HOSSEIN GODAZGAR

University of Warwick

A "SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST" APPROACH TO "MUSLIM BIOMEDICAL ETHICS":

EXAMINING "MUSLIM" OPPOSITION TO PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE

The literal meanings and textual contexts of "Islamic sources," namely the Qur'an and the "*Sunna*," have been central to traditional Muslim methodologies and jurisdictions regarding morality and practices for centuries. The main difference that distinguishes Muslim scholars from each other is the extent to which "intellect" (*'aql*) influences their attitudes and methodologies in interpreting these "sacred" texts, particularly in bioethical matters.[1] Dabbagh, Mirdamadi, and Ajani identify three distinct methodological types: textualism, contextualism, and para-textualism.

Textualism places the utmost importance on the literal aspects of the scripture itself, specifically the Qur'an and the "*Sunna*" of the Prophet (and the Imams in the case of Shi'ism). This approach considers these texts as the primary and essential sources for drawing ethical conclusions. In contrast, contextualism and para-textualism give varying degrees of preference to the "textual context" of the scriptures, that is, the specific narrative or account of an event that led to the revelation of a particular Qur'anic verse or the narration of a "*hadith*" attributed to the Prophet (or an Imam).

The criteria for classifying these types rest on two attitudes: a commentator's attitudes towards scriptural text and attitudes towards "rationality," (i.e., intellect). These criteria explain the differences between various moral interpretations of what are regarded as "sacred" texts. In terms of rationality, the textualist approach is evaluated as the least rational, while the para-textualist approach is considered the most rational. Despite the lack of hard boundaries between these methodologies,[2] the authors emphasize that "the classification of methodological

[1] Hossein Dabbagh, Yaser S. Mirdamadi, and Rafiq R. Ajani. "Approaches to Muslim Biomedical Ethics: A Classification and Critique," *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry,* 20 (2023), 327-39, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11673-023-10239-6

[2] Dabbagh, Mirdamadi, and Ajani, 9.

approaches in this paper is applicable primarily to texts rather than authors [or commentators of the scriptures]".[3]

Against this background, the primary aim of this article is to go beyond conventional methods and redirect the focus from interpreting the scriptures to analysing the *interpreters* themselves and the influences of their *social* contexts. The goal is to understand how these social contexts shape specific moral judgements while excluding others. In other words, it aims to address the question of "Where do these 'attitudes' come from?" By doing so, the article seeks to emphasize that the crucial factor influencing these "attitudes" and the subsequent changes lies not in the textual contexts, but rather in the social contexts of the interpreters. As we delve further, it becomes evident that as these interpreters hail from diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds, spanning different eras, their understandings and conceptualizations of the same scriptural text exhibit significant diversity and divergence.

To accomplish this goal, this article adopts the social theory of "social constructionism," as elaborated by Beckford,[4] and examines the perspectives of twenty-one exegetes regarding the meaning of a concise Qur'anic phrase of "*lâ taqtulû ánfuśkum*" (don't kill yourselves), arguably comparable with the sixth Biblical commandment of "Thou shalt not kill."[5] Muslim opponents of "physician-assisted suicide" (henceforth PAS), as a particular form of "suicide" that is of interest within bioethics, frequently use this phrase to assert that PAS is morally and legally impermissible. It should be noted that Muslim opposition to PAS is not solely based on this verse; it is just one of the primary reasons. Other Qur'anic verses as well as the Prophet's (and Imams') tradition ("*Sunna*") are also referenced, as some of which will be discussed under the (sub)titles of "Muslim Suicide" and Implications for "Muslim Physician-Assisted Suicide" and "*Don't Kill Yourselves*" below.

"Suicide" and "Physician-Assisted Suicide"

PAS is not simply an old concept under a modern label, shaped by advanced medical technologies. This is why historians of "suicide" have recently turned their attention to exploring primary sources such as religious and medical records, among others. The aim is to identify and comprehend historical shifts in the interpretations of

[3] Dabbagh, Mirdamadi, and Ajani, 2.
[4] James A. Beckford, *Religion and Advanced Industrial Society* (London: Routledge, 1989); James A. Beckford, *Social Theory and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[5] Øivind Ekeberg and Nils Retterstøl, "Christianity and Suicide," in *Oxford Textbook of Suicidology and Suicide Prevention*, ed. Danuta Wasserman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 61-68.

"suicide" on a global and transnational scale, moving beyond Eurocentric perspectives.[6]

However, it is acknowledged that the conceptual transformation of "suicide" from a "sin to insanity" occurred in the early modern era (17th/18th centuries). During this period, the "modern" notion of "suicide" was formulated, leading to its decriminalization, "secularization," and extensive medicalization.[7] It transitioned from the exclusive realm of the church and judiciary to become a social phenomenon investigated by sociologists and physicians.[8] Indeed, the seminal work of the French sociologist Émile Durkheim, *Le Suicide*[9], is indicative of "the birth of modern suicide." This might clarify why certain "religious" authorities attribute the global rise of "suicide" in various forms, including PAS, to "secularization" and the "decline of [religious] morality," originating in the Enlightenment.[10]

It is challenging to define PAS without a clear understanding of the definition of "suicide" itself. However, "suicide" is also a complex and ambivalent term. Its meaning has never been universally agreed upon and it has evolved over time. There are ongoing debates about whether "suicide" is a "choice" and, consequently, a "sin" (pre-modern or "religious" definition), a "social force" ("modern" and "structuralist" Durkheimian view), a "symptom" ("modern" medical view), a "right" ("modern rational choice" or broadly "libertarian" perspective), a "self-caused death," "intentional," "accidental," or "neither intentional nor accidental (NINA)".[11]

Considering all these conceptual complexities and diversities, Wicks, with little surprise, concludes:

> Crucially, both the consequentialist view and the right based view of suicide require us to *distinguish* between

[6] David Wright and John Weaver, "Introduction," in *Histories of Suicide: International Perspectives on Self-Destruction in the Modern World,* ed. David Wright and John Weaver (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 7.
[7] Wright and Weaver, 3.
[8] Kevin Siena, "Suicide as an Illness Strategy in the Long Eighteenth Century," in *Histories of Suicide: International Perspectives on Self-Destruction in the Modern World,* ed. David Wright and John Weaver (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 53-72; Elizabeth Wicks, *Suicide and the Law* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2023); Wright and Weaver, 3-18.
[9] Émile Durkheim, *Le Suicide* (Paris: Ancienne Librairie Germer Bailliere et Cte, Felix Alcan, 1897).
[10] For an in-depth analysis of the global rise in "suicide," the legalization of PAS in a growing number of countries, and the changing attitudes of lay Muslims towards euthanasia and PAS, see Mohammed Madadin et al., "The Islamic Perspective on Physician-Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia," *Medicine, Science and the Law* 60, no. 4 (2020): 278-286; Maurizio Pompili, "Introduction," in *Suicide: A Global Perspective,* ed. Maurizio Pompili (Singapore: Bentham Science Publishers, 2012), iv-v; WHO [World Health Organization: Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean], "Islamic Code of Medical and Health Ethics," September 2005, https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/em_rc52_7_en.pdf ; and Robert Young, "Voluntary Euthanasia," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, April 18, 1996, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/euthanasia-voluntary/
[11] Michael Cholbi, "Self-Manslaughter and the Forensic Classification of Self-Inflicted Death," *Journal of Medical Ethics* 33, no. 3 (2007), 155-57; Wicks, *Suicide;* Michael Wreen, "The Definition of Suicide'," *Social Theory and Practice* 14, no. 1 (1988): 1-23.

> different types of suicide, and that is essential if we are to avoid the dangerous over-generalisations that all suicides are sins or symptoms, to be punished or prevented. Suicide can occur in a wide variety of different circumstances, motivated by many different factors, representing either a manifestation of autonomy or an undermining of it; respecting human dignity or violating it; highlighting the subjective nature of the value of life or ignoring the sanctity of all human life. Each suicide is different, and it is this characteristic that presents such a difficult challenge for the law.[12]

It is on this basis that the multitude of meanings of "assistance" in suicide may be determined. If we define "suicide" as a "sin" or "against nature," providing "assistance" is seen as facilitating a "sin" or an action "against nature." Consequently, it becomes morally and/or legally impermissible. Conversely, if we define "suicide" as a "right", as Wicks does, "assistance in facilitating that right should not be denied on the basis of disability."[13] According to Wicks, every person has the right to make autonomous decisions about whether to end their lives or equally have their lives protected from the menace of "suicide."[14]

In light of the diverse interpretations of the term "suicide," drawing from definitions across various academic disciplines, medical and ethical organizations, as well as regional, national, and international judiciary and parliamentary documents, Riisfeldt asserts unsurprisingly that there exist myriad definitions for both PAS and "euthanasia."[15] Alongside these definitions, widespread and persistent arguments and disputes continue regarding their constitutions and distinctions, as well as the differences among PAS, "euthanasia," and "physician-assisted dying." The title of Section One of his article boldly declares: "There Are No Consensual Definitions of "Euthanasia" or "Assisted Suicide" Owing to Six Disputed Factors." These contested factors are whether: 1) "killing" or "letting die;" 2) fully "intended" or partially "intended" (from the provider's side); 3) "voluntary," "non-voluntary," or "involuntary" (from the patient's side); 4) provided to the "terminally ill" or also to the "non-terminally ill;" 5) offered to the fully "conscious" or also to patients with "persistent vegetative states" or "permanent comas;" and 6) given to "suffering" patients or also to those who are "non-suffering."

[12] Wicks, *Suicide,* 13-4; emphasis in origin.
[13] Wicks, 11.
[14] Wicks, 12.
[15] Thomas D. Riisfeldt, "Overcoming Conflicting Definitions of 'Euthanasia,' and of 'Assisted Suicide,' Through a Value-Neutral Taxonomy of 'End-of-Life' Practices," *Bioethical Inquiry* 20 (2023), 51-70, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11673-023-10230-1

In line with Wicks, Paterson links the definitions of PAS and "euthanasia" to that of "suicide."[16] He challenges the definitions of "suicide" put forth by the Oxford English Dictionary, first introduced in 1651, which emphasize the "self-murder" nature of "suicide" performed "by one's own hand." He criticizes the perspectives of Émile Durkheim, Richard Brandt, and Tom Beauchamp, arguing that their definitions are too broad, non-exclusive, vague, insufficient, or carry negative connotations. Paterson provides his own definition of "suicide" as "an act or omission whose proximate effect results in the person's own bodily death, voluntarily and knowingly undertaken, with the intended objective … that one's bodily life be so terminated".[17]

Building on this, Paterson crafts his definition of "assisted suicide" by differentiating it from "suicide" involving a "third party" (or "second party" as per Riisfledt). He distinguishes "assisted suicide" from "voluntary euthanasia" by excluding the physician's direct involvement in the act of suicide. In PAS, the physician provides only the lethal drug with instructions, leaving the patient responsible for the act, a measure aimed at preserving the ethical integrity of doctors.[18]

However, Paterson emphasizes that the physician remains morally responsible for providing the means and cannot escape this responsibility by altering the end from assisting the patient to die to assisting the patient in relieving them of pain or suffering.[19] According to him, assistance "is still an intimate part of a common enterprise and cannot be wrenched out of that context."[20] He defines "assisted suicide" as "an act or omission by a third party, voluntarily and knowingly undertaken, whose intent (at the very least) is to furnish a potential suicide with the lethal means necessary to commit suicide."[21] PAS is also classified as a form of "suicide" by other authors such as Cholbi, Friesen, and Reed.[22]

Nevertheless, the conceptual relationship between PAS, "euthanasia," and "physician-assisted dying" (henceforth PAD) is disputed and debated.[23] While some, like Singer

[16] Craig Paterson, "On Clarifying Terms in Applied Ethics Discourse: Suicide, Assisted Suicide, and Euthanasia," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (2003), 351-58.
[17] Paterson, "On Clarifying Terms," 354-5.
[18] Riisfeldt, "Overcoming Conflicting Definitions," 60; Stephen Holland, *Bioethics: A Philosophical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), 89.
[19] Paterson, 355.
[20] Paterson, 356.
[21] Paterson, 356.
[22] Michael Cholbi, "Suicide," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, May 18, 2004, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/suicide/; Phoebe Friesen, "Medically Assisted Dying and Suicide: How Are They Different, and How Are They Similar?" *Hastings Center Report* 50 (2020), 32-43; Philip Reed, "Against Recategorizing Physician-Assisted Suicide," *Public Affairs Quarterly* 34 (2020), 50-71.
[23] For example, see Cholbi, "Suicide"; Holland, *Bioethics*; House of Lords Paper 86-I, *Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill Bill [HL], Vol. I: Report* (House of Lords: Select Committee on the Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill Bill, 2005), 14; John Keown, *Euthanasia, Ethics and Public Policy: An Argument Against Legalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 31-6; Riisfeldt, "Overcoming

and Holland, view PAS as a type of "euthanasia," others, including Cholbi, see "euthanasia" as a form of "assisted suicide." The term PAD further complicates the discussion, as noted by Riisfeldt.[24] PAD is sometimes used interchangeably with PAS and at other times to denote both euthanasia and PAS. The usage of PAD aims to associate the practice specifically with the "end of life," excluding cases of "suicide" linked to mental illness, and strives for "value-neutrality" by avoiding the stigma attached to the term "suicide."

There is a discussion around whether the concept of "suicide" is inherently "value-laden," implying that it carries moral weight, or whether it can be considered "value-neutral," meaning it lacks inherent moral implications. Cholbi, for example, argues that suicide likely cannot be defined without moral connotations, suggesting it is a value-laden concept.[25] Conversely, Riisfeldt attempts a value-neutral analysis but admits that terms like "suicide" and "killing" carry negative connotations; thus acknowledging their value-laden nature.[26]

I argue that the crux of the debate centres on the interpretations of "value" and the authority determining whether something is value-laden. In the context of this article, I propose that if concepts like "suicide," "PAS," and "life" are viewed as *constructs* shaped by diverse social agents or persons in various contexts, then actions like PAS or the assessment of life itself can be considered as "*personal values,*" as per Dworkin,[27] and "*social constructs*," following Beckford.[28] This perspective, as implied by Cholbi,[29] may lead to the conclusion that acts of self-killing or assisting in such acts could be morally permissible or even necessary under specific conditions. Conversely, if life is regarded as "*intrinsically valuable*" without considering a person's personal values, perhaps due to being perceived as bearing the image of God, then suicide and PAS would be inherently wrong and indefensible. This stance would undoubtedly pose a challenge to the social constructionist perspective. This dichotomy highlights the moral intricacies surrounding the act of suicide and PAS.

"Religion" and "Physician-Assisted Suicide"

Conflicting Definitions"; and Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics.* 3rd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
[24] Riisfeldt, "Overcoming Conflicting Definitions," 60.
[25] Cholbi, "Suicide".
[26] Riisfeldt, 68.
[27] Ronald Dworkin, *Life's Dominion: An Argument About Abortion, Euthanasia, and Individual Freedom* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 71-81.
[28] Beckford, *Social Theory and Religion.*
[29] Cholbi, "Suicide".

Research shows an ambivalent correlation between "religion" and "suicide".[30] This ambiguity, I suspect, arises from variations in the definitions of "religion" (as well as "non-religion" and "spirituality") and "suicide" (including "life" and "afterlife") among different individuals and collectivities across various cultures.[31] As I will explain in the next section, the meanings of neither "religion" nor "suicide" are fixed, unitary and universal. They change across time and space due to "social constructionism".

Additionally, "religion" is not *the* only decisive social factor in everyday activities, including "suicidal" behaviours.[32] Other influential variables may also include age, gender, class, urban or rural origin, education, employment, ethnicity and nationality.[33] For example, Cooke illustrates in the context of Australia how age and gender differences play roles in shaping the methods and types of "suicides," with ageing leading to dependence and distinct lifetime experiences for men and women.[34]

Furthermore, Wright and Weaver[35] observe a "competition of discourses" between "lay" or, using Weber's[36] terms, "mass" and "religious" or "virtuoso" perspectives in terms of how religious authorities may officially adopt different approaches and/or degrees of refusal or acceptance regarding "suicide" and/or PAS, theologically and/or jurisprudentially speaking, compared to "mass" members. In any case, both "virtuoso" and "mass" shape and construct their understanding of "suicide" and/or PAS in accordance with their own social contexts. As there are similarities and differences in social contexts, individuals and collectivities also exhibit both commonalities and variations.

Virtuosos of the so-called "Abrahamic" religions, including Judaism, Christianity (particularly in post-St Augustine era), and Islam, which generally advocate the idea of a human being as an image of God, hold clear views against "suicide" as an impermissible act.[37] Thus, a physician's act of facilitating or assisting a patient in committing an

[30] Erminia Colucci, "Spirituality, Religion and Suicide," in *Suicide: A Global Perspective,* ed. Maurizio Pompili (Singapore: Bentham Science Publishers, 2012), 81.
[31] Beckford, *Social Theory and Religion*; Colucci, "Spirituality, Religion and Suicide," 84-95; Mark M. Leach, *Cultural Diversity and Suicide.* (New York: The Haworth Press, 2006); David Lester, "Culture and Suicide," in *Suicide: A Global Perspective,* ed. Maurizio Pompili (Singapore: Bentham Science Publishers, 2012), 9-29.
[32] Colucci, 81; Hossein Godazgar, "Islam Versus Consumerism and Post-modernism in the Context of Iran," *Social Compass* 54, no. 3 (2007): 389-418.
[33] Wright and Weaver, "Introduction".
[34] Wright and Weaver, 7.
[35] Wright and Weaver, 12.
[36] Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).
[37] Robin E. Gearing and Dana Lizardi, "Religion and Suicide," *Journal of Religion and Health* 48, no. 3 (2009): 332-41; Wicks, *Suicide,* 9.

impermissible act of "suicide" would also be impermissible.[38]

Of course, the attitudes in the "secular," societal context of "modern" Europe, for example, differ from those of the "global south." This is because it would be less plausible to single out a *religious* tradition or decree as the main cause of opposition to PAS due to the "invisibility" of "religion" in Europe.[39] Luckmann's notion of "invisible religion" is also confirmed by Godazgar's research on the question of PAS in Scotland.[40] Moreover, the call for "scientific" or medical arguments strengthens these "religious" collectivities' claim that there is allegedly no inconsistency between "religion" and "science."

In contrast to "Abrahamic" religions, authorities of the Eastern religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, which by and large champion the notion of rebirth and reincarnation, embrace less pessimistic attitudes towards "suicide" and PAS.[41] On the other hand, elites of the "secular" camp, who do not subscribe to transcendental standards, adopt a wide range of positions from prudent approval to absolute denial. This article examines the positions of Muslim exegetes (virtuosos) regarding "suicide" and its implications for PAS.

It falls outside the scope of this article to specifically argue for or against any of the above-mentioned discussions about the meanings of "suicide," PAS, and/or their association with "religion". However, I believe it would be beneficial to provide a tangible idea about PAS conditions by summarizing Young's general characterization of PAS before examining how far the exegeses of the crucial Qur'anic verse "don't kill yourselves," to which many Muslim individuals and collectivities attribute the impermissibility of PAS, are related to these conditions.[42] According to Young, despite all differences and divergences, there are *generally* five strict conditions for PAS to materialize *in practice*. The patient must be: 1) terminally ill, 2) unlikely to benefit from a foreseeable discovery related to the treatment of their illness, 3) in the state of excessive and unbearable pain, 4) competent, consistent and independent in their decision to die, 5) and incapable of ending their life without aid. We may bear these conditions in mind during the analysis of the meanings of "don't kill yourselves" presented by Islamic exegetes.

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[38] Colucci, "Spirituality, Religion and Suicide"; Lester, "Culture and Suicide"; Thomas Stompe and Kristina Ritter, "Religion und Selbsttötung - Teil 1: die Einstellungen der Religionen zum Suizid," *Neuropsychiatri* 25, no. 3 (2011), 118-26.
[39] Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (London: Routledge, 2022).
[40] Hossein Godazgar, "How Can We Ensure That 'Religion' Is Not Hidden Behind 'Non-Religious' Concepts? 'Religion', Diversity, and Physician-Assisted Suicide in Scotland," Annual Meeting of Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) and Religious Research Association, Milwaukee, United States of America, October 28-30, 2011, https://sssreligion.org/media/9812/program11.pdf
[41] Stompe and Ritter, "Religion und Selbsttötung".
[42] Young, "Voluntary Euthanasia."

Before I proceed with the exploration of the "social constructionist" approach to the scripture, it is crucial to emphasise a few points. This article does not aim to discuss the permissibility or impermissibility of PAS or dying in "Islam". Nor is it intended to provide a moral or legal verdict on the topic of "suicide" and PAS. Similar to the aforementioned article[43], the focus is not on the ethical judgements made by Muslim commentators in their investigations, but rather on *how* they arrive at those judgements. That is, this article is about methodology from a social scientific perspective. As such, this article also transcends the boundaries of specific "communities of interpretation" and denominational distinctions between Sunnism and Shi'ism. Indeed, as we will observe below, there are many commonalities between Sunni and Shi'a exegetes regarding the meanings of "don't kill yourselves," particularly during the pre-modern era.

A "Social Constructionist" Approach to Muslim Biomedical Ethics

As Beckford argues, human cultures exhibit remarkable diversity in patterns of social relations and the meanings attributed by individuals and collectivities.[44] These patterns are not arbitrary or random, but vary across different places and times, even though we often tend to take them for granted and make generalizations. However, upon closer examination, we come to realize that the meanings associated with broad concepts we commonly use in our daily lives, such as "life," "work," "law," "childhood," "motherhood," "family," "suicide," "abortion," and "dying," have undergone significant changes over time. The constant advancement of technology has also played a significant role in adding complexity to their meanings.

While various dictionaries offer general definitions for these concepts, a closer examination of debates in bioethical committees, legal institutions, and legislative bodies reveals profound disputes surrounding the boundaries of their meanings. Terms like these, along with many others, are social and cultural constructs, the meanings of which change across time and space and differ across different individuals based on various factors, such as gender, age, education, marriage, ethnicity, nationality, family background and status, rural or urban origin, sect and religion, subject of study, occupation, sexual orientation, and social class. As a result, the meanings attributed to them are subject to rejection, confirmation, modification and contestation.[45]

[43] Dabbagh, Mirdamadi, and Ajani, "Approaches to Muslim Biomedical Ethics."
[44] Beckford, *Religion and Industrial Society;* Beckford, *Social Theory and Religion.*
[45] Beckford, *Social Theory and Religion*, 13.

The concepts of "religion," "Islam," "Muslim," "religious ethics," and "Islamic ethics" extend beyond mere contestation. The history, both ancient and modern, of disagreements about what counts as "religion" or "real religion" and what does not is extensive and marked by conflicts and brutal violence, not only between followers of different religious traditions but also among various factions within a single tradition. Within the "Islamic" tradition, the "*Mihna*" (with a literal meaning of "ordeal", but perhaps "inquisition" in this context) movement arose due to conflicts between the proponents and opponents of the meta-ethical doctrine known as "theological voluntarism."[46] According to this doctrine, the determination of whether actions are "right" or "wrong" is solely dependent on God's will. Ash'arism supported this doctrine, while Mu'tazilism rejected it and argued that human beings can be held accountable for their actions only if they possess free will to choose between good and evil.[47]

The *Mihna* commenced in 833 as an inquisition initiated to support the belief in free will of human beings (and the notion of the "createdness of the Qur'an"). This belief was seen as a requirement for the definition of "Islam" during the reign of Ma'mun (r. 813-33), the seventh Abbasid caliph, who supported Mu'tazilism. The *Mihna* persisted with varying degrees of support until 847. During this period, many scholars who adhered to the traditionalist school (*áṣḥâb al-hadîth*), led by Ahmad ibn Hanbal, were punished and killed. The *Mihna* continued for the first two years of the tenth Abbasid caliph, al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-61), who completely reversed the norm and definition of "Islam" and "Islamic ethics". He harshly punished and executed "rationalist" theologians, effectively extinguishing the Mu'tazilite school.[48]

This brings to mind Talal Asad's significant argument regarding the influential role of power and "authorizing discourse" in shaping concepts such as "religion" and "religious ethics," in addition to the role of identity and social factors discussed above.[49] Asad provides several examples from the history of western societies, particularly during the Middle Ages, wherein the meanings of "religion" or "Christianity" were "systematically redefined" and "created" by, for example, "rejecting 'pagan' practices or accepting them … compiling saints' lives, both as a

[46] Richard C. Martin and Mark R. Woodward, *Defenders of Reason in Islam: Mu'tazilism from Medieval School to Modern Symbol* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997).
[47] Mairaj U. Syed, "Compulsion and Moral Agency in Mutazilism," in *Coercion and Responsibility in Islam: A Study in Ethics and Law,* ed. Mairaj U. Syed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 31-66.
[48] Jonathan E. Brockopp, "Islamic Ethics of Saving Life: A Comparative Perspective," *Medicine and Law* 21 (2002): 225-41; Jonathan E. Brockopp, "Taking Life and Saving Life: The Islamic Context," in *Islamic Ethics of Life: Abortion, War, and Euthanasia,* ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp (University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 1-19.
[49] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 37-9.

model of and as a model for the Truth; requiring the regular telling of sinful thoughts, words, and deeds to a priestly confessor and giving absolution to a penitent …."[50]

The "social constructionist" approach to "religion" rejects essentialism, which posits that each religion possesses inherent and distinctive characteristics and "ethics" that set it apart from other religions and traditions. By refraining from endorsing any metaphysical and "pre-constructed" notion of "religion," this perspective deems it "irrelevant" from a social scientific perspective. Beckford argues that "religion" (and one could extend this argument to "scriptural texts") lacks purpose, meaning, and agency without the involvement of human actors and social institutions.[51]

It does not "do" anything by itself …. Rather, it is an interpretative category that human beings apply to a wide variety of phenomena, most of which have to do with notions of ultimate meaning or value. The sedimented meanings associated with religion in the course of social life constitute authoritative guides not only to usage of the term but also to social action. The category of "religion" [and as argued here, "religious-related terms, such as "Muslim biomedical ethics" or "Muslim physician-assisted suicide"] is an abstraction from, or distillation of, these meanings and actions. As such, the category of religion is subject to constant negotiation and re-negotiation. *Its meaning must therefore be related to the social contexts in which it is used.*[52]

That is, a "common sense" or generic meaning of "Islam" or "Islamic bioethics" does not align smoothly with the social scientific study of religion.

Against the generic background, according to the "social constructionist" approach, there is a better way of understanding "Islam" and "Islamic ethics" (and indeed "ethics" and "bioethics") if we acknowledge that all knowledge and interpretations, whether "religious" or "non-religious," are shaped and "constructed" by the social conditions in which they exist. It makes no difference whether these interpretations are made by members of the "mass" or the "virtuoso" (elites), as defined by Weber. The former represents "first-order social constructionism," while the latter corresponds to "second-order social constructionism," as described by Beckford.[53] Both forms of constructionism are rooted in the social realm.

The "first-order constructions" occur when ordinary individuals observe and interpret social conditions, shaping their actions accordingly. The "second-order constructions" involve "reflecting" on these initial observations – basically

[50] Asad, 37-8.
[51] Beckford, *Social Theory and Religion*, 1-29.
[52] Beckford, *Social Theory and Religion*, 4; emphasis added.
[53] Beckford, *Social Theory and Religion*, 7, 20-1.

observations of observations or the constructions of constructions – in order to further understand the social world. Therefore, a "second-order concept," such as those presented by an exegete or a "Muslim bioethicist," is "an observer's construction that is supposedly based on the first-order beliefs, practices, and experiences of human actors."[54] What is now known as "Islamic ethics" or "Muslim biomedical ethics" are, in fact, the reflections and understandings of "dominant elites" regarding the sacred scriptures, shaped by their identity and influenced by the social, societal, historical, political, cultural, and global conditions in which they have lived: "second-order social constructionism." These "constructions" are subject to change across time and space in accordance with shifts in these conditions.

With this broad theoretical background in mind, we can now examine the views of Qur'anic exegetes on the phrase "don't kill yourselves" as an *example*, acknowledging that their interpretations are rooted in their identity, family background, and social, historical, and political conditions.

"Muslim Suicide" and Implications for "Muslim Physician-Assisted Suicide"

The term "*al-ʾintihār*," meaning "suicide," is not mentioned in the Qur'an. However, the phrase "*qátl ál-nafs*," meaning killing a person (which could refer to oneself or others), is mentioned in several places in the Qur'an, including 4:29, 6:151, 22:66, 17:31, 17:33, 2:195, 5:32, 2:85, and 4:93. For the purpose of this article, and noting that the term "*al-ʾintihār*" is not present in the most significant source of the "Islamic" scripture, I have selected a concise phrase from the initial verse (4:29) as an *illustration*. This phrase has commonly been *used* by numerous Muslims to counter the concepts of 'suicide" and "physician-assisted suicide or dying" (see below). As we will see, despite the literal simplicity and straightforwardness of the phrase "don't kill yourselves," the analysis shows how the Qur'anic exegeses are fragmented, contextualised and far from certain regarding the meaning of "suicide," let alone "physician assisted suicide."

The verse is as follows:

> "O ye who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities; But let there be amongst you Traffic and trade by mutual good will: ***Nor kill (or***

[54] Beckford, *Social Theory and Religion*, 21.

> ***destroy) yourselves***: for verily Allah hath been to you most merciful!"[55]

This verse is also significant in modern times, as it was used by Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar (1996-2010) in 2000 to argue that "suicide is prohibited in Islam".[56] Furthermore, this verse is frequently cited by many Muslim medical associations and professionals to assert that "suicide" and "physician-assisted suicide" is prohibited from an "Islamic" standpoint.[57] Indeed, comparing this verse with other relevant verses, it appears to be the most straightforward and pertinent verse that could be attributed to a statement prohibiting "suicide" as well as "PAS." Among these professionals, such as the United Kingdom's former President of the Islamic Medical Association[58], who, besides touching upon "secular" arguments like "slippery slope," refers to this specific Qur'anic verse as evidence of "Islam's" position in the prohibition of all types of "suicide," including PAS:

> All British Muslims and all Muslims believe in the SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE and that the end of any human's life is FIXED in advance only by our Almighty GOD, the Creator and the Owner of all life. Death should end naturally as ordained by GOD and without any interference/decision from the person's himself or herself and without the assistance of a doctor or a court or anybody else. This is why: ASSISTED SUICIDE, SUICIDE AND EUTHANASIA ARE ALL FORBIDDEN IN ISLAM. No one should have the intention to kill himself or herself, even with the assistance of somebody else. There are many verses in the final Holy Book: AL QUR'AN which emphasize these basic Pro-life Islamic beliefs. If I can quote one verse:
> In the Name of GOD, the Most Compassionate the Most Merciful
> 'DO NOT KILL YOURSELVES, FOR VERILY ALLAH/GOD HAS BEEN TO YOU MOST MERCIFUL' (chapter 4, verse 29).[59]

[55] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, trans., *The Qur'an,* 4: 29 (Kent: Wordsworth Edition, 2000); emphasis added.
[56] Tantawi, cited in Brockopp, "Islamic Ethics of Saving Life," 23.
[57] See for example, Shahid Athar, "Testimony of Islamic Medical Association Re: Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide," Religion, May 13, 1996, https://www.consciencelaws.org/religion/religion005.aspx; Gearing and Lizardi, "Religion and Suicide"; Majid Katme, "Rapid Response: Muslim Medical Reasons Against Assisted Suicide," *The British Medical Journal,* 351 (2015) https://www.bmj.com/content/351/bmj.h4517/rr-3; Madadin et al., "Islamic Perspective", 280; Hassan Chamsi-Pasha and Mohammed A. Albar, "Assisted Dying: Islamic Perspective," *Journal of the British Islamic Medical Association* 9, no. 3 (2021), 2, https://www.jbima.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2-1-ethics_-ChamsiPasha_Assisted-dying-Islamic-view_.pdf; WHO, "Islamic Code".
[58] Katme, "Rapid Response".
[59] Katme, "Rapid Response"; capitals in origin.

Before delving into the perspectives of prominent exegetes on the meanings of "don't kill yourselves," it is important to emphasize that diacritics were not present in the early periods of Islam in the Qur'an. Without diacritics, the Qur'an, including the mentioned verse, could be recited, translated, interpreted and understood in various ways. For example, "*lâ'tqtlû*" (without diacritics) can be recited in at least two ways:"*lâ taqtulû*," meaning literally "don't kill," addressed to individuals (which can embrace the meaning of both killing themselves and others), and "*lâ tuqattilû*," meaning literally "don't kill each other," or, roughly speaking, "don't massacre each other". All current versions of the Qur'an have recited it in the first form, that is, "don't kill." However, Zamakhshari[60] narrates from Ali (the Forth Caliph), and Qurtubi narrates from al-Hassan that they recited it in the second form, that is, "don't kill each other."[61] This highlights the existence of literal ambiguity. The same ambiguity applies to the next term: "*ánfuśakum*," meaning "yourselves," which can embrace both a community and individuals singularly.

This indicates that a single, fixed, or universal definition and understanding of the Qur'an was not warranted from the early days of Islam. This was perhaps the main reason behind Egyptian Muhammad Ahmad Khalaf Allah's statement that we should refer to the historical and social context of the Arabian Peninsula and endeavour to explore what the listeners of the Qur'anic verses understood and meant by these words, if this is at all achievable.[62] Therefore, the lack of diacritics in the Qur'an may also give rise to valid divergent questions and possibilities for interpretations and understandings of the concept of "suicide" and its implications for the impermissibility of "PAS."

With that being said, let us assume that the conventional recitation of this phrase in 4:29 was the one purportedly revealed to the Prophet, that is, "*lâ taqtulû ánfuśakum*," meaning "don't kill yourselves." What does it mean? I understand that the exegetes refer to myriads of "*ahadith*" or legal and narrative "cases" in the "*Sunna*" to make moral judgments. However, for the scope of this article, it is equally important to delve into the reasons and methods employed by these commentators when *selecting* specific cases to reference, while excluding others. I posit that this selection process is not arbitrary or coincidental but is deeply influenced by the social contexts in which the exegetes operate.

[60] Jarullah M. b. U. Zamakhshari, *Tafsir al-Kashshāf* [the Revealer], 2nd ed. (Qom: Qoqnoos, 2012), 170.
[61] Abu Abdullah Qurtubi, *Tafsir al-Qurtubi: Al-Jami' al-Ahkām al- Qur'ān* [A Collection of Qur'anic Exegeses]. 1st ed., Vol. 3 (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Elmiyyah, 1988), 137.
[62] Muhammad A. Khalaf Allah, *Al-Fann al-Qasasi fi al- Qur'ān al-Kareem* [Art of Narration in the Qur'an]. Cairo: Maktabah al-Nehdah al-Misriyyah, 1953).

My investigation of the meaning of "don't kill yourselves" from the perspectives of arguably the most famous or "dominant" twenty-one (twelve Sunni and nine Shi'ite) exegetes in the Islamic world over the last eleven centuries illustrates that its meaning is diverse and not universally agreed upon. The selection of these exegetes and elites was based on their fames and significant influence and contributions to "Islamic sciences," including Islamic law and ethics, in the Muslim world. The criteria for their inclusion was determined through brief interviews with six experts specializing in "Islamic studies", both Sunni and Shi'ite, generally speaking, as well as insights from relevant works in the field.

I aimed to understand and identify the meaning(s) of the Qur'anic verse "don't kill yourselves" and its relevance to the modern notion of "physician-assisted suicide" from the perspectives of Qur'anic exegetes within the world of "Islam" since its inception. The research scope focused on the two main denominations of "Islam," namely Sunnism and Shi'ism, without delving into myriad internal differences within each denomination.[63] Although I have an established background in "Islamic studies", I also sought the perspectives of other scholars in the field to minimise potential bias and to ensure a broader representation of views on this issue. The provisional sample size was initially set at six (three Sunni and three Shi'ite), with the intention of increasing this number if necessary.[64]

In summer of 2020, one Sunni Islamic scholar from Egypt and one Shi'ite expert from Iran were identified and invited for interviews via the British Association for Islamic Studies (BRAIS) email network and Sociology of Islam and Muslim Societies Mailing List.[65] These networks are popular among scholars of "Islamic studies" worldwide. Using a snowball sampling method[66], I interviewed four additional scholars in "Islamic studies," originally from Morocco, Turkey, Lebanon, and Pakistan. This method was chosen to target a small, specific group of "Islamic studies" scholars who could identify and recommend others with expertise in Qur'anic exegesis, ensuring representation across diverse geographical and denominational backgrounds. The purpose was not to generalize the findings to the entire Muslim population, but rather to tease out the main strands

[63] Beckford, *Social Theory and Religion,* 75.
[64] Oliver C. Robinson, "Sampling in Interview-Based Qualitative Research: A Theoretical and Practical Guide," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 11, no. 1 (2014), 29.
[65] BRAIS [The British Association for Islamic Studies], https://www.brais.ac.uk/; The Sociology of Islam and Muslim Societies Mailing List, https://groups.google.com/g/turk-tarihciler/c/dx8rT5M4K7s
[66] Chaim Noy, "Sampling Knowledge: The Hermeneutics of Snowball Sampling in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 11, no. 4 (2008), 327-44.

of thought and interpretation on this topic within the field.[67] Accordingly, my aim was not to provide an exhaustive account or classification of views within the broader Muslim collectivity – or even within "Islamic Studies" – nor to determine which perspectives were more dominant in particular contexts. Instead, I sought to identify the key currents of thought on this subject among experts in Qur'anic exegesis, taking into account geographical, cultural, and denominational variation. With this objective in mind, snowball sampling was deemed the most appropriate method for the initial step of identifying relevant experts in Qur'anic exegesis in a systematic and unbiased manner.

Out of these six scholars, two had an academic, two had a seminary, and two had both seminary and academic backgrounds. They were asked a single question: who, in their opinion, were the most important and influential Qur'anic exegetes from the beginning of Islam until the present-day, irrespective of where and when they lived. Interestingly, the majority of the cited exegetes overlapped not only among the scholars of each denomination but also across denominations, transcending "sectarian" boundaries. The significance of these exegetes was further confirmed by referencing Qur'anic studies literature related to both Sunni and Shi'ite traditions. They rank among the most frequently cited figures in the relevant scholarship and/or have exercised considerable religio-socio-political authority, arguably shaping the study of "Islam" within their respective denominations or collectivities more than any of their contemporaries – and, in some cases, influencing the discourse on "Islam" as a whole. It is therefore unsurprising that monographs dedicated to their work exist in multiple languages, including English.

The selected exegetes have lived in diverse social contexts spanning various geographical regions, including Iran, Spain, Egypt, Syria, Bahrain, Tunisia, Lebanon, and India/Pakistan. Their contributions to the field of exegesis have spanned a period from the tenth century to the present day. They are as follows: Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari (Sunni, Iran, d. 923), Abu al-Qasim Mahmud ibn Umar al-Zamakhshari (Sunni, Iran, d. 1144), Abu Ali Fadhl ibn Hassan Tabarsi (Shi'ite, Iran, d. 1153), Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (Sunni, Iran, d. 1210), Abu Abdullah al-Qurtubi (Sunni, Spain/Egypt, d. 1273), Nasir al-Din Abu al-Khayr al-Baydāwi (Sunni, Iran, d. 1316), Ismail Ibn Kathir (Sunni, Syria, d. 1373), Mulla Fathullah Kashani (Shi'ite, Iran, d. 1580), Mohsen Feyz Kashani (Shi'ite, Iran, d. 1649), al-Sayyed Hashim al-Bahrāni (Shi'ite, Bahrain, d. 1695), Abd Ali al-Arousi al-Huwayzi (Shi'ite, Iran, d. 1700), Muhammad Abduh (Sunni, Egypt, d. 1905), Muhammad Abu Zayd (Sunni, Egypt, d. 1930), Shaykh Tantawi Jawhari

[67] Cathy Lewin, "Elementary Quantitative Methods," in *Research Methods in the Social Sciences,* eds. Bridget Somekh and Cathy Lewin (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 219.

(Sunni, Egypt, d. 1940), Sayyid Qutb (Sunni, Egypt, d. 1966), Muhammad al-Tahir Ibn Ashur (Sunni, Tunisia, d. 1973), Muhammad Jawad Mughniyah (Shi'ite, Lebanon, d. 1979), Abul A'la Maududi (Sunni, India/Pakistan, d. 1979), Allameh Muhammad Husayn Tabatabaei (Shi'ite, Iran, d. 1981), Nasir Makarem Shirazi (Shi'ite, Iran, b. 1929) and Mohsen Qara'ati (Shi'ite, Iran, b. 1945).

I have categorized the interpretations of "don't kill yourselves" from the perspectives of these exegetes into two groups: "classical meanings" and "contemporary meanings." The classical meanings cover the "pre-modern" era from Tabari to Arousi, while the contemporary meanings encompass the "modern" era, from Abduh to Qara'ati.

For understanding and identifying the meanings of "don't kill yourselves," as we will see below, I have adopted the "library-based" research methods of "philosophy and hermeneutics," which are primarily used for the interpretation of biblical texts, and "discourse analysis," which is used to understand the contextual and "constructed" meanings of written or oral texts. This approach goes beyond outward and literal meanings to explore the implications of power, personal emotions, and interests that lie beneath the surface across time and space.[68] By examining aspects of the everyday life experiences of the selected exegetes, my aim is not to provide superfluous biographical detail, but to illuminate the social and historical contexts in which the specific meanings of the phrase "don't kill yourselves" emerged. As these contexts shift, so too do the meanings. In light of the "Muslim" opposition to "physician-assisted suicide" often attributed to this verse, I emphasize that its meaning is neither generic nor fixed. From a "social constructionist" perspective, "[w]hat we know to be true or real is *always* a product of the culture and historical period in which we exist."[69] Accordingly, such an understanding does not require opposition to "physician-assisted suicide", even if the verse's literal meaning might suggest otherwise.

It is noteworthy that most of these exegetes have provided multiple meanings for the verse. Therefore, as shown in Table 1, I will present the meanings in the order in which they first appeared, as provided by the selected exegetes.

"Don't Kill Yourselves"

[68] David Heywood and Ian Stronach, "Philosophy and Hermeneutics," in *Research Methods in the Social Sciences,* eds. Bridget Somekh and Cathy Lewin (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 114-20; Julia Gillen and Alan Petersen, "Discourse Analysis," in *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, eds. Bridget Somekh and Cathy Lewin (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 146-53; Jan Blommaert, *Discourse: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[69] David M. Newman, *Sociology: Exploring the Architecture of Everyday Life*, 5th ed. (London: Pine Forge Press, 2004), 53; emphasis added.

Classical Meanings

By "classical meanings," I refer to the interpretations of "do not kill yourselves" provided by prominent exegetes of the Qur'an who lived prior to the arrival of "modernity" in the Islamic world, approximately before the late nineteenth century.

1) "Do not kill each other": This meaning, which can be traced back to Tabari's (d. 923) *Jāmi' al-Bayān,* is considered the earliest and foundational interpretation in Islamic history.[70] Tabari defined "don't kill yourselves" as "don't kill each other." However, there remains an ambiguity regarding the intended recipients of this prohibition: whether it refers to the "faithful," possibly meaning "Muslims" specifically, or to all human beings. Attributing to "*hadith*," Tabari defined it as referring to "the people of one *umma*, one *da'awah* (invitation) and one religion" and "the people of your [the Prophet's] *umma*".[71] He did not introduce any additional meanings for "don't kill yourselves."

From a historical perspective, Tabari is the Qur'anic exegete most closely associated with the formative period of Islam. In the social context of early Islam, where conflicts and wars between "Muslims" and "non-Muslims" were prevalent, the interpretation of "don't kill yourselves" as "don't kill each other" primarily referred to the prohibition of Muslims killing fellow Muslims. This interpretation emphasized the importance of unity and solidarity within the Muslim community, especially in the face of external threats. In such a context, as Razi (d. 1210) observed, it was perhaps even unimaginable for someone to "kill oneself" or to commit suicide.[72] Therefore, bearing in mind that the Qur'an lacks the term "*al-'intihār,*" meaning "suicide," it is very likely that the concept of "suicide" was not used in the early centuries of Islam. This absence is reminiscent of the history of "Christianity," where the Bible also lacks a word synonymous with "suicide," and it was not used by biblical writers, either to approve of or disapprove of it, until the fifth century when St. Augustine argued that "suicide" was a defiance of the sixth commandment.[73]

Zamakhshari (d. 1144), Tabarsi (d. 1153), Baydāwi (d. 1316), Kashani (d. 1580), Feyz Kashani (d. 1649) and Arousi (d. 1700) reiterated this meaning in their exegeses during the pre-modern era.[74]

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[70] Muhammad b. J. Tabari, *Tafsir al-Tabari: Al-Musamma Jāmi' al-Bayān fi Ta'wil al-Qur'ān* [Collection of Statements on Interpretation of the Qur'an], 3rd ed., Vol. 4 (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyah, 1999).
[71] Tabari, *Tafsir al-Tabari,* 38.
[72] Fakhr al-Din Razi, *Al-Tafsir al-Kabir aw Mafātih al-Ghayb* [The Great Exegesis or Keys to the Unknown]. 1st ed., Vol. 5 (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Elmiyyah, 1990), 75.
[73] Gearing and Lizardi, "Religion and Suicide", 334.
[74] Zamakhshari, *Tafsir al-Kashshāf*, 170; Abu Ali F. b. H. Tabarsi, *Majma'a al-Bayān fi Tafsir al-Qur'ān* [Complex of Statements on Exegesis of the Qur'an], http://www.hodaalquran.com/rbook.php?id=2715&mn=1; Nasir al-Din A. K.

This definition was also confirmed in the modern era by Maududi (d. 1979).[75]

2) "Do not cause harm to yourselves and do not commit 'suicide'": First mentioned by Zamakhshari (d. 1144), the emergence and prevalence of this meaning in the discourse of commentators between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries is indeed interesting, particularly because it coincided with the significant conquests of the Indian Subcontinent by "Muslim" rulers. Islamic scholars, particularly those from Iran, had already established connections and networks with India and China through the Silk Road. Abu Reyhan Biruni's (d. 1050) book provides evidence of such networks.[76] Therefore, it is not surprising to observe that the exegetes of that time were curious about the causes and methods behind what they perceived as acts of "self-harm" among the Indian population.

Most of these commentators made attempts to refute their acts of "self-harm" in a critical and unsympathetic manner. They often labelled the individuals engaging in such actions as "ignorant" [such as Zamakhshari (d. 1144)[77] and Baydāwi (d. 1316)[78]], "idolaters" who sacrifice themselves for the "idols" [such as Kashani (d. 1580)],[79] and "the greedy" to this world and properties who have lost the control of their actions out of anger and weariness [such as Qurtubi (d. 1273)[80], Tabarsi (d. 1153)[81], and Kashani (d. 1580)].[82]

Ibn Kathir (d. 1373), in his commentary, does not explicitly mention the reasons behind acts of "self-harm." Instead, he focuses on describing *the means* typically associated with such acts, such as "iron, knife or poison," which involve the individual's own hands.[83] From his perspective, the involvement of one's own hands in "self-harm" (or "suicide") suggests a violation of the principle that human life is ultimately in the hands of God. Indeed, this meaning of "self-harm" is comparable to the definition found in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1651, where "suicide" is

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Baydāwi, *Anwār al-Tanzil wa Asrār al-Ta'wil, al-Má'roof be Tafsir al-Baydāwi* [Lights of Revelation and the Secrets of Interpretation, Known as al- Baydāwi's Exegesis] (Beirut: Dar Ehyā' al-Torath al-Arábi, 2015), 71; Fathullah Kashani, *Tafsir Manhāj al-Ṣadiqin fi al-Dham al-Mokhālifin* [Exegesis for Sincere Approaches in Denouncing the Offenders], 3rd ed. (Tehran: Ketab-froushi Mohammad Hassan 'Elmi, 1957); Mohsen Feyz Kashani, *Tafsir al-Ṣāfi fi Tafsir al- Qur'ān* [Refined Exegesis] (Tehran: Maktab al-Sadr, 1994), 443; Abd Ali Arousi, *Tafsir Noor al-Tháqáláyn* [Light of two Gems (the Qur'an and *Ahl al-Bayt*)] (Qom: Matbái' al-Elmiyah, 2004).

[75] Abul A'la Maududi, *Tafhim al- Qur'ān* [Towards Understanding the Qur'an] www.quranurdu.com

[76] Abu Reihan Biruni, *Alberuni's India: An Account of Religion, Philosophy, Literature, Geography, Chronology, Astronomy, Customs, Laws and Astrology of India, About A.D. 1030.* Edward C. Sachau, trans. (London: Kegan Paul, 1910). Originally written as *Tahqyq Mā li-l Hind min Maqūlah Maqbūlah fi-áql aw Mardhûlah* [Critical Study of What India Says, Whether Accepted by Reason or Refuted].

[77] Zamakhshari, *Tafsir al-Kashshāf,* 170.

[78] Baydāwi, *Anwār al-Tanzil,* 71.

[79] Kashani, *Tafsir Manhāj al-Ṣadiqin.*

[80] Qurtubi, *Tafsir al-Qurtubi,* 137.

[81] Tabarsi, *Majma'a al-Bayān.*

[82] Kashani, *Tafsir Manhāj al-Ṣadiqin.*

[83] Ismail Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al- Qur'ān al-Aẓeem* [Exegesis of the Great Qur'an], Vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'arefah Lil-Tiba'ah wa al-Nashr, 1969), 422.

defined as "one who dies by his own hand." Both definitions emphasize the victim's "own hands" as the necessary means of "self-harm" and "suicide"[84], consistent with the modern definition of PAS in which the patient is ultimately responsible for their own death. Ibn Kathir's interpretation of "don't kill yourselves," based on Islamic jurisprudence, has also influenced the reasoning of Muslim medical professionals who define the prescription of "drugs" by physicians as a form of "poison" in the act of PAS.[85] As we see, the exegetes mentioned above primarily focus on the interpretation of "self-harm" in relation to the social context of India during that time, rather than the act or reasons for "suicide".

Against this backdrop, it is noteworthy that Razi (d. 1210) takes a distinct and *relevant* (to PAS) approach in interpreting the phrase "don't kill yourselves" within the context of India.[86] While he acknowledges that commentators unanimously agree that the phrase refers to "the avoidance of killing the faithful by the faithful," he interestingly deviates from the consensus. Like other commentators, he believes that the "prohibition of suicide" can only be the secondary meaning of "don' kill yourselves." However, it is commendable that Razi demonstrates sympathy and understanding towards those "Indians" who were driven to contemplate "suicide" due to their convictions, even though he does not endorse it for "Muslims."

His reasoning is straightforward. From an "Islamic" perspective, Razi argues that the act of "suicide" entails "intensive pain and great disgrace" (*al- āl'am alshadid wa al-dhamu al'aẓim*) in this world and "severe punishment" in the afterlife. Therefore, no one would commit suicide, if there were no perceived benefit in doing so. If suicide had no purpose, there would be no point in prohibiting it. Consequently, Razi concludes that life *can* sometimes be so miserable and agonizing that "killing oneself could be easier than [continuing with life itself]" (*al-qatl 'alayh ʿashal min dhalik*). This explains, he adds, why many Muslims choose to end their lives, despite their belief in God and the resurrection. In this case, there appears to be a valid reason for the "prohibition of suicide." Despite his rejection of "suicide," it is remarkable to note that Razi's thinking in the twelfth century came remarkably close to the "spirit" (in Weber's term) of modern concept of "PAS," which even most contemporary Muslim interpreters have scarcely addressed, as we will see. Indeed, Razi was a "master of Qur'anic interpretation."[87]

[84] Paterson, "On Clarifying Terms".
[85] Katme, "Rapid Response"; Madadin et al., "The Islamic Perspective."
[86] Razi, *Al-Tafsir al-Kabir,* 75.
[87] Tariq Jaffer, *Razi: Master of Qur'anic Interpretation and Theological Reasoning.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Razi's understanding of the intensity of pain is comparable to Siena's report on physicians' conventions in the late eighteenth-century England.[88] According to Siena, some patients expressed a preference for death instead of tolerating constant suffering, referred to as an "illness strategy." Interestingly, this type of "suicide" was not labelled as "insane" by practitioners at that time. Various research findings illustrate that "unbearable suffering and pain" is a primary, if not the only, reason behind many terminally-ill patients' requests for PAS.[89] Riisfeldt further highlights that "many believe that any discussion surrounding euthanasia or assisted suicide in the absence of suffering is misplaced."[90]

The interpretation of "don't kill yourselves" in the sense of "don't commit suicide," often as a secondary meaning, has also persisted in the works of the contemporary exegetes such as Abduh (d. 1905)[91], Tantwai Jawhari (d. 1940)[92], Ibn Ashur (d. 1973)[93], Tabatabaei (d. 1981)[94], Maududi (d. 1979)[95], and Makarem Shirazi (b. 1929-)[96]. It is interesting to note that modern exegetes have placed greater emphasis on the concept of "suicide" than "self-harm." This observation becomes even more intriguing when considering the emergence of "Sociology" as a subject of study, which was a response to the prevalence and reasons behind "suicide" in nineteenth- century Europe.

3) "Take it easy": This meaning was also constructed by Zamakhshari (d. 1144)[97] for the first time. The Arabian Peninsula had long been afflicted by aridity and extreme climate conditions, including scorching heat and harsh cold, even before the emergence of Islam in the seventh century. Some scholars[98] argue that these challenging conditions

[88] Siena, "Suicide as an Illness Strategy".
[89] For example, see Marianne Dees et al., "Unbearable Suffering of Patients with a Request for Euthanasia or Physician-Assisted Suicide: An Integrative Review," *Psycho-Oncology* 19 (2010), 339-52; Kathleen M. Foley, "The Relationship of Pain and Symptom Management to Patient Requests for Physician-Assisted Suicide," *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management* 6, no. 5 (1991), 289-97; Marie-Estelle Gaignard and Samia Hurst, "A Qualitative Study on Existential Suffering and Assisted Suicide in Switzerland," *BMC Medical Ethics* 20, no. 34 (2019), 1-8, https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12910-019-0367-9 ; Keith G. Wilson et al., "Attitudes of Terminally Ill Patients Towards Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide," *Archives of Internal Medicine* 160 (2000), 2454-60.
[90] Riisfeldt, "Overcoming Conflicting Definitions", 67.
[91] Muhammad Abduh, *Tafsir al- Qur'ān al-Hakeem* [Exegesis of the Qur'an], ed. Muhammad R. Riḍā (Cairo: Al-Manār Press, 1910), 43-4.
[92] Shaykh Tantawi Jawhari, *Al-Jawāhir fi Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-Kareem* [Gems on Exegesis of the Qur'an], Vol. 3 (Cairo: Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi wa Awladoh, 1925), 35.
[93] Muhammad al-Tahir Ibn Ashur, *Tafsir al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir* [Interpretation of Verification and Enlightenment] (Tunis: Dar al-Funun li-Nashr wa al-Tawzi', 1973), 25-6.
[94] Muhammad H. Tabatabaei, *Tafsir al-Mizān* [The Balance in Interpretation of the Qur'an] (Qom: Entesharat Eslami, 2003), 505-7.
[95] Maududi, *Tafhim al- Qur'ān.*
[96] Naser Makarem Shirazi, *Tafsir Nemooneh* [Ideal Exegesis], 32nd ed. (Tehran: Dar al-Kotob al-Islamyyah, 1995), 394-8.
[97] Zamakhshari, *Tafsir al-Kashshāf,* 170.
[98] For example, see Marilyn R. Waldman and Malika Zeghal, "Cultural Core Areas of the Settled World," *Encyclopaedia Britannica.* https://www.britannica.com/topic/Islamic-world/Cultural-core-areas-of-the-settled-world ; Maxime Rodinson, *Muhammad* (London and New York: Tauris Parke, 2002); Maxime Rodinson, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002).

played a significant role, if not the primary factor, in the rise and expansion of Islam during that time. The severity of these conditions made it impractical for the inhabitants and tribes of the Peninsula to establish an "agrarian-based citied" society.[99] It appears that the lack of access to water and the harsh cold winds in the desert posed challenges for the Muslim community and individuals during that time, which is reflected in "*hadith*" literature. This circumstance explains the introduction of "*tayammum*" (ritual purification with clean soil) in Islamic law or "*shari'a*" as an alternative to ablution, considering the scarcity of water in certain situations.

Additionally, many Qur'anic commentators, particularly those who had experiences of colder winters outside the Arabian Peninsula, such as northern Iran, extended the application of "don't kill yourselves" to include the context of cold weather and the use of water for ablution. They interpreted it as a prohibition against performing ablutions in extremely cold weather, implying the concept of "take it easy." This definition was more or less reiterated by subsequent commentators such as Qurtubi (d. 1273)[100], Baydāwi (d. 1316)[101], Ibn Kathir (d. 1373)[102], Feyz Kashani (d. 1649)[103], Bahrāni (d. 1695)[104], and Arousi (d. 1700)[105]. For this interpretation of "don't kill yourselves," many commentators refer to a hadith narrated by 'Amr bin al-'Âs, as transmitted by Abu Dawud. It should be noted that this interpretation is unrelated to the conditions associated with PAS, though it is understandable when considered in the socio-geographic context of the region.

In the modern era, this interpretation has been further upheld in the exegeses of Ibn Ashur (d. 1973)[106] and Qara'ati (b. 1945)[107].

4) "Don't ruin your souls by committing sins and eating up wrong properties": The fourth interpretation of "don't kill yourselves" is perhaps the only one that aligns – at least partially – with the verse's overall "textual context". This meaning emerged around the same time as the second meaning, introduced by the Shi'ite exegete, Tabarsi (d.

[99] Instead, the Arabian Peninsula benefited from its strategic location as a hub for trans-Asian trade routes and the Silk Road, offering abundant commercial opportunities. It is worth noting that Ibn Khaldun, the Tunisian historian (d. 1406), also explored the relationship between climate and civilizations in his *The Muqaddimah.* However, he posited that the climate of the Arabian Peninsula was "humid" and "somewhat temperate" due to its three- sided coastal presence. See Abdur Rahman b. M. Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 124.
[100] Qurtubi, *Tafsir al-Qurtubi,* 137.
[101] Baydāwi, *Anwār al-Tanzil,* 71.
[102] Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al- Qur'ān al-Aẓeem*, 422.
[103] Feyz Kashani, *Tafsir al-Ṣāfi,* 443.
[104] Seyyed Hashim Bahrāni, *Al-Borhān fi Tafsir al- Qur'ān* [in Search of the Intellectual Foundations of the Qur'an] (Qom: Muasasat al-Ba'tha, 2017), 65.
[105] Arousi, "*Tafsir Noor al-Tháqáláyn,* 472-3.
[106] Ibn Ashur, *Tafsir al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir,* 25-6.
[107] Mohsen Qara'ati, *Tafsir Noor* [Exegesis of Light] (Tehran: Markaz Farhangi Dars-haei az Qur'an, 2006).

1153)[108], and was later echoed by two other Shi'ite commentators, Kashani (d. 1580)[109] and Feyz Kashani (d. 1649).[110] However, in the modern era, this understanding was not confined to the Shi'ite tradition. Given their Shi'ite origins in Iran, often described as the land of "spirituality" (as Foltz argues[111]), it is perhaps not surprising that these exegetes articulated this meaning within that particular social context.

According to Foltz, the pre-Islamic Iranian "spirituality," encompassing esoteric trends, continued to influence the definition of "Islam" and "religion" not only within Iran's borders in the forms of "Islamic mysticism," "Sufism," and "Shi'ism," but also beyond. Scholars like Henry Corbin and Montgomery Watt have also contended that "Shi'ite Islam," with its emphasis on esotericism and "spirituality," is a distinctive feature of "Iranian Islam".[112] In the classical era, Ibn Kathir (d. 1373) also mentioned "avoidance of sins and eating up wrong properties" as the primary meaning of "don't kill yourselves," albeit without specifically referencing individual "souls" or the preservation of "spirituality".[113] This meaning also falls beyond the scope of PAS, yet remains consistent with the "textual context".

In the contemporary era, Abu Zayd (d. 1930), a Sunni exegete from Egypt, has also interpreted "don't kill yourselves" as a "prohibition against causing harm to one's own soul through excessive greed for wealth and material possessions."[114]

5) "Don't put yourselves in danger in war": This meaning was also introduced by Tabarsi (d. 1153)[115] and subsequently followed by other Shi'ite commentators, including Feyz Kashani (d. 1649)[116], Bahrāni (d. 1695)[117] and Arousi (d. 1700).[118] Arousi emphasized that engaging in actions that put oneself at risk in times of war should be conditional upon the authorization of the Prophet. This interpretation may have been proposed at a time when there was no longer a pressing need for sacrificial actions. Islam had already been firmly established not only in the Arabian Peninsula, but also beyond, as it successfully expanded into the Indian subcontinent. This interpretation also lies far from the conditions of PAS.

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[108] Tabarsi, *Majma'a al-Bayān.*
[109] Kashani, *Tafsir Manhāj al-Ṣadiqin.*
[110] Feyz Kashani, 443.
[111] Richard C. Foltz, *Spirituality in the Land of the Noble: How Iran Shaped the World's Religions* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2004).
[112] Hamid Enayat, *Modern Political Thought in Islam.* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1982).
[113] Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al- Qur'ān al-Aẓeem,* 422.
[114] Muhammad Abu Zayd, *Al-Hidāyah wa al-Irfān fi Tafsir al- Qur'ān bi al- Qur'ān* [Guidance and Knowledge in the Exegesis of the Qur'an] (Cairo: Mustafa al-Bābi al-Halabi wa Awladoh, 2017), 65.
[115] Tabarsi, *Majma'a al-Bayān.*
[116] Feyz Kashani, *Tafsir al-Ṣāfi,* 443.
[117] Bahrāni, *Al-Borhān fi Tafsir,* 66.
[118] Arousi, *Tafsir Noor al-Tháqáláyn,* 472.

Similar to the previous meaning, this interpretation was also mentioned by the Sunni scholar, Abduh (d. 1905),[119] as well as other Shi'ite exegetes such as Tabatabaei (d. 1981)[120] and Qara'ati (b. 1945),[121] in the contemporary era.

6) "Don't commit any act that would bring the death penalty upon yourselves, that is, killing (qiṣāṣ), apostasy and fortified adultery": This meaning of "don't kill yourselves," introduced by the late Razi (d. 1210)[122], came about half a century after Tabarsi (d. 1153). Razi lived during the "Islamic golden age" and then witnessed the Shu'ubiyaa and Persianization movement in Iran, which eventually led to the downfall of the Abbasid caliphate and the Mongol conquest and rule of Iran, occurring a decade after Razi's death.[123] It appears that Razi's introduction of this new meaning for "don't kill yourselves" is influenced by his individual experience, socio-political pessimism and conservatism amid the chaotic conditions in Iran at the time. He served as an advisor to the Gurid sultans Ghiyath al-Din (d. 1203) and his brother Shahab al-Din (d. 1206) of Ghazna, as well as their opponent, Khawarazm Shah 'Ala al-Din Tekesh (d. 1200).[124] Although Razi came from a humble background, he acquired significant wealth, likely as a result of such associations.[125]

Furthermore, it is possible that Razi's perception of the turbulent political climate of his time influenced his belief that establishing a just government was nearly impossible and therefore an irrational pursuit. As a result, he concluded: "[p]olitical pursuit should aim, not at the realisation of human happiness or wellbeing, but at securing the most fundamental necessities for human existence, viz. a degree of security, law and order."[126] Indeed, the above-mentioned meaning of "don't kill yourselves" aligns with this conservative attitude towards society and reflects the social context in which Razi lived. This interpretation persisted until the seventeenth century, as it was also embraced by Baydāwi (d. 1316),[127] Kashani (d. 1580),[128] and Feyz Kashani (d. 1649).[129]

One might assume that "killing" in this context could be relevant to PAS, given that the physician provides assistance. However, as previously mentioned, the physician is not directly involved in the act of "suicide" in PAS, although they bear responsibility. Furthermore, the contexts, interpretations, and intentions associated with

[119] Abduh, *Tafsir al- Qur'ān al-Hakeem.*
[120] Tabatabaei, *Tafsir al-Mizān.*
[121] Qara'ati, *Tafsir Noor.*
[122] Razi, *Al-Tafsir al-Kabir,* 75.
[123] Frank Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Din al-Razi's Life and the Patronage He Received," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 18, no. 3 (2007), 313-44; Ayman Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi.* Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2006).
[124] Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Din"; Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Din.*
[125] Shihadeh, 4-5.
[126] Shihadeh, 180.
[127] Baydāwi, *Anwār al-Tanzil*, 71.
[128] Kashani, *Tafsir Manhāj al-Ṣadiqin.*
[129] Feyz Kashani, *Tafsir al-Ṣāfi,* 443.

"killing" during Razi's time are markedly different from those related to PAS, as discussed above.

This meaning has *not* been mentioned by the contemporary commentators of the Qur'an.

7) "Avoid any act that would cause harm to your self-esteem, dignity and integrity": This meaning has been mentioned exclusively by Baydāwi (d. 1316), who emphasizes that this is "the real meaning" among others.[130] The "Biographical Note" on Baydāwi's life by Calverley and Pollack's sheds light on the social and historical context in which this meaning emerged.[131] Baydāwi hailed from a prestigious and well-known family background, with his great-grandfather being a "respected" Imam in Bayda', a town close to Shiraz in Iran. His father followed in his grandfather's footsteps and held the position of chief *qazi* (judge) in Shiraz, representing "a lineage of accomplishment, honour and prestige."[132]

Baydāwi's career also reflects his respect for self-esteem, dignity and integrity. It appears that his youth coincided with the tumultuous period marked by the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate, the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1258, and the establishment of the Ilkhan dynasty in the Persian Empire, with Tabriz as its capital. After his father died in 1274/5, Baydāwi, who had already been involved in smaller public offices in Shiraz and its surroundings, was appointed as the chief *qazi* in Shiraz.

In the early years of his career, Baydāwi displayed great ambition and an uncompromising approach in his judgements. This created resentment among his fellow citizens, particularly those who held financial and political influence. As a result, he decided to leave Shiraz, his hometown, and relocate to the capital city of Tabriz, where he produced numerous works, including his renowned commentary on the Qur'an.[133] Amid his noble family background, commitment to integrity and dignity, and turbulent era of the Abbasid collapse and Mongol conquest, Baydāwi's interpretation of the phrase "don't kill yourselves" is understandable.

While this meaning significantly diverges from the definitions of "self-killing" and "suicide," proponents of PAS may find it relevant to PAS as an "act" rather than an "omission," following Paterson's terminology.[134] Thus, they may argue that PAS would safeguard the patient's dignity, integrity and self-esteem.

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[130] Baydāwi, 71.
[131] Edwin E. Calverley and James W. Pollack, "Translators' Introduction," in *Nature, Man and God in Medieval Islam: 'Abd Allah Baydāwi's Text: Tawali' al-Anwar min Matali' al-Anzar, Along with Mahmud Isfahani's Commentary Matali' al-Anzar*, Eds. & Trans. Edwin E. Calverley and James W. Pollack (Leiden: Brill, 2002), xvii-xxxviii.
[132] Calverley and Pollack, xvii-xxxviii.
[133] Calverley and Pollack, xvii-xxxviii.
[134] Paterson, "On Clarifying Terms".

8) "Don't kill the Prophet and his family (*ahl al-bayt*)": This definition attributed to Bahrāni – also known as "Allameh Bahrāni" (d. 1695), a prominent Shi'ite exegete – is best understood within the socio-political context of Iran at the time.[135] He was born into a deeply Shi'ite clerical family in a town near Bahrain when the Shi'ite Safavid Empire held power in Iran, including Bahrain. The Safavid Empire, being a Shi'ite state, held great reverence for the Prophet and his family, known as "*ahl al-bayt*." Bahrāni himself descended from the renowned Shi'ite jurist Seyyed Mortaḍā and had a particular interest in Shi'ite Imams, producing many works about them.[136]

Theologically, Bahrāni belonged to the Akhbari school of thought, which maintained that the tradition of the Prophet originated from him and that his "family" (i.e., the Imams) provided the reliable source for understanding the meanings of the Qur'anic concepts. According to the Akhbaris, each term in the Qur'an has both an outward or literal (*ẓāhir*) meaning and an inward (*bāṭin*) meaning that goes beyond their "mystic" interpretations. These inward meanings are beyond the comprehension of human wisdom and can only be understood through the "*ahadith*" that allegedly reflect the teachings of the Prophet and Imams.

Bahrāni lived during a period when the "Shi'itization" of the "Islamic" sources and society, under the authority of the Shi'ite Safavid government, was prominent.[137] Through his Akhbari Shi'ite "narrative commendatory" (*Tafsir Rawaiee*) on the Qur'an, he criticized the "literal" methodology of other exegetes who were popular in his time, such as Zamakhshari (d. 1144) and Baydāwi (d. 1316).[138] Bahrāni attributes the definition of "yourselves" as "your Prophet's family" to a "*hadith*", specifically referring to the Prophet, his daughter Fatima, his son-in-law Ali, and their two sons, Hassan and Hussain.[139] Thus, Bahrāni, as an exegete with deep Shi'i family roots and strong loyalty to the "*ahl al-bayt*" (Imams), advanced this definition of "don't kill yourselves" during the height of Safavid power.

Like the previous two meanings, this particular interpretation of "don't kill yourselves" did not continue into the modern era. Furthermore, this meaning has little relevance to PAS.

Contemporary Meanings

[135] Bahrāni, *Al-Borhān fi Tafsir,* 66.
[136] Mehdi Khoshdouni, "Barrasi-e Mabani-e Seyyed Hashem-e Bahrāni dar *Al-Borhān fi Tafsir-i al-Qur'ān*" [In search of the (intellectual) foundations of Seyyed Hashim al-Bahrāni in the (exegesis) of *Al-Borhān fi Tafsir-i al-Qur'an*"]. *Hosna: Specialized Quarterly of the Qur'an and Hadith* 18 (2013), 159-93; Ali A. Velayati, *Naqsh-e Shi'eh dar Farhang va Tamaddon-e Eslam va Iran* [The Role of Shi'ism in the Islamic and Iranian Culture and Civilization] (Tehran: Amirkabir, 2016).
[137] Khoshdouni, "Barrasi-e Mabani-e Seyyed"; Velayati, *Naqsh-e Shi'eh dar Farhang.*
[138] Khoshdouni, 173.
[139] Bahrāni, 66.

In response to the challenges posed by "modernism," and possibly influenced by colonialism and/or imperialism, the modern interpretations of "don't kill yourselves" in the Muslim world have primarily taken three distinct forms: reformation, radical Islam or "Islamism," and conservatism. It is evident that these new meanings are contextualised and often differ from, and even contradict, the classical interpretations.

1) Reformation: By "reformation", it is understood that the meanings of Qur'anic verses are not necessarily in conflict with the political and economic demands of the "modern" world. Proponents of reformation argue that in order to achieve similar progress and prosperity as western civilization, it is necessary to reform our understanding of "Islam" and re-interpret the Qur'an.

Within this framework, the phrase "don't kill yourselves" in the Qur'an has been interpreted in two distinct ways:

i) "*Do not kill human beings*" (rather than just "Muslims"): In the context of contemporary Qur'anic commentators, Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905) was the first scholar to extensively discuss the meaning of "don't kill yourselves" in *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-Hakeem,* also known as *al-Manār*, edited by his student al-Seyyed Muhammad Rashid Riḍā.[140] This definition aligns with his family background and the socio-political context of Egypt at that period. Abduh (1849-1905), who was born into an elite family with a Turkish father and Egyptian mother in Egypt, lived during a period marked by French and British occupation and colonialism (1798-1956). In response to the western technological advancements and modernity, Abduh adopted a peaceful, critical, and progressive approach of "Islamic reformism."[141] His approach was influenced by his teacher and intellectual mentor, Seyyed Jamal al-Din (1838-97). In addition to his tolerant attitudes towards different forms of "Islam," particularly Shi'ism, Abduh argued that "any passage in the *Qur'an* that appeared to contradict reason had to be interpreted in an allegorical way."[142] This approach has been labelled as "neo-Mu'tazilism" and, according to Dabbagh, Mirdamadi, and Ajani, it can also be classified as "para-textualist."[143]

In defining the meaning of "don't kill yourselves", Abduh made a novel reference to another Qur'anic verse (35:5), which states that whoever kills others, it is as if he has killed all humanity. Abduh argued that it is "our religious duty to

[140] Abduh, *Tafsir al- Qur'ān al-Hakeem,* 43-54.
[141] Christian Lekon, *Modernist Reformers in Islam, Hinduism and Confucianism, 1865-1935: Peripheral Geoculture in the Modern World-System* (London: Routledge, 2019).
[142] Lekon, 29.
[143] Dabbagh, Mirdamadi, and Ajani, "Approaches to Muslim Biomedical Ethics".

respect *all* human beings" and concluded that this interpretation is "the real meaning and a stronger possibility."[144] He described "killing other human beings" as "a crime against humanity," reflecting a "modern" perspective. This interpretation of "yourselves" as referring to "all human beings" was also adopted by the Sunni-Tunisian-"reform-minded" Ibn Ashur (d. 1973),[145] Shi'ite-Lebanese-"modernist" Mughniyah (d. 1979)[146] and Shi'ite-Iranian Tabatabaei (d. 1981).[147]

Among classical commentators, only Spanish/Egyptian Qurtubi (d. 1273) briefly mentioned that "exegetes have consensus that this verse denies people from killing others," suggesting that it may not refer to "suicide."[148] Therefore, it falls outside the scope of PAS. However, opponents of PAS may utilize this meaning to argue that it would be impermissible for the physician to be involved in the process of PAS.

ii) "*Don't consume too much"*: Tantawi Jawhari (1862-1940), influenced by the reformist and peaceful ideas of Abduh and Seyyed Jamal al-Din, added another meaning to "don't kill yourselves," reflecting the societal conditions of Egypt at that time. Like his predecessors, he was greatly impressed by western technological and scientific advancements and transcended sectarianism. He believed that there was no contradiction between being a "Muslim" and being a "modern" or between "Qur'an" and "science." Arguing this, he did not mean that "Europeans' discoveries were derived or deducted from the Qur'an, but they made these advances due to how they thought."[149] It is not surprising that he was labelled as the "Mu'tazilite" or "Fakhr al-Din Razi" of his time.[150]

Tantawi Jawhari held the belief that "unschooled" or "non-scientific" Muslims could rarely benefit from the Qur'an. As a result, he developed a "novel" and "scientific" approach to Qur'anic exegesis, known as *Al-Jawāhir fi Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-Kareem* (gems on exegesis of the Qur'an). He also followed in the footsteps of Abduh and Seyyed Jamal al-Din by being anti-colonial, particularly anti-British. As a political activist, he was involved in secretive anti-colonial movements and was suspected of being monitored by the British.[151] The definition of "don't consume too much" for this verse is linked to this socio-political context, especially

[144] Abduh, 44.
[145] Ibn Ashur, *Tafsir al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir,* 25.
[146] Muhammad J. Mughniyah, *Al-Tafsir al-Kāshif* [the Revealer]. (Beirut: Dar al-Ilm lil-Malaiyn, 1981), 304-5.
[147] Tabatabaei, *Tafsir al-Mizān,* 505.
[148] Qurtubi, *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, 137.
[149] Tantawi Jawhari, cited in Majid Daneshgar, *Tantawi Jawhari and the Qur'an: Tafsir and Social Concerns in the Twentieth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 9.
[150] Razi, despite inheriting his intellectual legacy from Ash'arite traditions through his father, was notably influenced by Mu'tazilite rationalist theology and the Aristotelian-Avicennian philosophical tradition in later years. (See Jaffer, *Razi*).
[151] Daneshgar, 19.

when Tantawi Jawhari refers to "western and forbidden goods" while harshly criticising "the world trade system, capitalism and European colonialism."[152] He states, "this really kills your souls." Tantawi Jawhari had a particular interest in discussions related to the "soul," which is why his exegesis has been labelled as "spiritual tafsir" (*tafsir rūhi*).[153] "Islamic reformism" represents an intellectual and critical opposition to both traditionalism and "westernization." Thus, this meaning is also unrelated to "suicide" and PAS.

2) *"Islamism"*: Against the "Islamic reformist" agenda of figures like Abduh and Tantawi Jawhari, there were Egyptian elites who adopted a rather reactionary approach towards western modernity, colonialism and imperialism. They rejected "westernization" and essentially abandoned "traditionalism," aligning themselves with "Islamic fundamentalism" or "Islamism," particularly exemplified by the Muslim Brotherhood. For the Muslim Brotherhood and its founder, Hassan al-Banna (1906-49), the relationship between reason and religion was no longer necessary. Their aim was not to re-define "Islam" to adapt to global conditions, but to establish an Islamic government based on "*shari'a law*." This approach diverged significantly from the earlier Islamic reformists. The Muslim Brotherhood expanded its activities beyond Egypt, supporting Muslim militants in Afghanistan, engaging in conflicts like the First Arab-Israeli War, and advocating various causes, including Palestine and Iraq under United States occupation.

Two other figures associated with the Muslim Brotherhood are Yusuf al-Qaradawi (1926-2022) and Sayyid Qutb (1906-66). While al-Qaradawi adopted a more moderate journalistic approach to "Islam" similar to Rashid Riḍā, Sayyid Qutb provided a more radical interpretation of "Islam" and the Qur'an.[154] Qutb associated the contemporary Islamic world with the pre-Islamic era of "ignorance" in the Arabian Peninsula, known as "*jāhiliyyah*," and called for the rule of "*shari'a*" and "God's sovereignty" (*hākimiyyah*). Qutb's Islamist radicalism influenced the later development of global terrorist organizations, such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.[155] In this socio-political context, entirely new meanings for "don't kill yourselves" emerge from Sayyid Qutb's writings:

i)"*Don't take wrong properties and don't sell the unsellable, such as religion, morality and honour* [especially related to your wife and daughter – "*namous"*]," as Qutb defined the meaning of "don't kill yourselves" in his exegesis *Fi Ẓilal al-*

[152] Tantawi Jawhari, *Al-Jawāhir fi Tafsir al-Qur'ān*, 39.
[153] Daneshgar, 9.
[154] Al-Qaradawi, as a jurist and not an exegete, issued a religious decree (*fatwa*) that PAS and active euthanasia is prohibited in Islam and equated it with the act of "murder". (See Mahmud A. Ayuba, "Euthanasia: A Muslim's Perspective," *Scriptura* 115, no. 1 (2016), 1-13 http://www.scielo.org.za/pdf/scriptur/v115/01.pdf)
[155] Lekon, *Modernist Reformers in Islam*, 46-8.

Qur'ān.[156] He emphasized that engaging in such actions is equivalent to committing suicide, describing them as "the real suicides."

ii) "*Don't kill yourselves by fleeing war"*: In his exegesis *Al-Taṣwir al-Fanni fi al-Qur'ān,* Qutb does not directly reference the phrase "don't kill yourselves," but instead refers to the verse that states "kill yourselves" (*Qur'ān,* 2:54).[157] He explains that this verse is associated with the children of Israel, who, in the majority, fled from war, and were subsequently reproached by God. By implication, Qutb concludes that "don't kill yourselves" would signify "don't flee from war." This interpretation contrasts with the classical understanding of "don't put yourselves in danger in war," as mentioned previously. These two meanings diverge from the conditions of PAS.

3) Religious conservatism: In contrast to the Egyptian social context, the Iranian context lacks the experience of colonialism, which has largely contributed to the manifestation of "religious conservatism" among Shi'ite clerics, including exegetes. Ayatollah Khomeini, though primarily known as a Shi'ite jurist and philosopher rather than an exegete, along with a few other clerics, stood as exceptions to the mainstream Shi'ite clerics during the pre-revolutionary era. As described by Keddie, Shi'ite clerics in Iran were representative of "quietism," rather than "revolutionary" or "radicalism."[158] Examples of Iranian Shi'ite conservatism can be seen in exegetes such as Makarem Shirazi (b. 1929) and Qara'ati (b. 1945). While the former represents both pre- and post-revolutionary Shi'ite conservatism, the latter mainly characterizes the post-revolutionary era.

i) *"Don't commit societal suicide"*: Makarem Shirazi's *Tafsir Nemooneh* (ideal exegesis) serves as an example of Islamic conservatism, "deliberately" written to address the social issues of the "contemporary era." He was born into a religious family in Shiraz, with a lineage of Shi'ite clerics. While he was briefly considered an "activist" by the pre-revolutionary Iranian security service, SAVAK, he never represented Iranian Islamic radicalism. In fact, his book *Filsoof-nama-ha* (quasi-philosophers), which harshly criticized Marxist materialism, was awarded "the best book of the year" by the Shah himself in 1956.

Makarem Shirazi's definition of "don't kill yourselves" focuses on the concept of "societal suicide," particularly through the disregard for observing "*shari'a*" in relation to property ownership.[159] This represents only one aspect of

[156] Sayyid Qutb, *Fi Ẓilal al- Qur'ān* [in the Shade of the Qur'an] (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2003), 640.
[157] Sayyid Qutb, *Al-Taṣwir al-Fanni fi al- Qur'ān* [Artistic Imagery in the Qur'an]. (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq (2004), 49-50.
[158] Nikki R. Keddie, *Religion and Politics in Iran: Shi'ism from Quietism to Revolution.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).
[159] Makarem Shirazi, *Tafsir Nemooneh,* 394-7.

Shi'ite conservatism within the socio-economic context of Iranian society, although it aligns closely with the verse's "textual context". It is interesting to note that in his exegesis, he links the "societal health" of a society to its "economic health": "*bastagi-e salamat-e ejtema'a be salamat eqtesad,*"[160] which ironically reflects Karl Marx's ideas! However, as Ashraf argues, this perspective may indicate a strong alliance between the Shi'ite clerical organization and the bazaar petite bourgeoisie.[161]

ii) "*Don't kill innocent leaders"*: Qara'ati, born into a family with a background in Qur'anic recitation in the rather religious city of Kashan, is a well-known figure among Iranians due to his weekly exegesis lectures broadcasted on Iranian State TV since the early years of the Islamic Republic. In his *Tafsir-e Noor* (the exegesis of light), Qara'ati recognizes the significance of a healthy economic system for societal well-being, aligning with Makarem Shirazi's position. He suggests: " … an unhealthy economic system [in a society] leads to uprisings of the oppressed against the rich, resulting in conflicts, societal killing, and destruction."[162]

Qara'ati also adds a new interpretation to "don't kill yourselves" by stating "don't kill innocent leaders," meaning: "[if you do so] it would lead to the suicide and destruction of society." Then he draws a connection to the statement of Imam Sadiq (Sixth Imam) who "mentioned '*lâ taqtulû ánfuśkum,*' (don't kill yourselves) meaning 'don't kill the Prophet and his family [*ahl al-bayt*]'." By doing so, Qara'ati implies that the current leaders of the Islamic Republic, being "Seyyed" or descendants of the Prophet, are considered part of the Prophet's family. This re-interpretation of the "*hadith*" reflects the post-revolutionary conservative orientation of Iranian Shi'ism. Qara'ati's understanding of "don't kill yourselves" is shaped both by his family background in Qur'anic recitation and, more significantly, by his strong allegiance to the leadership and authority of the Islamic Republic of Iran. These two definitions have little relevance to PAS too.

[TABLE 1 here]

In terms of historical periods, as shown in Table 1, it is notable that the selected Sunni scholars dominated the field of exegesis during the early centuries of Islam, which coincided with the European Middle Ages. On the other hand, the chosen Shi'ite scholars emerged as dominant

[160] Makarem Shirazi, 394.
[161] Ahmad Ashraf, "Bazaar-Mosque Alliance: The Social Basis of Revolts and Revolutions," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 1, no. 4 (1988), 538-67.
[162] Qara'ati, *Tafsir Noor.*

figures in the post-Middle-Age and late modern eras. Regarding geographical locations, the majority of the chosen commentators hail from the social context of Iran during both the pre-modern and late modern eras. However, in the early modern and modern eras, the focus shifts towards Egypt or North Africa regions that experienced colonialism.

It is also important to note that there is no distinct and abrupt division between the classical and contemporary meanings, as there is no definitive watershed moment, such as the Enlightenment, in Islamic history. Nevertheless, it is evident that there is greater continuity in the interpretations found at the top of the list, corresponding to the pre-modern era, compared to those further down the list representing the modern era. In other words, as we delve deeper into the list, the continuity of meanings becomes increasingly fragmented. This indicates that modernity has had a detrimental impact on the continuity of interpretations regarding the verse "don't kill yourselves."

Limitations

It would have been ideal to extend the arguments beyond the concise Qur'anic phrase "don't kill yourselves" (4: 29) and include other verses and related "*ahadith.*" Including perspectives from "Islamic jurists," alongside "Islamic exegetes," as well as commentators from other Islamic lands, would have also been more informative. However, as highlighted earlier, this article's main concern is the introduction of a new methodology, "social constructionism." Therefore, instead of broadening the scope of the article to encompass these additional perspectives, I focused deeply on the succinct Qur'anic verse of "don't kill yourselves" and the selected commentators' perspectives on the verse, as well as their specific socio-political contexts. This approach was taken merely to illustrate that literal meanings and textual contexts do not provide sufficient reasons for drawing moral and legal conclusions.

Additionally, this article has adopted "social constructionism" in the "second order" form, that is, at the level of elites and virtuosos. Conducting empirical research to identify the intersectionality between "Islam" and "suicide" and/or "PAS" in the "first-order" form of "social constructionism," that is, among the "mass" or "lay" Muslims from various social and societal backgrounds would also be very interesting.

Against the methodological approaches of "literalism" and "textualism," which emphasize the literal meanings and "textual contexts" of "sacred texts," this article introduces a novel methodological approach of "social constructionism." This approach aims to attract the attention of "Muslim" medical professionals by arguing that the *social* contexts of Muslim commentators are also important in identifying the meanings of "sacred texts" and drawing moral judgments. According to this approach, social factors play a crucial role in shaping diverse understandings and conceptualizations of various bioethical issues and in making legal judgments, which may differ across time and space.

It is unlikely that PAS ranks among the foremost bioethical concerns for professionals in many Muslim-majority countries, where more immediate ethical and medical challenges often take precedence. In such environments – where "literalist" and "textualist" approaches already dominate – adhering to these interpretive frameworks may seem both practical and uncontroversial. However, for Muslim medical professionals and associations operating in the "global north" – societies with advanced medical technologies, rigorous bioethical discourse, and largely non-Muslim or non-religious populations – complex questions, such as PAS, cannot be so readily set aside. In these contexts, an exclusive reliance on "literalism" or "textualism" risks overlooking the nuanced realities of contemporary medical ethics. This article therefore argues that the Qur'anic phrase "don't kill yourselves" (and perhaps similar verses) does not, in a strict interpretive sense, mandate opposition to PAS, particularly when examined through alternative paradigms such as "social constructionism", which situate meaning within shifting social and historical contexts.

As a sociologist, my commitment lies in studying *the processes and patterns* of social facts and phenomena. Therefore, I highly appreciate David Hume's distinction between "is" or "is not" and "ought" or "ought not" – commonly known as the "No-Ought-From-Is Law".[163] In this article, the focus is not on evaluating the "morality" or "immorality" of what is commonly referred to as "suicide" or "PAS" within the context of what is counted as "Islam". Instead, the article delves into the "is" and "is not" aspects of the interpretations and conceptualizations surrounding the Qur'anic phrase "don't kill yourselves," which is

[163] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature: Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects* (London: John Noon, 1739-40).

currently used by Muslim medical associations and professionals as the relevant verse prohibiting "PAS."

Using the research methods of "hermeneutics" and "discourse analysis," this article explores the significant changes in the meaning of this phrase since the tenth century, highlighting the diverse, fragmented, and contextualized patterns of interpretation. These interpretations often bear little relevance to both other social contexts and the contemporary understanding of "suicide," let alone "PAS." From my perspective, these meanings are so diverse that it becomes difficult to even imagine "a family resemblance between different meanings," as claimed by Dabbagh, Mirdamadi, and Ajani.[164] As we saw, the verse "don't kill yourselves" in the sense of "suicide" did not appear in the early centuries of Islam. When it did emerge in the twelfth century, it referred to "causing self-harm" and then to "suicide," specifically in the context of the Indian subcontinent. Additionally, even in these meanings, it was often used as a secondary, not primary, meaning. Overall, these meanings (i.e., "causing self-harm" *and* "suicide") constitute only around 23% (13 out of 57) of all meanings defined by the selected Islamic exegetes throughout the Islamic history (see Table 1).

Furthermore, and interestingly, as depicted in Table 1, nearly all the aforementioned meanings of "don't kill yourselves," including those of "causing self-harm" and "suicide," scarcely align with the conditions of PAS, despite the conceptualization and understanding of many Muslim medical practitioners. As the findings indicate, apart from Razi, who in one reference significantly approaches the meanings of PAS through his emphasis on "unbearable suffering," other interpretations of the verse "don't kill yourselves" hardly address the conditions and implications of PAS.

A "social constructionist" approach takes into account the social, societal, historical, political, cultural, identity, and family background conditions of the commentators. By doing so, it provides a deeper understanding of these attitudes. It recognizes that as these conditions change, the attitudes towards scriptures and rationality also change. Additionally, it acknowledges that commentators are human beings with *interests*, as highlighted by Beckford,[165] or *motives* that may not always be "rational," as an emotivist may argue. Therefore, it is not just their "rationality" or "intellect" (*'aql*) that influences their interpretations, judgments, and actions, but also their interests and "non-rational" motives.

In this context, I believe that Alasdair MacIntyre aptly states that "[a] moral philosophy … characteristically presupposes

[164] Dabbagh, Mirdamadi, and Ajani, 5.
[165] Beckford, *Social Theory and Religion,* 71.

a sociology."[166] A moral philosophy, whether "religious" or "non-religious," cannot be divorced from the social context in which it operates. By embracing a "social constructionist" approach, in my view, we gain a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between attitudes, interests, motives, and social conditions that shape moral, including bioethical, interpretations and judgments.

Equally important, this research demonstrates that "Muslim" opposition to PAS, at least based on this verse in the *modern social context,* is not as straightforward or as stringent as it may initially appear. The history of exegeses related to "don't kill yourselves," shaped by the social contexts of the exegetes, reveals that the verse does not possess a singular and immutable meaning. Therefore, we should avoid ascribing a generic definition to this verse, and by extension, to "suicide" and "PAS." Consider, for example, if "unbearable suffering or pain" is identified as a primary reason for PAS requests among terminally ill patients, how can we define it objectively and universally?[167] This is challenging because "unbearable suffering or pain" is essentially subjective and personal, varying significantly from one individual to another. Given the absence of the term "*al-ʾintihār*" (meaning "suicide") in the Qur'an and the lack of references to 'suicide' in the early centuries of Islam alongside these fragmented interpretations, it seems reasonable to suggest that "Islam" may not hold a strictly negative stance against "PAS." Indeed, the finding of this research may align with Wicks' viewpoint regarding "PAS" and Dworkin's argument that "life" could also be considered a "*personal value*."[168]

Further research on Muslim biomedical ethics may shed light on whether "Islam" grants individuals the right to make decisions about their own lives. One might argue in favour of such a right, considering that individuals routinely make decisions about their health by consulting physicians. Why should the ability to make decisions be restricted in such challenging circumstances? One potential response is rooted in the belief that God has allowed seeking medical advice for healing or curing purposes. Even if this permission is indeed established, one may argue that such certainty does not necessarily extend to the case of PAS. Hence, one can argue that there may be room within "Islam" for PAS within an "Islamic" framework of "rights". If the meaning of "don't kill yourselves" can evolve from "don't put yourself in danger in war" to "don't flee the war," there seems to be no essential reason why a similar shift cannot occur regarding PAS.

[166] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 22.
[167] For attempts to define "unbearable suffering or pain", see Dees et al., "Unbearable Suffering of Patients" and Gaignard and Hurst, "A Qualitative Study on Existential Suffering".
[168] Dworkin, *Life's Dominion,* 71-81.

Lastly, it would be intriguing to conduct a similar research on another concise Qur'anic phrase, namely "kill yourselves" (*Qur'ān,* 2:54), to explore the potential meanings that may indicate moral or legal permissibility of "suicide" or "PAS" according to Qur'anic commentators. Since "PAS" is a concept and phenomenon that emerged in the late modern period, it is expected that future commentators from the Muslim world may address its moral and legal dimensions more explicitly. Such research may contribute to a deeper understanding of the evolving interpretations and perspectives within the Muslim community regarding this sensitive ethical issue.

TABLE 1: Definitions of "Don't Kill Yourselves" by Qur'anic Exegetes in the Islamic World since the Advent of Islam: A "Social Constructionist" Approach

Research Methods: Hermeneutics and Discourse Analysis (Heywood & Stronach, 2005; Gillen and Petersen, 2005; Blommaert, 2005)

E1 = Tabari (Sunni, Iran, d. 923), **E2** = Zamakhshari (Sunni, Iran, d. 1144), **E3** = Tabarsi (Shi'ite, Iran, d. 1153), **E4** = Razi (Sunni, Iran, d. 1210), **E5** = Qurtubi (Sunni, Spain/Egypt, d. 1273), **E6** = Baydāwi (Sunni, Iran, d. 1316), **E7** = Ibn Kathir (Sunni, Syria, d. 1373), **E8** = Kashani (Shi'ite, Iran, d. 1580), **E9** = Feyz Kashani (Shi'ite, Iran, d. 1649), **E10** = Bahrāni (Shi'ite, Bahrain, d. 1695), **E11** = Arousi (Shi'ite, Iran, d. 1700), **E12** = Abduh (Sunni, Egypt, d. 1905), **E13** = Abu Zayd (Sunni, Egypt, d. 1930), **E14** = Tantawi Jawhari (Sunni, Egypt, d. 1940), **E15** = Qutb (Sunni, Egypt, d. 1966), **E16** = Ibn Ashur (Sunni, Tunisia, d. 1973), **E17** = Mughniyah (Shi'ite, Lebanon, d. 1979), **E18** = Maududi (Sunni, India/Pakistan, d. 1979), **E19** = Tabatabaei (Shi'ite, Iran, d. 1981), **E20** = Makarem Shirazi (Shi'ite, Iran, b. 1929), **E21** = Qara'ati (Shi'ite, Iran, b. 1945).

Meanings	***Classical***											***Contemporary***											
	E1	**E2**	**E3**	**E4**	**E5**	**E6**	**E7**	**E8**	**E9**	**E10**	**E11**	**E12**	**E13**	**E14**	**E15**	**E16**	**E17**	**E18**	**E19**	**E20**	**E21**	**F**	**R**
Don't kill each other	*	*	*			*		*	*		*							*				8	×
Don't cause harm to yourselves/ suicide		*	*	*	*	*	*	*				*		*		*	*		*	*		13	P
Take it easy		*			*	*	*		*	*	*					*					*	9	×
Don't ruin your souls			*				*	*	*				*									5	×

Don't put yourselves in danger in war			*						*	*	*	*							*		*	7	×
Don't bring the death penalty upon yourselves				*		*		*	*													4	×
Don't cause harm to your dignity						*																1	×
Don't kill the Prophet and his family										*												1	×
Don't kill human beings												*				*	*		*			4	×
Don't consume too much														*								1	×
Don't sell the unsellable															*							1	×
Don't flee war															*							1	×
Don't commit societal suicide																				*		1	×
Don't kill innocent leaders																					*	1	×
Total																						57	

E = Exegete; F = Frequency of used meanings; R = Relevance of the given meaning to physician-assisted suicide; P = partly relevant;
"*" shows the meaning "constructed" by the given exegete;"×" shows the irrelevance of the given "constructed" meaning to physician-assisted suicide.