



The General Presidency for the Affairs of
the Grand Holy Mosque and the Prophet's Holy Mosque

Translation of the Two Holy Mosques Khutbahs
A Joint Project



Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University
College of Languages and Translation

[28/11/1434- A -Ibn Humaid] أ- بن حميد - المسجد الحرام - 1434-11-28

Our War Ethics

Khutbah Topic

His Eminence Sheikh Saleh ibn Abdullah ibn Humaid delivered this Friday's khutbah entitled "**Our War Ethics**." In the khutbah, the Sheikh spoke about the events and incidents the world is currently experiencing and pointed out their ruthless and brutal nature. Then, he mentioned the ethical standards adopted by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and by later Muslim generations in wars and battles, stressing the fact that our religion is against gloating over people through killing; rather, it proscribes the mutilation of corpses.

Part One

Praise be to Allah, our Lord! Glory to Him! There is no divinity except Him. He preordained the destiny of all creatures, whether while they are retreating or advancing, moving or travelling. I praise Him (ﷻ) for whatever bounties He has offered His creatures, and I thank Him for His unceasing favours munificently and successively bestowed upon His servants with generosity and abundance.

I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship save Allah without associate, a genuine testimony delivered in quest of gaining reward in the Herein and the Hereafter. I equally bear witness that our Master and Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) is Allah's Servant and Messenger. Allah unlocked through his prophethood blind eyes, closed hearts, and deaf ears, in addition to orientating through him erratic people who strayed too far in misguidance. May Allah send His unceasing *Salât* (Graces, Honours, and Mercy) and Peace onto him, his immaculately virtuous family, his wives (who are mothers of the believers), his pious Companions whose good deeds serve as landmarks and whose speech is uncompromisingly truthful, the *tabi'în* (the contemporaries of the Companions of the Prophet [ﷺ] after his death), and all those who have followed them in righteousness till the Day of Judgment.

O people! Now, let me enjoin, first of all, myself and then you to observe *taqwa* (fear of Allah). So, observe *taqwa*, may Allah have mercy on you! He who is cognisant with the Herein will never feel gratified by its well-being and affluence, and will never experience sorrow because of its afflictions. He who is target to alternating day and night will fall prey to their lethal rotation; and he whose proxy is death will face annihilation. Our lifespan is constantly decreasing due to unfolding hours, and



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our health is subject to occasional malady. One never hails a day without departing from another; the most catastrophic predicament is to lose hope.

May Allah have mercy on you! Get prepared for the day you return to Allah, as there is no shelter from Allah's chastisement except with Allah Himself. How felicitous the eyes which have experienced an overflow of tears due to true knowledge actually are! ***﴿And only on the Day of Resurrection shall you be paid your wages in full. And whoever is removed away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise, he indeed is successful. The life of this world is only the enjoyment of deception (a deceiving thing).﴾***[Al-Îmrân: 185]

O Muslims, pilgrims to the House of Allah! Humanity is utterly exhausted despite the availability of life facilities. Peoples around the world are experiencing a feeling of unhappiness in spite of the latest technologies they have at their disposal. In addition, countries are engaged in constant conflict despite their command of various factors of concord and aspects of consensual existence.

In fact, humanity is today in dire need to follow a path of friendliness, mutual affection, and tolerance. It is an imperative necessity motivated by sympathy and solidarity with humanity at large. The world today suffers from a lack of affection and clemency in all its transactions, life styles, and policies. Violence, ruthlessness, and injustice are salient features characterising modern life.

Brothers and sisters in the worship of Allah! If contemporary veterans of politics, experts in economics, military leaders –among others in all walks of life– have found it extremely difficult, even impossible, to abide by a set of ethical norms and humanitarian standards governing their transactions and relations, history provides evidence that it was not the case in our religion. Islam has not known such a difficulty or experienced such a dilemma. On the contrary, the essence of our religion and its ultimate objective is expressed through the following verses from the Holy Qur'ân: ***﴿And We have sent you (O Muhammad SAW) not but as a mercy for the 'Alamîn (mankind, jinns and all that exists).﴾***[Al-Anbiyâ: 107]; ***﴿And by the Mercy of Allâh, you dealt with them gently...﴾*** [Al-Îmrân: 159]; ***﴿...and My Mercy embraces all things.﴾***[Al-A'râf: 156]

Throughout history, our religion has handled the incidents it has encountered in a unique way characterised by an exemplary conduct, arighteous life and a spotless record. Such a gold mine of behavioural art and interactional code has been acknowledged even by the enemies, as it invariably manifests itself in every single attitude, event, action or reaction. These highly refined ethical norms and sophisticated arts of interpersonal relations are visible even in matters of war and



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politics –including how to deal with tyrants, heretics, and war opponents, let alone the treatment of women, children, and civilians.

My brothers and sisters in the worship of Allah! Guests of Allah, the Compassionate! I know that speaking about such topics is multifarious and digressive. However, we will confine our discussion to just clemency, pardon, and tolerance in our religion, and how we are expected to behave in wartime, in cases of tension overshadowing mutual relations, as well as in armed conflicts. Clemency –may Allah have mercy on you– lays the foundations of nations' welfare, psychological stability, and safety in this world. In our religion, it is not restricted to a specific location or timeframe, nor is it exclusive to any given religion or race. On the contrary, it is meant for the whole world from the moment Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was sent as Messenger until Doomsday: **﴿And We have sent you (O Muhammad SAW) not but as a mercy for the 'Alamîn (mankind, jinns and all that exists).﴾** [Al-Anbiyā': 107]

Brothers and sisters in religion! Pilgrims to the House of Allah! It would be no surprise to speak about clemency as part of war issues. In fact, one form of clemency requires the delivery of services and facilities to people at large even if they instinctively abhor such an action because it runs contrary to established tradition and personal inclination. This is indeed one of the greatest forms of clemency which is similar to that shown by a father towards his son when the former coerces the latter to acquire knowledge and strictly abide by the rules of politeness, knowing that such coercion may cause hardships to the son. This is similar to clemency or mercy shown by a bitter pill a patient has to swallow as remedy for his disease. Likewise, sometimes one is engaged in an undesirable war prompted by irrevocable reasons, but its warlike facet hides a dimension of clemency which is manifest in its rulings and ethics.

This is perfectly true as clemency clearly manifests itself in the way our religion has dealt with wars and battles. As you all know, wars have their undeniable disasters, as their outcome is usually serious casualties: deaths and injuries. It is to be pointed out that our religion does not cherish the idea of war, nor does it welcome armed conflicts. In fact, it endeavours to prevent and eliminate them as much as possible, because it does not advocate war and never encourages waging wars, either. In *ahadith*, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) says: **“Never yearn for encounter with the enemy, but ask Allah for well-being and uncompromised faith.”**

If the term “war” occurred six (06) times in the Holy Qur’ān, its counterpart the term “peace” occurred one hundred and forty (140) times. Thus, anyone who wants to reflect on this issue should contemplate the ratio between both terms. In Islam, only



belligerents in the battlefield should be fought: *﴿But if they incline to peace, you also incline to it, and (put your) trust in Allâh. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.﴾*[61]; *﴿And if they intend to deceive you, then verily, Allâh is All-Sufficient for you. It is He Who has supported you with His Help and with the believers.﴾* [Al-Anfâl: 61-62]

Allah, the believers, and equitable people do know that Muslims' *ghazwas* (military expeditions), wars, and jihad –whether led by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) himself (called *ghazwa*) or by his Companions during his lifetime (called *sarî'ya*)– were not motivated by mundane gains, financial drives, pursuit of leadership positions, or extension of power and annexation of further territories. Rather, all the aforementioned military actions primarily aimed at guiding people towards the right path, emancipating them from worshipping other people or being subservient to them. Such military actions aimed at helping them embrace the worship of Allah alone, the Lord of mankind, eradicating injustice, and supporting the victims of tyranny. All such enterprises were undertaken with the highest respect for clemency, chastity, dignity, and honour. History bears witness to this statement, and comparing our wars to those waged by others can attest to its veracity.

Dear brothers and sisters! Pilgrims to the House of Allah!

If the term “soft power” has gained currency nowadays, we do confidently and proudly affirm that it is war in Islam –along with its ethics and conventions– that should be called “soft power.” In a cursory statistical account focussing on Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) period of prophethood, it has been shown that the overall period of wars covered just five years out of twenty-three (23) years; and the overall death toll during those five years and during the series of *ghazwas* did not exceed one thousand and forty-eight death casualties, not a single one of them was a civilian; in fact, some researchers say that their number did not exceed a few hundreds.

Try to compare this with the statistics of the first and second world wars. In the First World War, the number of death casualties amounted to seventeen million people including armed forces and civilians, whereas in the Second World War, sixty million people were killed. The grand total is seventy-seven million deaths in just two wars. In the ensuing period, however, the number of fatal casualties was incalculable.

Why is the difference between the casualties of our wars and theirs so big? It is basically because our religion does not like wars. Islam endeavours to avoid war as much as possible and is never engaged in it except when it is compelled. Should the need for war arise, Islam will then advocate a series of principles, ethical standards, and conditions: *﴿Permission to fight is given to those (i.e. believers against disbelievers), who are fighting them, (and) because they*



(believers) have been wronged...)[Al-Hajj: 39]; *﴿And fight in the Way of Allâh those who fight you...﴾*[Al-Baq̄ara: 190]; *﴿you wished that the one not armed (the caravan) should be yours ...﴾*[Al-Anfâl: 7]. Muslims would restrictively fight belligerents seeking armed confrontation and never chase after fugitives to kill them outside the battlefield.

Muslims' jihad involves power but is associated with clemency, pardon, chastity, and remission of faults. In addition, when both parties are engaged in war, and fierce fighting reigns over the battlefield, Islam insists on not lengthening the war period and putting an end to armed conflict as promptly as possible. One of the verses in the Holy Qur'ân reads as follows: *﴿So, when you meet (in fight Jihâd in Allâh's Cause), those who disbelieve smite at their necks till when you have killed and wounded many of them, then bind a bond firmly (on them, i.e. take them as captives). Thereafter (is the time) either for generosity (i.e. free them without ransom), or ransom (according to what benefits Islâm), until the war lays down its burden...﴾*[Muhammad: 4]

Thus, Muslims fought battles with clemency, won wars with pardon, and gained a good reputation for not returning maltreatment. The instructions of our religion during wars are: *Do not act treacherously towards your enemy, do not exceed the limits in killing, do not mutilate corpses, do not kill the elderly, children, and peaceful worshippers in sanctuaries, and do not cut off or uproot trees.*

O pilgrims! O Muslims!

If you care to see more wonderment in this respect, look at the clemency of our Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)—as our leader and set example—his forgiveness and tolerance vis-à-vis those who have done harm to him, or those who assaulted and abused him.

Look at his clemency as illustrated in one of the incidents reported in the two *Sahihs*¹ thus: “A Bedouin with a sword assaulted the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) while he was napping under a tree. He said: ‘Who will save you from me now, O Muhammad?’ ‘Allah (ﷻ),’ replied the Prophet. Right then, the sword fell from the Bedouin’s hand. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) picked it up and said: ‘Who will save you from me now?’ The man replied: ‘Be the best captor!’ the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: ‘Will you bear witness that there is no deity but Allah?’ The man answered: ‘No, but I promise I will not fight you or be among those who do,’ so the Prophet(ﷺ) let him go.

¹*Sahih Muslim* and *Sahih al-Bukhari* are collections of *hadith* of the Prophet (ﷺ). They contain roughly 7500 *hadith* in 57 books.



Upon returning to his comrades, the Bedouin told them: 'I have just been with the best of men ever.'

When the Prophet (ﷺ) was asked to invoke a curse against the *Mushrikin* (polytheists), he said: ***"I have not been sent as the invoker of curse but I have been sent as mercy."***

The Prophet was asked to invoke a curse against *Thaqif*², and he (ﷺ) said: ***"O Allah! Guide Thaqif!"*** He supplicated for them and not against them. [This was narrated by Al-Tirmidhi]. Justice is a supreme moral standard, but mercy and forgiveness are even more so.

Now then, O servants of Allah!

Our Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) incarnates the greatest manifestations of mercy, forgiveness, and good manners. He would not even expose the names of *munaḥiqin* (hypocrites) let alone kill or punish them. His motto in this regard is ***"What is the matter with such and such people?"*** The State of Islam was founded on the morals of love, mercy, fraternity, and support of one another. I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed Satan: ***Verily, those who have believed, and those who have emigrated (for Allah's Religion) and have striven hard in the Way of Allah, all these hope for Allah's Mercy. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most-Merciful.*** [Al Baqarah: 218]

May Allah (ﷻ) benefit me and you with the Great Qur'ān and the Guidance of Muhammad (ﷺ). I say this, and I ask Allah to forgive my sins, yours, and those of all the Muslims, so ask Him for forgiveness, for He is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Part Two

²The *Thaqif* was one of the Arab tribes. It was, and still is, the main tribe of the town of Taif in present-day Saudi Arabia. The tribe worshipped the pre-Islamic 'goddess' – Al-Lāt.



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Praise be to Allah, the Generous, the Provider (with the means of subsistence)! I praise Him (ﷻ) and I thank Him. I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah Alone with no associate. Everything bears witness and proof to His Oneness. I also bear witness that our Master and Prophet, Muhammad –the faithful and the truthful– is His Servant and Messenger. May Allah’s *Salat* (Graces, Honours and Mercy), Peace and Blessing be upon him, his family and Companions who believed in their Lord, trusted in His Messenger and severed all connections with whims, the *tabi’in* (the contemporaries of the Companions of the Prophet [ﷺ] after his death) and those who righteously followed them! O Allah! Send much of Your Peace unto them until the day (the Day of Judgment) all creatures are summoned!

Now then, O Muslims! O Pilgrims to Allah’s House!

Our religion is one of mercy, and our Prophet (ﷺ) is the Prophet of mercy. However, it is regrettable to see present-day culture, the mass media, the means of communication and media websites with their shortcomings and all the irk they cause to believers upon exposing them to such disruptive images that certainly make no part of Islamic ethics or *Sharia’* law. The behaviour of those morons in the battle fields and war zones is marked with such cruelty and harshness that are alien to the teachings of our religion and the instructions of our Prophet during wars.

What you may see are corpses being mutilated, heads being torn to pieces after being severed from the bodies. This is occasionally accompanied by *takbir* (saying *Allahu Akbar*, or Allah is Great) and acts of cruelty. Such images are then photographed and aired or published through the media websites amidst an atmosphere of jubilation and joy.

Though some of those killed may deserve it, our religion does not warrant mutilation or revenge for these are aspects of cruelty and ruggedness that would have serious repercussions on manners, conduct, attitudes, and on the way they are being perceived by the younger generations, particularly teenagers, the narrow-minded and those with no *fiqh* (no real or proper understanding) of Islam.

Dear brothers and sisters in faith,

In our religion, only the wretched may be bereaved of the precious gift of mercy. Mercy in humans is equated with tenderness of the heart; as scholars put it: “*Tenderness of the heart is a sign of faith.*”

Those who seek mercy will have to observe forbearance and benevolence vis-à-vis people. Indeed, Allah's mercy is close to those who are benevolent. In *ahadith*: “***The merciful are granted mercy by Al Rahman (Allah, the Merciful).***” [Narrated by Ahmad, Abu Dawood, and Al-Tirmidhi]



Commenting on the above-mentioned hadith, Al *Qurtubi*³, may Allah bless his soul, said: “*The hadith presented the concept of al-rahimun (the merciful) in its broad sense thereby including all sorts of people and other creatures as well: the benevolent and the lecherous, the humans and the non-humans, and animals and birds.*”

Therefore, observe *taqwa* (fear of Allah) –may Allah have mercy on you. The believers must pursue mercy and recommend it for one another. Just as patience is the rein of souls, mercy is a pre-condition for ensuring righteousness for the country and its citizens, ﴿*Then he became one of those who believed, and recommended one another to perseverance and patience, and (also) recommended one another to pity and compassion. They are those on the Right Hand (the dwellers of Paradise).*﴾ [Al Balad: 17-18]

This being said, I advise you to send your *Salat* and peace on the Mercy and Blessing Allah bestowed on you, your Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), the Messenger of Allah, as Your Lord commanded you to do in His wise Book where He so truthfully and graciously said: ﴿*Allâh sends His Salât (Graces, Honours, Blessings, Mercy) on the Prophet (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم), and also His angels (ask Allâh to bless and forgive him). O you who believe! Send your Salât[1] on (ask Allâh to bless) him (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم), and (you should) greet (salute) him with the Islâmic way of greeting (salutation i.e. As-Salâmu ‘Alaikum.*﴾ [Al Ahzab: 56]

O Allah! Send Your *Salat* (Graces, Honours, Mercy), Peace and Blessing on Your Servant and Messenger, our Master and Prophet, Muhammad (ﷺ), the beloved and the Chosen One; on his virtuous and immaculate family and on his wives, mothers of the believers. O Allah! We seek Your satisfaction with the four Caliphs, Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman, and Ali, with the Prophet’s Companions, the *tabi’in* and those who followed them in righteousness until the Day of Judgment! O Allah! We seek Your Satisfaction with us as well, as You are Most Forgiving, Most Generous, and Most Beneficent!

O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims! O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims, and fail polytheism and polytheists! O Allah! Let down tyrants and infidels and all other enemies of Islam!

O Allah! Grant us security in our homelands, and set right our *Imams* and leaders! O Allah! Entrust our government to those who fear You and seek Your satisfaction, O Lord of the Worlds!

³He is most famous for his commentary and exegesis of the Holy Qur’ân.



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O Allah! Grant our *Imam* and Leader a success of Your own! Honour him with Your obedience and make Your word the uppermost through him! Make him an asset to Islam and Muslims! Grant him sound health and wellness! Extend his life so he can worship You more! Guide him, his deputy, his brothers and his aides to do what You love and please, and lead them to righteousness and piety!

O Allah! Help the Muslim leaders to abide by Your Book and to follow the *Sunnah* of Your Prophet, Mohammad (ﷺ)! Make them a blessing on Your faithful, and unite them on the grounds of righteousness, truth, and the *sunnah*! O Lord of the Worlds!

O Allah! Set right the conditions of Muslims! O Allah! Set right the conditions of Muslims and spare their blood! Unite them on the grounds of truth, guidance and the *sunnah* and grant them victory against Your enemy and theirs!

O Allah! Whoever intends to carry out evil deeds against us, our religion, our homeland, our *Ummah*, our security, our unity, our leaders, our *ulama* (religious scholars), the people of virtue, goodness and piety among us, keep him, O Allah, busy with himself, let his plotting be to his own detriment, and make his destruction in his planning, O You, the Strongest, the Almighty!

O Allah! Make for this nation (the nation of Islam) a matter (an affair) of rationality (guidance) where the people of piety are honoured and those of sins are guided, and where virtue is promoted and vice is prevented! Verily, You are the Omniscient!

O Allah, the Protector of believers, the Supporter of the defenseless, the Reliever of those in need, the Ultimate Hope, the Refuge of the weak! Grant relief to our brothers and sisters in Syria! O Allah! Grant relief to our brothers and sisters in Syria! O Allah! Bring an end to their suffering! Grant them speedy relief and draw them closer at heart! O Allah! Grant them an aid, a fighting power and a triumph of your own! O Allah! We beseech You to grant them great victory, relief, mercy and perseverance! O Allah! Grant them rectitude and success, strengthen their resolve and bring unity among them!

O Allah! We invoke Your Mercy on those nursing infants and bowing⁴ elders!

O Allah! Defeat the tyrants and oppressors in Syria and those who sympathize and side with them! O Allah! Disperse their gathering, scatter their crowds, and tear them apart! O Allah! Make their plotting to their own detriment!

O Allah! Destroy the usurpers and occupiers among the Jews, for You are certainly able to do so! O Allah! Inflict Your wrath which is so inevitably destined to strike the people who are *Mujrimûn* (criminals, polytheists or sinners)! O Allah! We pray You to drive them off to their own detriment and we seek refuge in You from their evils!

⁴ Bowing to Allah while performing their prayers



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O Allah! Guide us to the path of repentance to You and reliance on You and open up for us the doors of acceptance and gratification! O Allah! We implore You to accept our obedience, and supplication! We implore You to make righteous our deeds, expiate from us our wrongdoings, lead us to redemption, forgive our sins and bestow on us Your mercy, You, the Most Merciful!

«Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You forgive us not, and bestow not upon us Your Mercy, we shall certainly be of the losers.»

[Al-A'raf: 23]

Glorified be Your Lord, the Lord of Honour and Power! You are free from what they attribute unto You! May peace be upon all the messengers! And all praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!