Jami, hadith no. 338]

In this narration we read that Prophet Muhammad was sent by Allah to make monotheism [the belief that only one God exists] prevail over polytheism [the worship of multiple deities] ! Earlier we pointed out that the Holy Qur'an states that Muslims are not allowed to show hostility towards non-Muslims who are peaceful, neutral and friendly [Qur'an 2:190 ; 60:8]. We further noted that the Qur'an forbids Muslims to convert non-Muslims by force [Qur'an 2:256 ; 18:29]. Therefore it is incorrect to say that the above narration indicates that the Prophet was given a sword by Allah, in order to convert non-Muslims by force ! Nor is it correct to say that the narration indicates that the Prophet was given a sword by Allah in order to fight neutral and peaceful non-Muslims , since it is reported that the Prophet forbade his followers to attack the peaceful Abyssinians. In the light of all these given facts, we conclude that above narration simply means, that the Prophet was sent by Allah with the mission of making monotheism prevail over polytheism, and was given a sword by Allah, in order to defend the divine message and mission , against anyone who tried to destroy or harm it. This meaning of the text is confirmed in various other narrations. For example it is reported that on the occasion of the Treaty of Hudaibiyya, the Prophet told his mediator, Badil ibn Warraqa, "...But if they do not accept this truce, by God in whose Hands my life is, I will fight with them, till I get killed..". [18](#) It is also reported that when the Muslim army met the Pagan army at Badr, a town near Madinah, the Prophet said, "..This is a combat to stop their aggression.." [19](#) In another narration the Prophet said, "...Guarding the border for one day for the sake of Allaah is better than this world and everything in it.." [20](#) Imam Muslim further reports:

The Prophet said: "...This religion will continue to exist, and a group of people from the Muslims will continue to fight for its until the Hour is established.." [Sahih Muslim, Book 20, Nr. 47165]

The Prophet also said, "...The one who is killed defending his wealth is a martyr, the one who is killed defending his family is a martyr, the one who is killed is a martyr, and the one who is killed defending his life is a martyr.." [21](#) All these narrations clearly confirm that Allah gave the Prophet a sword, in order to his message and mission against anyone who violently opposed it ! In this context the Prophet said, "...disgrace and humiliation were placed on whoever my (mission) .." [Ahmad]. To " " is in one English dictionary defined as:

Defy (di-fie) ... to oppose actively or boldly, often in the sense of a challenge [22](#)

Another dictionary states:

To Defy - .. call to combat ... Defy - de-fi s. A challenge, an invitation to fight [23](#)

In other words the Prophet pointed out that those who violently opposed him or his message, or challenged him to fight for his religion, were disgraced and humiliated by Allah. When the Prophet spoke about those who him and his , it was a reference to those who disbelieved in him showed hostility towards him or his message ! The next verse supports this conclusion:

[18](#): See: Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Vol. 9 [Darussalam 2003], p. 160.

[19](#): See: Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "Jihad Renegotiated" , islamonline.net

[20](#): See: Sahih Al-Bukhaari , nr. 2678 ; see also Sahih Muslim nr. 1913

[21](#): Al-Tirmidhi 1421, classed as sahih by Shayk al-Albaani in Irwa' al-Ghaleel 708

[22](#): Jessica Feinstein , "Heinemann English Dictionary" , [Heinemann, 2001], p. 258

[23](#): John Walker, "A critical pronouncing dictionary and expositor of the English language" [1818], p. 141

Thou wilt not find folk who believe in Allah and the Last Day loving those who oppose Allah and His messenger, even though they be their fathers or their sons or their brethren or their clan. [Qur'an 58:22]

The message of this quranic verse is that it does not befit a true believer to love those who oppose Allah and His messenger. If the phrase, "...those who oppose Allah and His messenger.." , refers to all who disbelieve in Islam, then it would be clearly not permitted for a Muslim male to marry a Jewish or a Christian woman, since the objective of marriage in Islam, is to achieve love and calmness in one's life [see: Qur'an 30:21]. However the Holy Qur'an permits Muslim men to marry Jewish or Christian women [see: Qur'an 5:5]. The fact that Muslim men are permitted to marry these women, clearly demonstrates that they are also permitted to love them ! Therefore the phrase, "...those who oppose Allah and His Messenger.." , must refer to more, than only disbelief in Islam ! After quoting the verse in question [Qur'an 58:22] , Shayk Yusuf al-Qaradawi comments:

Opposition to Allah is not simply belief but includes opposition toward Islam and Muslims . [24](#)

Hadith Nr. 3

The Prophet said: "I have been ordered to fight the polytheists until they declare that there is no god but God [la ilaha illallah] and that Muhammad is His Messenger, establish prayers, and pay zakat.." [Bukhari]

How do we reconcile this authentic narration with the quranic verse that states that it is forbidden for a Muslim to coerce others into Islam [see: Qur'an 2:256] ? Dr. Louay M. Safi answers this question:

The word *al-kuffar* here implies the polytheists only. For if the word is interpreted to be all-inclusive, the rule embodied in this hadith should be also applied to the Byzantine Christians and the Persian Zoroastrians [*majus*]. But since this is not the case, the word *al-kuffar* has an exclusive meaning and implicates only the Pagan Arabs the word cannot be considered to include all people, since that contradicts the Qur'anic directions, as well as the practice of the Prophet, which permit the "People of the Book" to maintain their religion. Regarding the word *al-kuffar* to be all-inclusive will, therefore, violate the provisions that have been given to the People of the Book by the Quran and Sunnah. Abu Hanifah and his pupil Abu Yusuf contend that *al-kuffar* refers to the polytheists who were invited into Islam. In his book *Al-Fiqh al-Khariji* Abu Yusuf relates that al Hasan ibn Muhammad said: "...The Prophet (peace be on him) consummated a peace treaty with the polytheists of al Hajar on the terms that they pay *al-jizyah* , but did not permit (Muslims) to take their women in marriage or to eat their slaughtered animals..." [Abu Yusuf, *Al-Fiqh al-Khariji* , (Cairo al Tiba'ah al Muniriyyah , 1397 AH / 1976 AC) p. 9]. He also stated that *jizyah* may be collected from all polytheists, such as "Zoroastrians" , "Pagans" , "Fire and Stone Worshipers" , "Sabians" (*Sabi'iyyin*) , but not from apostates or Pagan Arabs , for the latter group are to be coerced into Islam [*Ibid.* , p. 38]. [25](#)

[24](#): Shayk Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "The Lawful and Prohibited in Islam" [El Falah , Cairo - Egypt 1997] , p. 338
[25](#): Louay M. Safi, "Peace and the limits of War : Transcending Classical Conception of Jihad"(2003) p. 12-13

Hadith Nr. 4

It is reported that Abu Huraira used to say : "Conquer where you will, by God, you have not conquered and to the resurrection day you will not conquer a city whose keys God had not given beforehand to Muhammad" [Ibn Ishaq, , trans. Guillaume (Oxford University Press 2002) p. 452]

Polemics against Islam argue that this statement attributed to Abu Hurayra [one of the Prophet's close companions] confirms that Muslims are allowed to conquer any city they like ! This view is however wrong. The above narration is taken out of context. Let us take a look at the full passage:

Salman al-Farisi said: "I was digging in one corner of the trench at which time one rock gave me difficulty. Allah's Messenger came near me and saw my difficulty as I was digging. He came down and took the pick from my hands. Then he struck and a great spark flashed under the pick. He struck again and another spark flashed. He struck a third time and a third spark flashed. I said to him: My father and mother [be ransomed] for you, O Messenger of Allah ! What is that I saw flashing under the pick as you were striking ? He said: Did you see this, O Salman? I said: Yes! He said: The first time, Allah opened Yemen [the South] for me; the second time, He opened the North [] and the West [] for me; and the third time, he opened the East []." [Ibn Ishaq said] One whom I do not suspect narrated to me that Abu Hurayra used to say, when were conquered in the time of Umar and in the time of `Uthman and after `Uthman: "...Conquer what comes within your sight. By the One in Whose hand lies Abu Hurayra's soul, you do not conquer any city nor will you conquer any city until the Day of resurrection except that Allah the Exalted gave Muhammad its keys beforehand.." [26](#)

It is important to note that Ibn Ishaq connects Abu Huraira's statement to Prophet Muhammad's prophecy. In the above hadith we read that the Prophet predicted that the Muslims one day would conquer Yemen [the south], the North [al-sham], the West [al-Maghrib [27](#)], and the East [al-Mashriq]. In the Musnad of Imam Ahmad we find the same narration with the next wording:

At the time of the Battle of Ahzab or the battle of the Trench, the Prophet went down to hit a rock with his pick, whereupon he said: and shattered one third of the rock. Then he exclaimed: "Allahu akbar ! I have been given the keys of Syria. By Allah, verily I can see her red palaces right from where I stand." Then he said: and shattered another third and exclaimed: "Allahu akbar ! I have been given the keys of Persia. By Allah, I can see her cities and her white palace right from where I stand." Then he said: and shattered the remainder of the rock and exclaimed: "Allahu akbar ! I have been given the keys of Yemen. By Allah, I can see the gates of San`a' .." [Ahmad 4:303, nr 18718]

[26](#): Ibn Hisham, [Beirut, dar al-wifaq ed. 3-4: 219] ; Ibn Ishaq, , (2002) p. 452

[27](#): The Maghrib , meaning "place of sunset" or "western" in Arabic, is a region in North Africa. The term is generally applied to all of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, but in older Arabic usage pertained only to the area of the three countries between the high ranges

It is after this narration, that Ibn Ishaq narrates to us that Abu Hurayra [ra] used to say when these countries were conquered in the time of Umar and Uthman, “..Conquer what comes within your sight. By the One in Whose hand lies Abu Hurayra's soul, you do not conquer any city nor will you conquer any city until the Day of resurrection except that Allah the Exalted gave Muhammad its keys beforehand.” []. In other words, Abu Hurayra’s statement was made during the Muslim invasions of these countries or areas [Persia, Syrie, Yemen and the Maghrib]. Since he [Abu Hurayra] was aware of the fact, that the Prophet had foretold that the Muslims would conquer these areas completely one day, he did not see any reason for the Muslim army to think or fear that they could not conquer certain cities of the enemy in these countries [Syrie, Yemen, Persia and the Maghrib]. In this context made Abu Hurayra the next statement, “..conquer what comes within your sight..” []. Abu Hurayra further believed that it was possible that the Muslims had to fight until the Day of Resurrection [28](#) , in order to conquer all these mentioned places by the Prophet in his prophecy. Hence he said, “...By the One in Whose hand lies Abu Hurayra's soul, you do not conquer any city nor will you conquer any city until the Day of resurrection except that Allah the Exalted gave Muhammad its keys beforehand.” [see: Ibn Hisham,]. Further one should not label Islam as an or religion, simply for the reason that the Prophet predicted that areas like Syria, Yemen and Persia one day would be turned into Muslim areas. A prophecy is not an instruction ! The Prophet did not instruct his followers to invade these countries ! He only made a prediction about the state of the Islamic Empire in the future. How things would change were kept secret. Muslims did not know if these countries would turn into Muslim areas through peaceful ways [preaching] or war [as a result of aggression committed by these countries against the Muslim community]. They were only told by the Prophet that these countries or places one day would be turned into Muslim areas. The Prophet did not give an unconditional command to attack these nations. Such an instruction would moreover violate Islamic Law, since Allah clearly states in the Holy Qur’an that he does not like the “..aggressors..” [i.e. those who initiate hostilities]. [29](#)

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- 28:** Many early Muslims believed that they would witness the Day of Resurrection in their lifetime, or that the Day of Resurrection would arrive in a short period of time after their death. It is reported that the Messenger of Allah said: “.. When I was sent (to transmit the message), I and the (final) Hour were like these two, pointing at his index and middle fingers..” [see: “The History of al-Tabari” , Volume 1- General Introduction and from the Creation to the Flood (trans. Franz Rosenthal, State University of New York Press, Albany 1989) , p. 176]. This narration probably led many early Muslims to the belief that the Day of Resurrection would occur during their lifetime, or in a period of time after their death. As a result of this view, he [Abu Hurayra] believed that it was possible that the Muslims had to fight until the Day of Resurrection, in order to conquer all these enemy countries (and it’s cities) that were mentioned by the Prophet in his prophecy [Syria, Yemen, Persia, and the Maghrib]. Or it can be said that Abu Hurayra thought that the Day of Resurrection would arrive soon or immediately after the conquest of these places [Syria, Yemen, Persia, and the Maghrib]. Hence he said, “.. By the One in Whose hand lies Abu Hurayra's soul, you do not conquer any city nor will you conquer any city until the Day of resurrection except that Allah the Exalted gave Muhammad its keys beforehand..” [Ibn Hisham,]
- 29:** In verse 2:190 Allah says: “...Fight in the way of God against those who fight you, but do not commit aggression. Truly, God does not love the aggressors ...”. Dr. Louay M. Safi points out that the verse starts by commanding Muslims to fight those who initiate war against them, emphasizing that Muslims should never be the aggressive party. The term , translated here as , is used in the Qur’an to indicate the instigation of hostility. This meaning is demonstrable in verse [2:194] : “..whoever then commits aggression against you, commit yet aggression against him accordingly..” [Source: Dr. Louay M. Safi, “Peace and the limits of War : Transcending Classical Conception of Jihad”, (2003) , p. 9]