

Muhammad Awan lectures in politics and religion.

Here he gives his response to the question: What does jihad mean to me?

The Arabic word *jihad* basically means to struggle, to exert oneself and to strive. Two forms of jihad exist: the 'greater' jihad and the 'lesser' jihad. The greater jihad contains within its meaning the idea of emptying out the spiritual diseases and blameworthy traits of the heart such as anger, jealousy, envy, ignorance and arrogance, and replacing these with praiseworthy traits such as kindness, generosity, mercy, respectfulness and tolerance. The greater jihad is for life!

The lesser jihad is struggle against oppression. This does not mean that it is only the act of fighting the enemy. The act of warfare is the **last resort** in a lesser jihad and many preconditions have to be met in order to declare it; it is the absolute last step taken if nothing else is successful. A well-known saying of the Prophet Muhammad on returning from a battle is, 'We return from the little jihad to the greater jihad.' Unfortunately, today's minority radical Muslims only concentrate and emphasise the act of warfare whilst ignoring what *shar'iah* (Islamic law) has laid down.

Ibn Rushd was a great Muslim scholar. He lived in Cordoba, Spain, in the twelfth century and was known in the West as Averroes. He divides jihad into four categories:



- 1 **The jihad of the heart**, which coincides with what we defined as greater jihad.



- 2 **The jihad of the tongue**, which is to speak out against hypocrisy, injustice and oppression.



- 3 **The jihad of the hand**, which is the fight of those in authority against crime, injustice, corruption.



- 4 **The jihad of the sword**, which coincides with what we have defined as lesser jihad.



AS a Muslim, in my everyday life I would put into practice the first two divisions of Ibn Rushd's classification of jihad. It is a real test of the self. Recognising your failings, attempting to improve upon them and then maintaining this improvement in yourself is an arduous task. This does not suggest that you beat yourself up over them.

For example:

- * AS a Son I must look after my parents, respect them and show them affection.
- * AS a husband similarly, I should love and take care financially, emotionally and physically of the needs of my wife within my means.
- * AS a father I must do these but also ensure my children are educated, imparting vital knowledge to them and giving them a sound moral and ethical foundation.

Whether in work or just walking about I must show respect and kindness, and aim to take on traits of humility and compassion - the traits of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him).

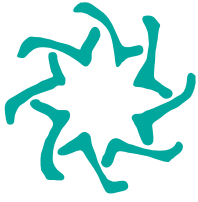
Muhammad Awan

Activity

- 1 Look at the four categories of jihad from Ibn Rushd. Divide some paper into four columns with these categories as headings. Using the information on this page, and in the other materials you have on jihad from Imran Atcha, Asim Hafiz and your other work, put the actions described by these sources into the relevant columns.
- 2 In general, the news media focus on the fourth category. Research and find three newspaper or web articles on jihad. See if your research backs up this comment.
- 3 If it is the case that the media focus on jihad of the sword, give three reasons why you think this happens.

Imran Atcha is a youth worker in Gloucester.

Here he gives his answer to the question: What does jihad mean to me?



The greater jihad is about the struggle against the ego, or the soul. This is the real jihad, to be fought first and foremost, and is a lifelong struggle,

harder to overcome than the physical military jihad which usually comes to mind when the word 'jihad' is mentioned. People incline towards seeking praise and detest criticism and the finding of faults and shortcomings within themselves.

Common instances in daily life to be struggled against include things like performing good deeds so that people will say good things about me, such as giving money to a charity so people will say that I am generous, or going to the mosque so people will think of me as an upright and religious person, or helping someone out so that others think good of me. All good acts have to be for God's sake and not so that others think well of me.



Here are some examples of daily struggles:

Thinking of myself as better than someone else.	Talking about or sitting in conversations where the faults of another person are mentioned.	Performing good deeds so that people say good things about me.
Serving my parents and treating them with respect and trying to please them (which can be difficult sometimes).	Earning a lawful income to support my family.	Serving the local community and neighbours and supporting those less fortunate than myself.
Practising certain sports such as swimming and horse riding, taking care of the health God has given me.	For a mother, giving birth to her child and bringing the child up counts as a jihad.	For a teenager, jihad includes trying to avoid alcohol or bad habits when everyone else around them is involved in it.

All of these acts and many more are part of the daily jihad as they involve an element of struggle. The greater jihad element is to keep the intention pure so that you do them for God's sake and not so that anyone will say what a good person so and so is. As you can see from the examples above, jihad varies from person to person.



Activity

Imran gives nine examples of jihad. Work in pairs to do the following:



1 Rank them from most demanding to least demanding. (Use a 'diamond nine' pattern – most demanding in the top row, then two below, three in the middle row, two below, and then the least demanding.)



2 Sort them according to those that are mostly inner struggles and those that involve outward behaviour.



3 Decide between you whether these struggles are easier or more difficult for someone with a religious faith or for someone without. Write your ideas in 100–150 words, showing that you have thought of different points of view.