

Chapter Eleven: Jihad and Martyrdom

Jihad

The sometimes elusive concept of jihad is interpreted in the Egyptian school curriculum almost exclusively as a military endeavor. In religious terms, it is war against God's enemies, i.e., the infidels. In secular terms, it is war against the homeland's enemies and a means to strengthening the Muslim states in the world. In both cases, jihad is encouraged, and those who refrain from participating in it are denounced.

The Muslims' duty to fight the infidels vigorously

[One] of the rules derived by the [Muslim religious] scholars from these [Qur'anic] verses is the following:

1. Obligation to fight the infidels with utmost vigor and power until they become weak, their state disappears and they submit to the rule of the law of Islam.

Commentary on the Surahs of Muhammad, Al-Fath, Al-Hujurat and Qaf, Grade 11, (2002) p. 24

God has ordered us to prepare ourselves for defeating His enemies and our enemies and has said [in the Qur'an]: "Muster against them all the men and cavalry at your command, so that you may strike terror in the enemy of God and your enemy". (Al-Anfal, 60), that is, you should, O believers, prepare the various kinds and types of means of power you can prepare for [the purpose of] fighting your enemies, such as castles, fortresses, weapons and horses – for the jihad in God's cause.

... The Muslims in this era are obliged by the Qur'an to make modern weapons for battle that will be superior to those that are with their enemies, in order to preserve their prestige, liberty and dignity. They also should learn all the sciences and arts so as to defeat those who attack them.

Studies in Theology: Tradition and Morals, Grade 11, (2001) pp. 291-92

If the Muslims besiege [non-Muslim] enemies [Ahl al-Harb] in a city or a fortress – they [should] call upon them to [embrace] Islam... If they do not embrace Islam, they [i.e., the Muslims, should] call upon them to pay the Jizyah [poll tax paid by non-Muslims in a Muslim country]... If they agree, they [should] have the same rights and duties as we have... If they refuse, that is, to embrace Islam or pay the Jizyah, they [i.e., the Muslims, should] turn to God's help against them and fight them... and destroy their plants and trees.

Selections for the Explanation of [the Book of] "Selection", Grade 11 (2002) pp. 330-332

Write for the school magazine essays about:

- God's promise to His servants, the believers [i.e., the Muslims]... regarding victory over their enemies.
- The infidels [i.e., non-Muslims] are defeated and unbelief vanishes before the [Islam's] belief and its people.

**Our Beautiful Language: Reading and texts – Exercise and Activity
Booklet, Grade 7, Part 2 (2002) p. 3**

... This noble [Qur'anic] Surah [Surat Muhammad]... deals with questions of which the most important are as follows:

- Encouraging the faithful to perform jihad in God's cause, to behead the infidels, take them prisoner, break their power, and make their souls humble – all that in a style which contains the highest examples of urging to fight. You see that in His words: “When you meet the unbelievers in the battlefield strike off their heads and, when you have laid them low, bind your captives firmly. Then grant them their freedom or take a ransom from them, until war shall lay down its burdens.”

Commentary on the Surahs of Muhammad, Al-Fath, Al-Hujurat and Qaf, Grade 11, (2002) p. 9

When you meet them in order to fight [them], do not be seized by compassion [towards them] but strike the[ir] necks powerfully.... Striking the neck means fighting, because killing a person is often done by striking off his head. Thus, it has become an expression for killing even if the fighter strikes him elsewhere. This expression contains a harshness and emphasis that are not found in the word “kill”, because it describes killing in the ugliest manner, i.e., cutting the neck and making the organ – the head of the body – fly off [the body].

Commentary on the Surahs of Muhammad, Al-Fath, Al-Hujurat and Qaf, Grade, 11 (2002) pp. 19-20

The rules of jihad in this context

Jihad is a religious duty of every individual at a time of general call to arms, and a religious duty of a sufficient number [of Muslims] in other times. Jihad is a firm religious duty and anyone [i.e., any Muslim] who repudiates it should be considered an unbeliever. Its being a religious duty is proven by the Book [i.e., the Qur'an], the Prophetic Tradition [Sunnah] and the [Muslim] nation's consensus. As for the Book, there are His words: “Fight those who do not believe in God, neither in the Last Day” and the rest of the verses regarding the command to fight the infidels. [As for] the Sunnah, [there are] the Prophet's words: “I have been ordered to fight the people until they say that there is no god except God....”

Fighting the infidels is a duty of every man who is in full possession of his mental faculties, healthy, free [i.e., not a slave] and able [to perform jihad], because a woman and a slave are occupied by [the task of] serving the master and the husband...

If the enemy attacks, it is the duty of all people to [participate in the] defense: Women and slaves go out [even] without the permission of the[ir] masters and husbands, because it [i.e., jihad] becomes [in such a case] a personal religious duty, and the husband's and master's right is not superior to a personal religious duty, as is [the case with] prayer and fasting.

Selections for the Explanation of [the Book of] "Selection", Grade 11, (2002) p. 329

"[Question:]

What are the rules of jihad? What is the proof [of that]? When does it become a personal religious duty? When is it a collective religious duty? Give the evidence for what you say.

Selections for the Explanation of [the Book of] "Selection", Grade 11, (2002) p. 483

Islam was not spread by war or by the sword, or by any kind of force and coercion. Rather, the rule regarding the legality of jihad is summarized as defending religion, as safeguarding the means for Islamic missionary work, as self-defense and as defending the homeland. This is jihad in God's cause. It has no connection with [any] type of coercion, pillage, and imperialism. Those who follow the jihad verses in the Holy Qur'an will discover that they have given it a sound and pure framework, namely, that it is [done] in God's cause.

Security in Islam, Grade 10, (2002) p. 26

Anyone who fights so that God's word would be the highest one is [fighting] in God's cause.

Selected Prophetic Sayings [Ahadith], Grade 10, (2002) p. 82

Jihad's various attributes

Jihad is a duty.

Our Beautiful Language: Grammar and Grammatical exercises, Grade 8, Part 1, (2002) p. 7

Jihad is honor. Inability to perform it is a cause for grief.

Islamic Education, Grade 10, (2002) p. 69

The best means of profit is Jihad, because it combines the attainment of profit, the strengthening of religion and the vanquishing of God's enemy.

Selections for the Explanation of [the Book of] "Selection", Grade 9, (2002) p. 297

Jihad is one of Heaven's gates. Whoever desists from it willingly is humiliated by God...

Arabic Literature: Literature, Texts, Eloquence, Grade 9, (2002) p. 144

Jihad's rank among other religious duties

There is some ambivalence on this topic. Some quotations present jihad as superior to other religious duties, while others indicate the opposite.

Exercises

Give three verses from the Qur'an and three Prophetic Sayings from the Hadith that expound the superiority of Jihad in God's cause.

Islamic Religious Education, Grade 5, Part 1 (2002) p. 40

The noble Surah ends with a call for spending [one's money] in God's cause..., that is, for good purposes, of which first and foremost is jihad for the sake of raising God's word and supporting His religion.

Commentary on the Surahs of Muhammad, Al-Fath, Al-Hujurat and Qaf, Grade 11, (2002) p. 86

The Tabuk Raid and the Lessons Learned from It
What do we learn from this lesson?

...Jihad in God's cause is one of the highest degrees of worship.

Islamic Religious Education, Grade 8, Part 2, (2002) p. 55

A man came to God's Messenger and said: "Guide me to a deed that is equivalent to jihad." He [the Messenger] said: "I do not find it!"

Selected Prophetic Sayings [Ahadith], Grade 10 (2002) p. 81

In the following passage the contradiction regarding the rank of jihad is expressed by the words of the Prophet versus those of his wife.

A'ishah [one of Muhammad's wives]... said: "O Messenger of God, we see that jihad is the best of [all] deeds. Will we not go to fight in a jihad?" He said: "No. The best jihad is a blessed pilgrimage."

Selected Prophetic Sayings [Ahadith], Grade 10, (2002) p. 55

Another quotation ranks jihad and helping the poor on the same level.

The one who endeavors for the sake of a widow and the poor is like a jihad fighter in God's cause.

Selected Prophetic Sayings [Ahadith], Grade 10, (2002) p. 99

The following passage ranks jihad lower than fasting (in Ramadan).

The effect of fasting is better than the effect of Jihad, because fasting is one of the pillars of Islam... and because jihad is a collective commandment, while fasting is a personal commandment, and a personal commandment is better than a collective commandment.

Selected Prophetic Sayings [Ahadith], Grade 11, (2002) p. 57

Nevertheless, jihad is important enough, as we can see in the following examples.

Emphasizing the importance of jihad

Al-Qadr Night [27th of Ramadan] is better than all other times, no matter how long they are. But, in what [sense] is it better than thousand months? ...In carrying a sword in God's cause.

The Miracle of the Qur'an, Grade 9 (2002) p. 87

A day in a fighting position in God's cause is better than this world and whatever is in it.

Selected Prophetic Sayings [Ahadith], Grade 10, (2002) p. 85

The importance of jihad is explicitly taught to students of the eighth grade:

The essence of the focus in this curriculum is helping the students to deepen their Islamic perception and their understanding of the matters of religion, Islamic values and social systems, as well as emphasizing the belief in the divine mystery and the importance of jihad in God's cause.

Introduction, Islamic Religious Education, Grade 8, Part 2, (2002) pages not numbered

Unit Four: Jihad in God's Cause

This unit deals with the Tabuk raid.... The unit also deals with the importance of jihad in God's cause."

Islamic Religious Education, Grade 8, Part 2, (2002), p. 54

Participation in jihad is urged

One who truthfully participates in jihad will be rewarded by God, while those who refrain from doing so should repent and change their ways, or they will have to take the consequences of their evasion in the hereafter.

What the noble verses guide to

Jihad in God's cause is a religious duty, and staying behind is disobedience [of God], which necessitates penitence.

Islamic Education, Grade 11, (2002) p. 47

Put a V sign next to the correct phrase and correct the incorrect phrase:

- Staying behind in the jihad in God's cause is disobedience, which necessitates penitence.

Islamic Education, Grade 11,(2002) p. 48

The jihad fighters get the fruit of their jihad.

Grammatical Exercises, Grade 9, (2002) p. 110

Whoever is not sincere in his work for God but [does it] for a worldly goal only..., there is no reward for him [in the hereafter], like the one who fights the jihad only for the spoils – there is no reward for him.

Selected Texts from the Prophetic Tradition [Sunnah], Grade 7, (2000) p. 19

Anyone who holds back a horse [from participating in a Jihad] in God's cause... [the quantity of food] that satisfies it and [the quantity of water] that quenches its thirst, as well as its droppings and its urine, will be weighed against him on the Day of Resurrection.

Selected Prophetic Sayings [Ahadith]..., Grade 10 (2002) p. 84

Boycotting those who refrain from participating in a jihad is an effective means to bringing them back to the tenets of religion and to its rightly guided principles. It will make every Muslim embark upon defending his homeland if an oppressive enemy attacks it, for the love of one's homeland is an article of faith.

Islamic Religious Education, Grade 8, part 2, (2002) p. 57

Following are texts that indirectly advocate jihad in a modern context:

Hymn of Egypt

...And with me are my heart and my determination for jihad ...

Arabic Language: Read and Learn, Grade 2, Part 2, (2002) p. 15

Everyone performs the jihad for the homeland's sake.

Arabic Language: Read and Express, Grade 4, Part 2, (2002) p. 56

The brave one fights the jihad by himself.

Islamic Religious Education, Grade 8, Part 1, (2002) p. 61

Jihad in Islamic History

He [Al-Izz Bin Abd al-Salam, 1181-1262] also called for equality between the people and the rulers in undertaking the burden of Jihad in the cause of liberating the homeland from the Tartars.

Islamic Education, Grade 10 (2002) p. 107

The Political Importance of Jihad Nowadays

Jihad is presented as an effective tool in the hands of the Muslim states against their enemies.

With these souls full of faith, which are bent upon jihad in God's cause... the states of Islam become strong and they rise and live honored and respected, powerful and lofty.

Islamic Religious Education, Grade 8, Part 2, (2002) p. 56

Even if it seems to the malicious that we are disunited, we will still move forward on the road to glory, under the Arab flag, on the day we are called to jihad.

Our Beautiful Language: Reading and Texts, Grade 6, Part 1, (2002) p. 15

What will happen:

- If the Muslims are afraid of confronting their enemies?
- If the Muslims of our time follow the example of the early Muslims?

Our Beautiful Language: Reading and texts – Exercise and Activity Booklet, Grade 7, Part 2 (2002) p. 2

Jihad in the Palestinian context

The ongoing violence in the Holy Land is defined as jihad. Also, Jerusalem must be liberated by jihad.

The Palestinian people still fight a jihad in the cause of attaining the rest of its rights, establishing its state on its land and making noble Jerusalem its capital.

Social Studies: Geography of the Arab Homeland and Milestones of Islamic History, Grade 7, Part 1, (2002) p. 24

Here I am! O Jerusalem of peace. Welcome the jihad fighters who will respond to the call for your rescue. Let eternal damnation be upon those who do not hurry to jihad!

Our Beautiful Language: Reading and Texts, Grade 7, Part 1, (2002) p. 30

Martyrdom

Martyrdom, one of jihad's two prizes – the other one being victory, is an exalted value in the Egyptian school textbooks. The books define the martyr,

talk of his high status in God's eyes and of his reward in Heaven, provide the students with examples of heroic martyrdom, both in Islamic and modern history, and feature expressions of readiness for martyrdom.

Know, O dear Muslim student, that in war the true Muslim has no alternative, except victory or martyrdom.

Islamic Religious Education, Grade 7, Part 2, (2002) p. 52

Definition of martyrdom and martyrs

The concept of martyrdom in Islam is broad enough to include any Muslim who is killed unjustly, even while defending worldly interests. But the main sense of the word is closely related to defense of religion, and in modern times – defense of the homeland.

The Martyr [Shahid]

What do we learn in this lesson?

- Acquaintance with the meaning of “martyr”
- The martyr’s reward from God is enormous
- ...

Who is a martyr?

Is he the one killed in his nation’s battle? Is he the one killed in one of the events of life? That is what you will know from the following Prophetic Saying [Hadith]:

... The Messenger of God said: “One who is killed defending his property is a martyr. One killed defending his life is a martyr. One killed defending his religion is a martyr. One killed defending his family is a martyr.”

Explanation

This noble Hadith makes it clear for us whom we should call by the term “martyr”. The one who defends his property against a robber, and that robber kills him, is a martyr. The one who defends himself against his enemy, and is killed, is a martyr. The one who defends his religion, and is killed for his religion’s sake, is a martyr. The one who defends his family, protecting them from harm, and is killed, is a martyr. That means that a martyr is any person killed in the cause of dignity and a noble goal.

Arabic Language: Read and Discuss, Grade 5, Part 1, (2002) p. 65

For the sake of defending the perfect faith, the martyrs were created, [that is,] the ones who meet death with laughing faces and rejoicing souls. The tongue of [each] one of them says when he is hit by fatal arrows [shot] by his and God’s enemies: “I have won, by the Lord of the Ka’bah.”

Studies in [Islamic] Theology: Spiritual Matters, Grade 9, (2002) p. 29

How many martyrs there are in the homeland's cause!

Our Beautiful Language: Grammar and Grammatical Exercises, Grade 8, Part 1, (2002) p. 52

The martyr's high status in God's eyes

The Martyr

God loves the strong believer who carries his weapon defending his religion, family, himself and his property. He promises him [that he will enter] Paradise, if the enemies overcome him and [if] he is killed as a martyr.

Arabic Language: Read and Discuss – Exercise Booklet, Grade 5, Part 1, (2002) p. 43

What do we learn in this lesson?

- Martyrdom in God's cause is a great honor.

Islamic Religious Education, Grade 7, Part 2 (2002) p. 53

...Martyrdom for the homeland's sake is the high[est] status in God's eyes.

...The martyrs' status is high as a result of [their] death for the homeland's sake.

Arabic Language: Read and Express, Grade 4, Part 2, (2002) p. 66

Your teacher has assigned you [the task of] preparing a speech about the martyrs and their status in God's eyes, to be delivered over the school radio. What will you say?

Arabic Language: Read and Discuss – Exercise Booklet, Grade 5, Part 1 (2002) p. 44

The martyr's high status in God's eyes is given a physical characteristic as well in Islamic tradition.

The odor of the martyr's blood is that of musk.

Selected Prophetic Sayings [Ahadith]..., Grade 11 (2002) p. 57

The martyr's reward

“As for those who are slain in God's cause”, i.e., those who fall as martyrs while fighting for the purpose of raising God's word high, “He will not allow their works to perish” – He will not let their deeds be lost, nor annul them, but rather “He will vouchsafe them guidance” – bring them to the road of happiness and salvation, “and ennoble their state” – improve their conditions, affairs and hearts ...

Commentary on the Surahs of Muhammad, Al-Fath, Al-Hujurat and Qaf, Grade 11, (2002) p. 23

The Messenger of God said: "A martyr is given six rewards: At the first drop of his blood all his sins are forgiven, he is shown his place in Paradise, he is made to marry the virgins of Paradise [Hur al-ayn], he is reassured regarding the great fear [of the Last Judgment] and regarding the grave torment [by interrogating angels, according to Muslim belief], and he is adorned with the decoration of belief."

Commentary on the Surahs of Muhammad, Al-Fath, Al-Hujurat and Qaf, Grade 11, (2002) p. 28

The Unit's Goals

After studying this unit the student should be able to:

- Describe the reward of the martyrs in God's cause.

(Islamic religious Education, Grade 5, Part 1 (2002) p. 35

Martyrs in Islamic and Egyptian history

The lessons that are derived from the Mu'tah raid

- The Muslim fights in God's cause in order to attain one of the two best things (martyrdom or victory).
- Honoring the Jihad fighters in God's cause.
- The Muslim does not flee from battle, but rather fights bravely and has faith in God's support.

Islamic Religious Education, Grade 7, Part 2, (2002) p. 55

The Martyr Commanders of the Mu'tah [Raid]

What do we learn in this lesson?

That I [should] fight God's enemies if they attack my religion or my homeland.

Islamic Religious Education, Grade 7, Part 2, (2002) p. 56

In 629 CE the Byzantines defeated an expedition force sent by Muhammad to southern Syria. Three of the Muslim commanders were killed in that battle while fighting relentlessly, and have become since then a symbol of martyrdom in Islam.

The Unit's Goals

After studying this unit the student should be able to:

- Sum up what he has read about Al-Khansa's personality.

Islamic religious Education, Grade 5, Part 1 (2002) p. 35

Al-Khansa' was a known poetess before Islam. Her most famous poem then was the lamentation over her killed brother. She later became a devoted Muslim. Her four sons were killed in the battle of Al-Qadisiyyah in which the Muslims defeated the army of the Persian Empire (637)

The Mother of the Martyrs (Al-Khansa' Bint Amr)

The student chose Al-Khansa' Bint Amr to be the "Issue Personality" of the religious magazine issued by the school...

Al-Khansa' witnessed the battle of Al-Qadisiyyah and recruited her four sons to fight the Jihad in God's cause...

When she heard the news of their martyrdom she said: "Praise to God who has honored me with their death"...

Look how Islam had changed her personality! She, who had filled the world with weeping over her brother [before she became a Muslim], is now happy to that degree with the martyrdom of all her sons in God's cause. How wonderful is religion and Islam! How wonderful is death and martyrdom! How wonderful is this woman, Al-Khansa'.

Islamic Religious Education, Grade 5, Part 1, (2002) pp. 39-40

Exercises

5. What do you think of al-Khansa's reply when the news of her sons' death reached her?

Islamic Religious Education, Grade 5, Part 1, (2002) p. 40

The Egyptians are a religious people. Therefore, they are a tolerant people, and religious fanaticism has not entered their hearts. They have never refrained from martyrdom for religion's sake.

Our Beautiful Language: Reading and Texts – Exercise and Activity Booklet, Grade 8, Part, 1(2002) p. 63

The passage's phrase "for religion's sake" in this context may indicate a broader concept of martyrdom to include the Coptic martyrs of Roman times as well.

Exercises

How old was Nabil Mansur³³ when he died as a martyr?

Arabic Language: Read and Discuss, Grade 5, Part 1, (2002) p. 57

Expressions of readiness for becoming a martyr

Such expressions are not frequent, but they mostly appear in books for the lower grades, with a view – so it seems – to instilling in the minds of the young students a positive attitude to martyrdom.

³³ This question is part of a lesson about an Egyptian boy who was killed in Port Said in 1956 while fighting the Anglo-French forces.

The martyr died repeating ... [the phrase]: “Praise to God, for I have done my duty.”

Arabic Language: Read and Discuss, Grade 5, Part 1, (2002) p. 58

The most precious thing in a man’s eyes is the homeland. Therefore, I am ready to sacrifice myself for it, to answer its call at the time of need and to present my soul for its sake contentedly and faithfully. If I fall as a martyr, then that is what I wish...

Arabic Language: Read and Express, Grade 4, Part 2 (2002) pp. 65-66

Making the students ready for martyrdom is an explicit goal of one of the lessons:

What do we learn in this lesson?

- That I [should] fight in God’s cause until I attain one of the two best things: martyrdom or victory.”

Islamic Religious Education, Grade 7, Part 2, (2002) p. 53

And a more vivid description of readiness for martyrdom is given in a poem intended for fifth grade students.

The Hymn of My Country

O my country, my country, Feel secure and comfortable
I will let you drink my blood in times of thirst

Islamic Religious Education, Grade 5, Part 1 (2002) p. 41

Language exercises that refer to martyrdom

The word “martyr” is also used in language exercises, probably as part of the indoctrination process in this respect.

The two soldiers fell as martyrs.

Our Beautiful Language: Grammar and Grammatical Exercises, Grade 8, Part 1, (2002) p. 21

Put in each empty space the appropriate word:

A. The two martyrs [...]B. [...] the two martyrs.

Arabic Language: Read and Discuss, Grade 5, Part 1, (2002) p. 14

Put a vowel on the following and explain the difference between the two verbs:

- He brought [several] verses of poetry as a proof [istash’hada] of that rule.
- He fell as a martyr [ustush’hida] on the battlefield.

Language Exercises, Grade 11, (2002) p. 30