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Why are all terrorists the Muslims?

Two months ago, everyone was consoling Muslims. A Christian white man opened fire inside a mosque at Christchurch, New Zealand, during Friday prayers and killed more than 50 Muslims. But nowhere on media it was, ‘A terrorist attacked the Muslims’, until New Zealand’s Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern called it a terrorist attack. The media was initially labeling him as psychotic even after the notes on his gun against Islam. But this is not the case when a Muslim conducts terrorist attack. It makes into headlines that ‘A Muslim terrorist attacked innocent people’. Even without any conformation, just based on his look media labels him as a terrorist. Terrorists started using the name of Islam from 7th century. The first Muslims terrorist group were the Kharijites. They believed that anyone who does not accept their extremist views should be killed. Even for small sins, the punishment was a murder. Eventually, the Kharijites ended up murdering each other because of their extreme views (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica). Today, there still exist groups who are using the name of Islam to take the lives of civilians for their own political and economic goals. Most Islamic scholars have rejected the views of the Kharijites at that time and even today, they have rejected the present terrorist groups and their affiliation with Islam. But these are just a very small portion of the more than two billion Muslims around the world. One derivation of the word Islam is from the Arabic word “Salaam” meaning “peace” (Islam). Islam not even condemns, but it rejects all types of terrorism. Translation of one verse of one Quranic verse is:

For this reason; We decreed for the Descendants of Israel that whoever kills a human being except in lieu of killing or causing turmoil in the earth, so it shall be as if he had killed all mankind; and whoever saves the life of one person, is as if he had saved the life of all mankind; and undoubtedly Our Noble Messengers came to them with clear proofs - then after this indeed many of them are oppressors in the earth. (Maidah 5:32).

So why is Islam known as a religion of violence and terror around the world? Although many people relate terrorism with Islam due to some terrorist groups and misrepresentation of facts against Muslims on media but, they are wrong because they ignore the terrorism of non-Muslims, the exclusion of any kind of terrorism in Shari’ah (Islamic jurisprudence) and the fact that most of the victims of terrorist attacks are Muslims.

Terrorism is not unique to Muslims, non-Muslims have done far more terrorism than Muslims. Today, the world only calls those the terrorists, the names of which are included in United States Department of State terrorist list. More than three-fourth of the terrorist organizations included in the international terrorist lists are Islamic organizations. People view Islam as monopoly of terrorism. While labeling the Muslims as terrorists, people do not see the state-sponsored terrorism by India, Israel, Burma, United States or Russia. These countries are killing innocent people openly and the world is silent. When George Bush killed thousands of Iraqis, he was not labelled as terrorist. When Netanyahu’s forces kill Palestinians, they are not labelled as terrorists. When Indian Army kills Kashmiris every day, no one tag a terrorist label on them. When Muslims were killed in Burma, Aung San Sui was not labelled as a terrorist and there was not any NATO attack on Burma like the attack on Afghanistan because of Al-Qaida. When Hamas fights against Israel or Hizb-ul- Mujahideen fights against Indian forces for their freedom, they are depicted as terrorists on all international forums and these organizations are put under ban. Only based on one person, Usama bin Laden, America declared a war against Afghanistan and attacked the poor country and Al-Qaida was declared as an international terrorist organization. But when a non-Muslim state or person commit terror attacks; its race, nation or religion is not labelled a terrorist based on individual acts. NATO forces did not act when Burmese Muslims were going through genocide. They claim to be international leaders, but they are using the name of terrorism for their own purposes. America attacked Iraq for oil and Russia attacked Afghanistan for expansion. These super-powers mostly get together in the cases against the Muslims like that of Palestine or of Kashmir. India or Israel are not labeled as terrorists, nor their religions but Hamas and Jesh-e-Mohammed are declared as international terrorist organizations, their leaders as international terrorists and their activities are banned, Moreover, people often relate terrorism with the roots of Muslims and defend their arguments by giving examples of how early Muslim rulers use sword for the expansion of Islam. Even though it can’t justify the acts of Muslim rulers, but they ignore some great terrorists in history. Hitler who murdered millions of Jews on the religious basis was a Christian, Joseph Stalin, Chengez Khan of Mongol, Mussolini of Italy and Mao Tse Tung of China they were all non-Muslims and they killed millions of people on religious and ethnic basis. Thus, terrorism is not a monopoly of Muslims, nor of any other religion but people should change their views about Islam when attaching terrorism solely to Islam.

Islam is a religion of peace and harmony. It teaches tolerance and patience to its followers. Terrorism, extremism and violence are neither supported by Quran, nor by Hadith. Islam came in this world to stop violence and extremism. Before Islam, Arab world was in darkness of ignorance. Daughters were slaughtered, Slaves were treated more worse than the animals and there were perpetual wars between the tribes. When Islam came, it ended the violence and hatred among the Arab tribes and it spread peace and brotherhood among the Arabs and where else it spread. Prophetﷺ – peace and blessings be upon him – came to this world with a message of love and peace for the humanity. It comes in Quran “and We did not send you (O dear Prophet Mohammed - peace and blessings be upon him) except as a mercy for the entire world. (Prophet Mohammed – peace and blessings be upon him – is the Prophet towards all mankind.)” (Ambiya 21:107). So how can be a religion which came to spread peace can be a cause of spreading violence? Obviously not, but some people use the name of Islam for doing terrorism activities. These hypocrites are not following the teachings of Islam, but the world attacks the teachings of Islam for being extremist. For those it comes in Quran that:

And those (hypocrites) who built a mosque to cause harm, and due to disbelief, and in order to cause divisions among the Muslims, and to await the one who is at the outset an opponent of Allah and His Noble Messenger; and they will surely swear that "We wished only good"; and Allah is witness that they are indeed liars. (Taubah 9:107)

Moreover, these terrorists use Quranic verses and Ahadith (Prophetic words) to defend their cause and for motivating people for violent crimes. It comes explicitly in Quran against them, “And when it is said to them, “Do not cause turmoil in the earth”, they say, “We are only peacemakers!” (Baqarah 2:11). Not only Quran denies violent and extremist acts, but hadith also denies these acts. The Prophetﷺ – peace and blessings be upon him – said:

No doubt your blood, property, the sub-narrator Muhammad thought that Abu Bakra had also mentioned and your honor (chastity), are sacred to one another as is the sanctity of this day of yours in this month of yours. It is incumbent on those who are present to inform those who are absent." (Muhammad the Subnarrator used to say, "Allah's Apostle told the truth.") The Prophet repeated twice: "No doubt! Haven't I conveyed Allah's message to you. (Bukhari)

Terrorists mostly commit suicide bomb attacks on the innocent people. In Islam, suicide is strictly forbidden. The Prophetﷺ – peace and blessings be upon him – said A man was inflicted with wounds and he committed suicide, and so Allah said: My slave has caused death on himself hurriedly, so I forbid Paradise for him.” (Bukhari). Islamic teachings are free from terrorism and hate spreading. People need to know about the true teachings of Islam. For this they should explore the Quran and Hadith, so they can differentiate between the Terrorists and the Muslims.

Majority of the terror attacks victims over the past two decades are Muslims. According to the Global Terrorism Database report (2015), out of the top ten most suffered countries from terrorism, eight are Muslim countries. Furthermore, according to the United States Counterterrorism report (2011) around ninety percent of the total victims of terrorist attacks were Muslims (Washington's Blog). Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria and Nigeria, there are all Muslim countries. While the European countries and the American countries, who are far less affected from terrorism cry of terrorism on media on international forums. They always do efforts for fighting terrorism, but they only increase the sufferings of peaceful Muslims. Muslims are suffering from both sides. From one side, terrorist groups are using the name of Islam for taking innocent lives. Most terrorist groups strive for a political control in an Islamic country. They target the residents of that location. For example, Daesh is killing Syrian Muslims, Boko Haram is killing Nigerian Muslims, Al-Qaida killed Afghani Muslims and Taliban killed Pakistani Muslims. On the other side when Muslim civil residents, who opposed terrorism, emigrate from their areas to other countries, they have to pay the price of the oppression from which they are running. They suffer the consequences of Islamophobia: ‘discriminating Muslims due to the hatred against Islam as a political force’, that has developed in the people over the world. Muslims are facing immigration bans, Hijab ban, prayer bans etc. because they view them as terrorists. Even in Muslim countries immigrants are being discriminated. Like in Pakistan, Afghani immigrants are facing lot of discriminations. Not because of the increase of burden on resources, but because of their bad image that Al-Qaida had made them in the world. People should support the Muslims who are against terrorism. If world will continue to include the innocents in the oppression that they have not committed, it will become very difficult to fight against the terrorism. When normal Muslims are included in the list of extremists, it aids the work of terrorists because terrorists who are on the extreme side want to prove that Islam is religion of terror. So, there is a need to differentiate between the victim and the oppressor for the international community, else all efforts for fighting terrorism will going into vain.

Despite the peaceful teachings and fight against terrorism, many people round the world relate Islam with terrorism. They do so because of the normalization of the terms like ‘radical Islamist’, ’pan-Islamic, ’Arab terrorists’ etc. by the media and the misconception about the concept of Jihad that has build among them due to the use of the name of Jihad by the terrorists. Media’s role is totally biased against Islam in terrorism context. It always referred terrorists with Islam. Whenever any terror takes place, unidentified terrorists are initially associated with Islam without even the research of the case. After the 9/11 attack, Islamic terrorism has always been a hot topic in media debates over the world. On 9th September,2001, two planes were hijacked by some people and they crashed them with the World Trade Center towers and Pentagon, killing more than three thousand people. America blamed Al-Qaida, the then party in power in Afghanistan responsible for the terrorist attacks and declared its leader as an international terrorist even without any proofs (9/11 Attacks). Since then the world is facing a new wave of terror of which suicide bombs are the special characteristic. Rationally, hitting the World Trade Centre and Pentagon is an impossible thing for anyone. It was a surprising thing that someone from a country like Afghanistan can hijack the then world’s super-power’s planes and crashed them into their country. United States declared war against Afghanistan, then attacked Iraq and then many other countries like Libya, Syria and Egypt on the name of restoring peace but for capturing oil resources. International media has done much hypocrisy in last two decades. They do not show the people the brutalities America and its allies are doing. They only cover the terrorists who are killing people on the name of Islam. It has created the “othering” in people for the Muslims. Like whenever a terrorist is depicted on the screen, one is shown wearing shalwar kameez, in heavy beard, long hairs and shaved moustaches. When a terrorist attack is shown, terrorist was shown shouting “Allah u Akbar”. Many terrorist attacks that Jihadi movements claim are called Islamist terrorist attacks based on just their claims, without any solid proofs. Media has gone so far in depicting Muslims as a terrorist that it is now very difficult to change the minds of the people. Media does not cover the Islamic scholars over the world who have given fatwas against the terrorism. Second reason due to which Muslims are labelled as terrorists is the misconception about the concept of Jihad by the non-Muslims. Video clips and interviews of the sufferers are often shown in media that groups like Islamic State, Taliban or Boko Haram are killing the people, raping the women and capturing the assets of civilians on the name of Jihad. After seeing this type of content, it is totally right for the people to develop hated against Jihad and Islam. But Jihad is totally an opposite thing of the terrorism. Killing of civilians, raping women, capturing children and looting the assets, all these barbaric acts are strictly prohibited while doing jihad. Some women were killed in Ghazwa (the war in which Prophet ﷺ – peace and blessings be upon him – himself participated), he strictly forbade the killing of women during Jihad (*Sunan Abi Dawud*). While, terrorist groups are doing all these things which are excluded from Jihad. Prophet ﷺ – peace and blessings be upon him – called him a martyr the Muslim who die defending his wealth. It comes in hadith that “whoever is killed defending his wealth and is killed unjustly, he is a martyr” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*). Moreover, Jihad is only fought under the leadership of the chief of a Muslim state. The terrorist groups are mostly fighting under their own leaders. Goal of most Jihadists groups is to gain political power in an area, not any religious purpose. Also, many of the people who are allied with terrorists are mostly illiterate who are easy to convince. They have lack of proper knowledge of Islam. Like in Pakistan, much of the people who joined Al-Qaida were from backward areas. They need to be introduced to Islamic teachings. So, Jihad nothing to do with terrorism and people should stop blaming the concept the Jihad as source of promoting terrorism. Hence, media should stop spreading the Islamophobia and people should learn about the teachings of Islam before labelling it a terrorist religion.

In conclusion, neither all Muslims are terrorists, nor all terrorists are Muslims. Terrorism has no religion. Religions are to spread the message of peace and to improve the society. But some terrorist groups have created a vey bad image of Islam in the whole world by using the name of Islam for doing terrorism. Now, people should avoid building the negative perceptions about Islam due to their lack of knowledge. The victims will continue to suffer the consequences of the acts of oppressors until media will not stop spread Islamophobia and people will not stop remaining in ignorance.

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