

**Crescent and Dove: Peace and Conflict Resolution  
in Islam**

*Qamar-ul Huda, ed.*

*(Preface by HRH Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal)*

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What can be learned from Islamic teachings on questions of nonviolence and peace building? Quite a lot according to the contributors of this new collection of essays from Muslim theologians, academics, and peace activists. This is a timely contribution to the nascent field of Islamically in-

spired peacemaking and conflict-resolution studies, offering both intellectual and practical applications for those interested in engaging this difficult but important task. The volume is divided into two sections and contains ten chapters. Part one presents theoretical discussions, which contextualize notions of peace and conflict resolution from Islamic textual sources and analyses the concepts of peace, jihad, war, and martyrdom within the Islamic tradition. The second part is more empirical and profiles case studies from human-rights activists, peacemaking organizations, and the work of prominent Islamic thinkers. It also has a glossary of conflict-resolution terms and four appendixes, which provide useful resources. This volume addresses three areas: the ethics of violence in Islam, nonviolence in the Islamic tradition, and contemporary efforts at Islamic peacemaking.

Among the most notable contributions is the first chapter by Ibrahim Kalin, who gives a substantial overview of the historical, philosophical, and theological perspectives on peace building and how they relate to contemporary debates around Islam, violence, war, evil, sin, and peace. He correctly reminds readers that both Christian and Islamic religious texts contain exclusive claims that can serve as the basis for justifying persecution and conflict, but can also equally be called upon to promote justice and peace, depending upon the hermeneutical approach of readers and their sociocultural circumstances.

Asma Afsaruddin offers a fascinating analysis of the semantic evolution of the word *jihad* and its ethical-legal implications alongside the Muslim conceptualization of martyrdom. She argues that the early understanding of both ideas carried a multiplicity of meanings. We are informed that it was not until the early third century of the Islamic era, that *jihad* came to be associated primarily as military combat. Though the word *jihad* is most often translated as “holy war,” this is in fact linguistically incorrect; the correct phrase in Arabic is *harb al-muqadassah*. Afsaruddin reveals that “a number of medieval jurists came perilously close to endorsing a form of holy war, but stopped short of it because of the Quranic constraints on the forcible conversion of non-Muslims and its proscription against unethical conduct during the waging of war” (41). She goes on to contextualize the verses in the Qur’an, which seem to command warfare and points out that the often quoted “sword verse” (9:5) had an internal reference which at that time limited application to fighting the pagan Arabs at the end of the sacred months, and this was the view of many early exegetical authorities such as al-Tabari. It is also argued that both classical and modern Muslim and non-Muslim scholars have tended to downplay the Meccan phase in

Qur'anic usage, where various verses speak of jihad as a form of piety and active peaceful resistance to persecution. Waleed El-Ansary, in his chapter entitled, "Revisiting the Qur'anic Basis for the Use of War Language," deconstructs the usage of the Arabic word *ihrabi* to denote terrorists. This is important as it relates to the power of language, According to El-Ansary, Usama Bin Laden was said to be happy to be called an *ihrabi*, as its root form connotes positive meanings such as having the fear of God. El-Ansary cites the opinion of Shaykh Ali Goma, Grand Mufti of Egypt, who instead suggests the term *irjafi* as a more accurate word to describe the subversion and sense of fear caused to society by the perpetrators of terrorism. It is hoped that this usage of language would contribute to a strategy of recapturing the religious vocabulary from extremists in the ongoing intellectual struggle for the minds of potential terrorists.

In chapter four, Mohammed Abu-Nimer's Islamic model of conflict resolution moves the emphasis on from theory to practice by sharing a framework that can be applied in real-world scenarios. He first contrasts the difference between Western conflict-resolution processes, which are grounded in their own particular cultural values and norms and cannot be automatically transplanted into Muslim contexts. His approach stresses the values of the following words as overarching principles in an Islamic approach to peace building: *adl* (justice), *ihsan*, (benevolence) *rahmah* (compassion) *hikmah* (wisdom) *amal* (service) *yakeen* (faith), *afu* (forgiveness) *sabr* (patience), and *muhabba* (love). In addition, this model relies upon social and economic empowerment through "doing good," the recognition of the universality of human dignity, equality, the sacredness of human life, and the pursuit of peace as being integral Islamic values and objectives that can shape an Islamic perspective to peacebuilding.

The case study chapters by Asna Husin, Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, and Meena Sharify-Funk contain inspiring stories of female Muslim nonviolence activism at the grassroots. The Peace Education Programme in Indonesia, Afghan Institute of Learning, Friends of Victimised Families in Thailand, and Wajir Peace and Development Committee in Kenya all illustrate the critical role of women as agents of change in rebuilding societies in the aftermath of conflict. The final chapter by the editor Qamar-ul Huda on enhancing skills and capacity building, details the range of skills required by practitioners as well as the challenges of peacebuilding that may be encountered by those working within some Muslim societies. He explains the deeply rooted political, economic, social problems, and counter discourses that can obstruct progress. For example, local Muslim scholars

sometimes question the political agenda of this work, while others can succumb to a form of Islamic fatalism, hindering positive change. He goes on to delineate the skill sets required for working with these challenges and ends on a hopeful note.

It is the optimism that runs through this anthology that is one of its great strengths as well as the highly informative analysis and resources, making this a valuable addition to the literature on Muslim peacebuilding and one that will hopefully inspire positive action.

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