



YAHYA SINWAR: THE MILITARY STRATEGY AND DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS OF HAMAS IN OPPOSING ISRAEL

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Abstrak: Yahya Sinwar, the Hamas leader in Gaza, significantly influences the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through a deliberate amalgamation of military tactics and diplomacy grounded on Islamic beliefs. Sinwar, a key personality in Hamas, has exhibited a distinctive capacity to synchronize militant opposition to Israeli occupation with strategic diplomatic initiatives. This paper examines his ideological framework, assesses his method of establishing international alliances, and analyses the effects of his strategies on Hamas's worldwide position. This study utilizes qualitative methods, including document analysis and primary source investigation, to reveal how Sinwar capitalizes on ties with critical regional allies, like Iran and Turkey, to bolster Hamas's standing. Despite encountering considerable hurdles, including extensive international scrutiny and criticism of his leadership style, Sinwar continues to be a pivotal figure adept at merging political insight with military proficiency. His leadership exemplifies a wider effort to maintain justice following Islamic principles regarding defensive jihad, which seek to safeguard rights and oppose oppression. Sinwar's dual approach to conflict ultimately highlights his importance in influencing the dynamics of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and enhancing Hamas's international prominence.

Kata kunci: Yahya Sinwar, Hamas, warfare strategy, diplomacy, defensive jihad



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INTRODUCTION

Yahya Sinwar is a prominent leader within the Hamas movement, an organization established in 1987 by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in conjunction with Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. It operates as both a political and military organization for Palestinians against Israeli occupation. Sinwar, as a Hamas commander, has been instrumental in formulating the organization's strategies, especially on military operations and diplomacy. Prior to his 2017 selection as the leader of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, he was incarcerated in Israeli jails for 22 years owing to his participation in terrorist activities. Sinwar's existence has been characterized by unwavering endeavors for the liberation of Palestine, and his impact inside Hamas is substantial, especially in fortifying its military faction. His efficacy as a leader is frequently ascribed to his unwavering

position against Israel and his diplomatic initiatives to secure international backing (Nasir Faeq & Diego Jahnata 2020; Hannani Juhari 2024).

Yahya Sinwar is recognized for his proficiency in devising and implementing military operations against Israel. Under his command, Hamas has intensified missile assaults and employed subterranean tunnels for clandestine operations against Israeli targets. A strategy commonly linked to Sinwar is the construction of "strategic tunnels" beneath the Gaza-Israel border, facilitating undetected surprise assaults against Israeli forces. Sinwar is one of the leaders that supports the use of force to defend Palestinian rights and freedoms against occupation. Nonetheless, these assertive actions have frequently faced criticism from the international community for aggravating the conflict and heightening tensions in the region (Daphné Richemond & Stefan Voiculescu 2023).

From a diplomatic standpoint, Yahya Sinwar emphasizes military initiatives while also significantly contributing to political conversations. He has engaged in ceasefire negotiations with Israel multiple times, while upholding the belief that Palestinian liberation can only be completely realized via armed resistance. Another crucial facet of Sinwar's diplomacy is his endeavor to fortify relationships with regional allies that advocate for the Palestinian cause, including Iran, Qatar, and Turkey. His diplomatic efforts are perceived as endeavors to position Hamas as the preeminent political entity among Palestinians while securing unwavering foreign support for their cause (Sean Mathews 2024; Reuters & Toi Staff 2024).

Yahya Sinwar's leadership of Hamas is profoundly shaped by Islamic philosophy, highlighting the fight against oppression. The Quranic verses used by Hamas endorse the perspective that jihad, especially regarding self-defense and the liberation of occupied lands, is an obligation for Muslims. This intellectual underpinning influences Sinwar's military tactics and diplomatic efforts, strengthening his dedication to opposing occupation and affirming Palestinian rights (Haneen Odetallah 2024). In this perspective, it is apparent that several Quranic passages advocate waging jihad, including the statements of Allah swt:

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ١٩٠

Meaning: Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress.

Indeed. Allah does not like transgressors. (Qur'an, Al-Baqarah 2:190)

Sayyid Qutub (2000), al-Marāghi (2001) and Ibnu Kathir (2008), interpret Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 190, as underscoring the necessity of jihad for self-defence in response to aggression against Muslims, while imposing stringent criteria to prevent excess. Ibn Kathir elucidates that jihad is sanctioned solely against those who engage in hostilities against Muslims, with stringent prohibitions against inflicting injury on civilians, especially women, children, and non-combatants. Al-Maraghi asserts that the principles of Islamic warfare are governed by ethical standards and seek to protect justice, stating that jihad is sanctioned exclusively for the defence of rights and the repudiation of injustice. Sayyid Qutb perceives jihad as an obligation to emancipate humanity from subjugation and facilitate the freedom to worship Allah swt. He asserts that whereas jihad aims to combat injustice, Islam promotes kindness and equilibrium, forbidding all forms of extreme and brutality.

In conclusion, Yahya Sinwar serves as both a military leader and a significant political figure inside the Hamas movement. His leadership has profoundly influenced the Israel-Palestine conflict through adept military measures and diplomatic initiatives. Nonetheless, his methodology on military conflict and his resolute position in negotiations with Israel remain a topic of contention among global political analysts. Sinwar's impact on Hamas and the Palestinian cause will continue to be pivotal in determining future developments, particularly given the precarious situation in Gaza (Rayhan Uddin 2024).

METHODOLOGY

This article utilizes a qualitative methodology, mostly employing document analysis to investigate Yahya Sinwar's military strategies and diplomatic initiatives. Data were collected from secondary sources, including official papers, scholarly journal articles, and media accounts concerning Sinwar's involvement in the Palestine-Israel conflict. Furthermore, tafsir literature and hadith compilations were employed to elucidate Quranic verses pertinent to the subject. This methodology enables the researcher to thematically examine critical elements, including defensive jihad strategies rooted in Islamic tenets, diplomatic initiatives to garner international backing from nations such as Iran and Turkey, and the effects of integrating military tactics with diplomacy on Hamas's global reputation. This methodology was selected for its ability to offer a thorough and nuanced comprehension of Sinwar's leadership dynamics within the intricate political and military landscape.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section examines the background and leadership of Yahya Sinwar within the Hamas movement, emphasizing his crucial role in fortifying the organization as a political and military force in Palestine. Emerging from adversity and tyranny in the Khan Younis refugee camp, Sinwar's life trajectory exemplifies his commitment to the liberation of Palestine via tactical military strategies and judicious diplomatic initiatives. The examination of Sinwar's personal biography, encompassing his role in the establishment of Hamas and the internal security apparatus Al-Majd, highlights his capacity to mitigate internal risks and enhance the movement's resilience. This discussion's findings indicate the impact of Islamic philosophy on Sinwar's leadership of Hamas, merging the tenets of defensive jihad with contemporary techniques to oppose Israeli occupation.

Yahya Sinwar: His History and Leadership Role in Hamas

Yahya Sinwar is a pivotal person in the Hamas movement, significantly influencing the organization's political and military leadership. Sinwar was born in 1962 in the Khan Younis refugee camp in Gaza, where he experienced poverty throughout the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He became involved in the Palestinian cause at a young age, ultimately co-founding Hamas in 1987. Sinwar is recognized as a resolute and extremist leader, dedicated to the liberation of Palestine by both military and diplomatic strategies. His past as a liberation fighter, political

prisoner, and ultimately the head of Hamas in Gaza illustrates a path that has influenced his current political perspective and strategies.

Familial Heritage and Initial Years

Yahya Sinwar was born in 1962 in the Khan Younis refugee camp in Gaza, which is populated by numerous Palestinian refugees as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. His family, akin to numerous other Palestinian families, forfeited their land and residences during the Nakba, a calamitous event characterized by the widespread deportation of Palestinians from their homeland by Israeli authorities. Existence in the refugee camp was profoundly arduous, marked by destitution, congestion, and an absence of fundamental infrastructure. Sinwar was raised in an environment of oppression, which intensified his perception of injustice and motivated his aspiration to free Palestine from occupation. His formative years in the camp established the basis for his politically motivated identity, centered on the resistance against Israel (Robert Inlakesh 2023; Berita Harian 2024 & Gili Argenti 2024).

Yahya Sinwar studied Arabic Language at the Islamic University of Gaza in the early 1980s, when he participated in student organizations aligned with Palestinian nationalist philosophy. His participation in anti-occupation action resulted in multiple arrests by the government. In 1985, to bolster the Palestinian liberation struggle prior to the official establishment of Hamas, Sinwar was instrumental in the formation of the Majd network. This assembly, consisting of committed Muslim youngsters, was assigned the responsibility of discovering and revealing Palestinian persons said to be collaborating with Israel. Following the formation of Hamas, the Majd network was included into the Hamas security framework with same objectives. In 1988, Sinwar was incarcerated by Israel and sentenced to four life years for his purported involvement in the murders of two Israeli soldiers and four Palestinians accused of collaborating with Israel. Sinwar is acknowledged as a significant actor in fortifying Hamas's security apparatus and for his unwavering opposition to Israeli occupation (Kara Fox & Ivana Kottasova 2024).

Sinwar's arduous life experiences forged his resolve to oppose Israel through what he views as a moral and religiously justified battle. In this initial phase, he significantly contributed to the formation of Al-Majd, a clandestine security squad assigned to eradicate Palestinian collaborators cooperating with Israel. Al-Majd then became integrated into Hamas's security apparatus, with Sinwar assuming leadership of the unit. His inflexible and stringent stance in addressing traitors inside the Palestinian community underscored his determination to protect the Islamist cause from internal dangers. These initial experiences established the groundwork for his leadership in Hamas, grounded on Islamic philosophy and militant resistance (Rania R.a Abushamala 2024; The Jerusalem Post 2024).

Initial Engagement with Hamas and the Establishment of Al-Majd

Yahya Sinwar commenced his participation in Hamas in the early 1980s, during the movement's emergence as an Islamist organization dedicated to the liberation of Palestine via armed resistance. As a founding member of Hamas, Sinwar played an active role in the organization's military and security strategies. He was instrumental in formulating the strategic framework of

Hamas, underscoring the paramount significance of security and defence in furthering the agenda. During that period, Hamas was commencing the formation of its unique identity as a radical faction of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine, with its principal aim of terminating Israeli occupation through military force. As a nascent leader, Sinwar acknowledged that the conflict need a robust and organized strategy, and he played a pivotal role in directing Hamas towards more assertive operational methodologies (Britannica 2024; The Times of Israel 2024).

Alongside his overall participation in Hamas, Sinwar played a pivotal role in the formation of Al-Majd, a clandestine security force tasked with preserving the movement's internal security. This team concentrated on confronting internal treachery by identifying and neutralizing Palestinian individuals accused of espionage or collaboration with Israel. Sinwar directed Al-Majd with a stringent and inflexible methodology, executing decisive measures against anyone discovered to be collaborating with the adversary. Al-Majd was essential in safeguarding Hamas against internal threats, and the unit's success proved Sinwar's proficiency as a capable security leader. His participation in these activities further reinforced his status inside Hamas leadership as a revered and powerful individual (Bassem Mroue 2024).

The establishment of Al-Majd enhanced Hamas's internal security capabilities and underscored Sinwar's proficiency in devising and executing long-term strategies to safeguard the movement against adversarial threats. His participation in this unit facilitated his expanded role within the military faction of Hamas and subsequently in the leadership of the group in Gaza. Al-Majd's success in addressing espionage risks positioned Sinwar as a pivotal figure in the formulation of Hamas's future security strategies. His leadership in Al-Majd exemplifies Hamas's approach of not exclusively concentrating on violent assaults but also emphasizing internal initiatives to maintain the movement's strength and safeguard it from internal challenges.

Military Strategy: Yahya Sinwar and Hamas's Combat Tactics

Under Yahya Sinwar's leadership, Hamas has formulated and executed diverse military measures to protect Gaza from Israeli assaults. Sinwar, as the leader of Hamas's political and military factions, has been instrumental in formulating efficient military strategies, encompassing tunnel utilization, rocket assaults, and guerilla warfare. He has fortified Hamas into an entity capable of withstanding and executing well-coordinated and strategic counteroffensives. The measures implemented under Sinwar's leadership are designed not just to protect areas but also to respond to the blockades and military operations enforced by Israel in Gaza.

The Employment of Covert Tunnels in Military Operations

The employment of tunnels as a military strategy by Hamas has emerged as a significant tactic under Yahya Sinwar's command. These tunnels are built as clandestine pathways to penetrate Israel for executing assaults and trafficking armaments. These tunnels serve as escape routes and storage for weaponry during Israeli military operations. Hamas has established a comprehensive network of tunnels beneath the Gaza-Israel border, which Sinwar considers an essential asset for gaining a strategic advantage in combat. In 2014, during Operation Protective

Edge, these tunnels facilitated Hamas in executing surprise assaults on Israeli forces, resulting in a considerable psychological effect on Israel (Amos Yadlin 2014).

The tunnel network in the Gaza Strip serves a vital strategic function for Hamas in its fight with Israel, functioning both in military operations and as a mechanism of psychological warfare. The tunnel system is enormous and intricate, with pre-2023–2024 Gaza war estimates suggesting around 1,300 tunnels covering approximately 500 kilometers. Post-war, their length was reportedly extended to between 560 and 725 kilometers. These tunnels function as clandestine pathways for penetrating Israel, executing ambushes, trafficking arms, and providing refuge for militants during Israeli military operations. The presence of this tunnel network profoundly affects Israel psychologically, illustrating the extent and complexity of Hamas's subterranean fortifications. The tunnels are excavated at depths ranging from 20 to 30 meters below the surface, with some extending to 40 to 50 meters, and in exceptional instances, reaching depths of 70 to 80 meters. The Israeli military identified a tunnel extending 800 meters from Gaza into Israel, reaching a depth of 70 meters, comparable to a 30-story structure. This network affords Hamas a significant tactical advantage, allowing them to escape aircraft assaults and execute rapid, clandestine counterattacks. The construction of these tunnels demonstrates Yahya Sinwar's strategic insight in maintaining the organization's survival and efficacy, despite substantial military and political challenges from external entities (Raphael D. Marcus 2017; Majd Abuamer 2023).

Nonetheless, the utilization of these tunnels has presented difficulties for Hamas, as Israel has escalated its endeavours to identify and eliminate them. Israel's utilization of advanced technologies, including subterranean detecting systems, has compelled Hamas to modify their strategies. Notwithstanding these problems, the utilization of tunnels continues to be one of Hamas's principal assets in its battle with Israel, demonstrating Yahya Sinwar's capacity to modify military methods in response to changing conditions.

Guerrilla Warfare and Psychological Operations

Under Sinwar's leadership, Hamas has adeptly utilized guerilla tactics as a fundamental aspect of their military strategy. These strategies intend to undermine Israeli forces by unexpected assaults and limited operations that are challenging to foresee. Guerrilla warfare eschews extensive military apparatus, emphasizing rapid and strategic tactics that exert considerable influence on Israel despite constrained resources. Sinwar, as a seasoned strategist, employs these tactics to maintain the conflict's momentum while mitigating the potential for significant losses on Hamas's part (CNN Indonesia 2023).

Hamas, constrained by significant limitations and resource deficiencies, utilizes guerilla tactics to confront the overwhelmingly superior Israeli military forces. Principal techniques encompass ambushes, sniper assaults, and the deployment of anti-tank rockets. These strategies aim to harm Israeli soldiers and substantially diminish their morale. This strategy not only has military effects but also exacerbates instability in combat zones. Hamas seeks to instigate an enduring confrontation, undermining Israel's policies and necessitating withdrawals from specific regions, as evidenced by the 2005 Gaza disengagement. Their adaptability and flexibility in response to evolving conditions underscore their inventive capabilities in guerilla

warfare. This method illustrates how Hamas, despite constrained resources, attains military efficacy by proficient tactical planning (Patrick Kingsley & Aaron Boxerman 2024).

Psychological warfare is integral to Sinwar's tactics. An illustrative instance is the abduction of Gilad Shalit in 2006, executed by Hamas as a component of their guerilla tactics. This incident prompted significant negotiations for a prisoner exchange, culminating in the release of over 1,000 Palestinian detainees in return for the Israeli soldier. This action not only elevated the morale of Hamas soldiers but also weakened Israeli determination, illustrating Hamas's capacity to utilize hostages as a means of political and military pressure (BBC News 2011).

Sinwar recognizes that conflict transcends the battlefield and infiltrates the psyche of the adversary (psychological warfare). Rocket assaults and kidnappings are tactics employed to inspire terror in Israeli residents and undermine their trust in the government and military. Hamas frequently employs media to disseminate information about their achievements, regardless of scale, as a component of their psychological warfare strategies. By implementing these strategies, Sinwar has preserved Hamas's significance in the Palestinian struggle, utilizing a blend of guerilla tactics and psychological warfare to mitigate their military shortcomings against Israel (Mathilda Heller 2024; Veronica Neifakh 2024).

Hamas' Diplomacy and International Relations Under Yahya Sinwar

Diplomacy is a crucial strategy for maintaining Hamas's significance as a political and military force in Gaza, especially under the leadership of Yahya Sinwar. In addition to violent conflict, Sinwar has exhibited shrewdness in utilizing diplomatic connections to maintain the organization. He has been instrumental in sustaining and augmenting support from nations such as Iran, Qatar, and Turkey, who offer strategic aid to Hamas.

Sinwar has effectively established strong relationships with these states, acknowledged as principal backers of Hamas. Iran provides military assistance through rocket technology and militant training, while also enhancing the financial stability of Hamas. Qatar plays a pivotal role by offering humanitarian and financial assistance, mitigating the problems in Gaza resulting from Israeli blockades. Turkey, by its political support and anti-Israel discourse, has facilitated Hamas in augmenting its international impact.

Furthermore, Sinwar use diplomacy to mitigate international pressure, especially from Western countries that often support Israel. These diplomatic initiatives enable Hamas to obtain essential logistical, financial, and political backing, so insuring their endurance in the protracted struggle. Sinwar's activities not only strengthen Hamas's standing in Gaza but also augment its credibility among Palestinian sympathizers and the Islamic community. This highlights the significance of diplomacy as an adjunct to military strategy in Hamas's conflict.

Diplomatic Relations with Iran and Military Assistance

Iran has historically been a primary ally of Hamas, and under Yahya Sinwar's leadership, this alliance has become more entrenched. Iran considers Hamas an essential element of its "axis of resistance" against Israel, providing military, financial, and logistical assistance to the group. Sinwar has effectively enhanced this partnership through negotiations that have fortified

collaboration between the two parties. Iran has supplied Hamas with diverse sorts of support, notably in rocket technology and military training, thereby augmenting Hamas's missile assault capabilities against Israel.

During the 2021 confrontation between Hamas and Israel, Iran's position as a principal supporter of Hamas became increasingly apparent. Tehran has always been a principal benefactor of Hamas, offering considerable financial backing and facilitating the enhancement of their armament, including a notable quantity of missiles employed during the conflict. This assistance facilitated Hamas in executing extensive missile assaults on Israel, indicating a significant improvement in their military capabilities. Iran's assistance includes not just financial support but also military training and technological aid, thereby enhancing Hamas's military readiness. The strong alliance between the two factions illustrates how the military diplomacy initiated by Hamas commanders, such as Yahya Sinwar, has effectively enhanced their battlefield prowess. Although Iran refutes direct participation in these military activities, it publicly admits to supplying financial and military assistance to Hamas. This promise highlights Iran's strategic backing of Hamas in their opposition to Israel, affecting the overall dynamics of the conflict and imposing further political and military pressure on Israel (BBC News Indonesia 2023).

Yahya Sinwar, selected as the leader of Hamas in August 2023, introduces a novel aspect to the organization's leadership. His strong connections with Iran are regarded as a vital strategy for reinforcing Hamas's relationship with Tehran after Ismail Haniyeh's demise. Sinwar's history as an Israeli captive, his role in founding the internal security organization Al-Majd, and his proficiency in Hebrew, which enables him to comprehend the perspectives of Israeli authorities, render him a formidable and esteemed figure. His unexpected nomination reflects Iran's considerable impact on Hamas's strategic choices. Nonetheless, his mobility within Gaza is restricted by the persistent fighting with Israel, presenting difficulties for his leadership. Notwithstanding these limitations, Sinwar is perceived as an emblem of perseverance by the Palestinian populace. His ongoing presence in Gaza is a powerful indication that Hamas is firmly entrenched in the region. Sinwar has become a principal target for Israel; nonetheless, his leadership and symbolic significance in the conflict bolster his standing in the Palestinian resistance (Kian Sharifi 2024).

Moreover, Sinwar has leveraged his affiliation with Iran to mitigate the global pressure exerted on Hamas. Despite ideological disparities that strain connections with certain Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt, Iran persists as a loyal friend. Sinwar adeptly utilizes Iranian support to augment Hamas's capabilities while minimizing dependence on nations that could exert political pressure on the organization. This intimate alliance allows Hamas to persist in its violent conflict with the support of a prominent Middle Eastern power. This alliance has caused worries among other nations, including Israel and the United States, which perceive it as a danger to regional stability (Reza Sabeti 2023).

Negotiations for a Ceasefire with Israel

Yahya Sinwar, although acknowledged for his rigorous stance against Israel, plays a crucial part in ceasefire negotiations with Hamas. Negotiations are frequently facilitated indirectly by

mediators including Egypt, Qatar, and the United Nations (UN). In 2021, Egypt convened Hamas leaders to negotiate a new peace accord with Israel. (Astro Awani 2024).

Qatar has played a pivotal role, participating in extensive diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis in the Gaza Strip. Sinwar has utilized these ceasefires to alleviate military pressure and to facilitate Gaza's recuperation after Israeli assaults. Hamas has obtained channels for receiving humanitarian and financial assistance from outside entities, notably Qatar, which frequently acts as a principal facilitator of Gaza's rehabilitation finances. Sinwar has leveraged these ceasefire deals to enhance Hamas's political stature among Palestinians, presenting the movement as both a military power and a diplomatic body capable of advocating for the welfare of Gaza's populace (Kosmos 2024).

In May 2021, Qatar committed \$500 million (roughly Rp7.1 trillion) for reconstruction initiatives in the Gaza Strip, which was significantly impacted by the conflict between Israel and Palestinian militant organizations. This declaration was issued by Qatar's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, after a ceasefire accord that concluded some of the most severe hostilities in years. Qatar, which often mediates between Israel and Hamas, has consistently provided hundreds of millions of dollars in humanitarian and developmental assistance to facilitate prior ceasefires. The allocated funds are intended to assist Gaza's inhabitants in managing the difficulties arising from Israeli assaults and to aid in the reconstruction of public sector infrastructure and residences that were obliterated. Besides Qatar, Egypt committed \$500 million for rehabilitation initiatives in the Palestinian area. The 11-day confrontation led to the fatalities of 254 Palestinians, comprising 66 children, and resulted in over 1,900 injuries from Israeli airstrikes and artillery fire. Rocket assaults and other hostilities from armed factions in Gaza resulted in 12 fatalities, including two minors, and approximately 357 injuries on the Israeli side (Benedikta Miranti 2021).

Sinwar employs these conversations to uphold Hamas's legitimacy among the Palestinian populace. Successful ceasefire deals, especially following harsh hostilities, portray Hamas as adept in diplomacy and capable of yielding concrete outcomes for the populace of Gaza, despite constrained resources. This bolsters public backing for Hamas as a liberating entity that not only participates in armed conflict but also excels in international diplomatic negotiations (Marlissa Mohammad Kamal 2024).

The Notion of Jihad in The Quran and The Endeavor of Hamas in Gaza

Jihad is a fundamental notion in the Quran, denoting the sincere commitment to uphold Islam, either by physical combat or spiritual pursuits. In the realm of battle, jihad is sometimes misconstrued as an incitement to violence, while the Quran delineates explicit parameters for its execution. For example, Surah Al-Baqarah articulates:

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقْتُلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ

Meaning: Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed. Allah does not like transgressors (Al-Baqarah 2:190)

According to Ibnu Kathir (2009), this passage is understood as a directive for Muslims to participate in war, while strictly observing ethical standards and limitations. Ibn Kathir interprets the divine instructions of Allah swt, " Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you" as authorizing jihad exclusively in the context of self-defence against hostile attack. Ibn Kathir asserts that jihad is not meant for offensive assaults but rather to safeguard the infringed rights of Muslims. He also emphasizes the stipulation of adhering to limitations, which encompasses restrictions against the killing of women, children, the old, or non-combatants. Ibn Kathir references the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) that prohibits the damage of civilians during warfare, illustrating Islam's profound dedication to justice, even in times of conflict. This interpretation embodies the Quran's directives for upholding ethical conduct in combat, ensuring that actions adhere to ideals of equity and compassion.

Furthermore Wahbah Al-Zuhaili (2013) in his Tafsir al-Munir, elucidates this verse as the cornerstone of ethical combat in Islam. He contends that the jihad mentioned in this scripture seeks to protect religion and promote justice. He asserts that the scripture stipulates that Muslims are instructed to combat only those who instigate hostilities towards them. Al-Zuhaili underscores that combat is justifiable solely in instances of oppression or violations of Muslim rights. He emphasizes a stringent ban on violations, including the harm of children, women, the old, or defenceless individuals. This interpretation underscores Islam's commitment to upholding justice and ethical behaviour, especially amidst conflict, by matching acts with moral and humanitarian principles.

He underscores the significance of justice that Islam advocates in combat. Wahbah Al-Zuhaili elucidates that the expression *wala ta'tadu* (do not trespass) pertains not alone to physical activities but also to ethical breaches such as treachery and cruelty. This idea emphasizes that jihad is not solely a military undertaking but a pursuit of justice and peace. Al-Zuhaili links his interpretation to modern situations, saying that Muslims must unwaveringly uphold Islamic ethics and values, especially in strife. This perspective underscores that jihad, as described in the Quran, corresponds with universal tenets of justice and morality, highlighting the importance of restraint and preserving of human dignity in all situations.

Moreover, Ibn ʿĀshūr (2014), in his *Tafsīr al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr* interprets this verse as a conditional directive, confined to self-defence and the administration of justice. He elucidates that the Quran employs unequivocal and assertive language, exemplified by *wa qatiluu fī sabilillah alladhina yuqatilunakum* (fight in the way of Allah those who fight you), to signify that jihad is inherently defensive. Ibn ʿĀshūr asserts that Islam does not promote indiscriminate violence; instead, it favors justice as its paramount objective. The expression *wala ta'tadu* serves as a warning that Muslims should eschew excessive retribution and avoid implicating innocent individuals in disputes.

Ibn ʿĀshūr emphasizes the spiritual aspect of the passage, indicating that *fī sabilillah* signifies that such endeavours must be pursued with sincerity for Allah swt. This passage regulates bodily actions while also advocating for self-discipline and virtuous conduct in times of conflict. Ibn ʿĀshūr asserts that the emphasis on ethics in Islam underscores its commitment to peace and the repudiation of unjust aggression, establishing justice and morality as essential tenets in every conflict.

Sayyid Quṭub (2000) in *Fi Zilal al-Quran* asserts that the mandate for jihad in Islam is contingent upon criteria. He elucidates that jihad is sanctioned solely as a form of self-defence

against aggression and to counteract injustice that infringes upon fundamental human rights. In his commentary, Sayyid Qutb emphasizes that jihad is a virtuous pursuit intended to emancipate humanity from the bonds of oppression and to guarantee the unimpeded freedom to worship Allah swt. In the context of the phrase *wala ta'tadu* (do not transgress), Sayyid Qutb elucidates that Islam prohibits all sorts of excess in combat. This encompasses prohibitions on the killing of non-combatants, including women, children, and the elderly, as well as the unwarranted destruction of property. This perspective emphasizes Islam's dedication to justice, compassion, and equilibrium, especially during difficult confrontations, highlighting the religion's profound reverence for humanitarian principles.

Jihad, as defined in the Quran, is a notion fundamentally anchored in justice, morality, and ethical behaviour, offering explicit directives to guarantee its execution conforms to divine principles. Scholars such as Ibn Kathir, Wahbah al-Zuhaili, and Ibn ʿĀshūr agree that jihad is primarily defensive and sanctioned solely to combat oppression or safeguard rights that have been unjustly infringed upon. The Quran expressly cautions against exceeding boundaries, underscoring the prohibition of inflicting injury on non-combatants, such as women, children, and the elderly. This demonstrates Islam's dedication to preserving human dignity and averting unnecessary violence, even during wartime. The spiritual dimension of jihad emphasizes its objective as a genuine endeavour for Allah's sake, grounded in moral discipline and self-restraint.

The viewpoints of Islamic scholars correspond with the overarching tenets of Islam, which emphasize a balance between rigor and empathy. Jihad encompasses not just a physical struggle but also a quest for justice that protects liberty and peace while denouncing all forms of unjust aggression. In contemporary contexts, these interpretations persist in relevance, providing a foundation for ethical involvement throughout conflicts. In both historical and contemporary contexts, the core of jihad in Islam embodies a deep commitment to justice, kindness, and the safeguarding of human rights as articulated in Quranic teachings.

Hadith and Islamic Principles of Warfare

Alongside the Quran, hadiths significantly contribute to the comprehensive advice on the fundamentals of combat in Islam. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) consistently underscored the significance of upholding ethics and limitations in battle, ensuring that Muslim conduct adheres to principles of justice and humanity. Frequently referenced hadith asserts:

Hadith 1:

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ عَنْ نَافِعٍ عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ أَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّ امْرَأَةً وَجِدَتْ فِي بَعْضِ مَعَازِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَقْتُولَةً فَأَنْكَرَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ذَلِكَ وَنَهَى عَنْ قَتْلِ النِّسَاءِ وَالصِّبْيَانِ.

Meaning: That a woman was found killed in one of the expeditions of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), so the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) rebuked that, and he prohibited killing women and children.

This hadith emphasizes a major tenet of Islam: safeguarding civilians, especially women and children, is paramount even in times of conflict. In this account, the Prophet Muhammad

(peace be upon him) prohibited the killing of innocents following the discovery of a deceased woman during a military campaign. This restriction underscores that Islam prioritizes justice and charity as the foundation of all activities, rather than just focusing on victory in war. This principle is essential since it offers Muslims advice on upholding ethical behaviour in battle, ensuring that military acts remain within boundaries and do not inflict cruelty onto vulnerable populations.

Furthermore, the hadith stipulates that fighting in Islam is intended not for destruction but for the defence of rights and the maintenance of justice. The Prophet (peace be upon him) emphasized that combat is sanctioned solely against individuals directly engaged in aggression. Women, children, and unarmed persons must not be subjected to targeting. This depicts Islam as a faith that champions human values, even in times of strife. This doctrine corresponds with universal ideals of justice and constitutes an essential basis for international humanitarian laws that forbid the egregious killing of people.

The relevance of this hadith persists in contemporary society, when civilians frequently emerge as the principal victims of battle. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) imparted explicit directives that Muslims are obligated to uphold ethical principles in fighting, especially under difficult situations. The ban on the killing of women and children not only safeguards innocent lives but also embodies Islam's portrayal as a faith that extends mercy to all beings. In modern times, the implementation of this principle is increasingly vital, as military conflicts often lead to civilian casualties.

This hadith serves as a reminder to Muslims that mercy must be a fundamental principle in all deeds, including warfare. Despite confronting adversaries' intent on annihilating Islam, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) underscored justice and compassion as fundamental tenets. In contemporary society, this instruction is essential to prevent the justification of war as a rationale for human rights violations. Islam continually promotes a balance between steadfastness in upholding the truth and compassion for the innocent, rendering it a pertinent framework for confronting contemporary world issues.

In the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, battle frequently implicates civilians, prompting inquiries regarding the relevance of wartime ethics in contemporary scenarios. Hamas, led by Yahya Sinwar, has been criticized for conducting military operations, including rocket assaults, that frequently fail to differentiate between military and civilian targets. Notwithstanding this, Sinwar and other Hamas officials rationalize their activities as a fight against occupation, referencing the directives of Allah in the Quran and the precedents set by the life of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) (Hanif Hawari 2023).

Moreover, the Israeli assaults on Palestinian civilians since October 2023 have elicited extensive global denunciation and are deemed breaches of humanitarian law. The conflict, initiated by an attack from Hamas, resulted in Israel executing disproportionately extensive strikes on the densely populated region of Gaza. Consequently, approximately 43,700 individuals have perished, predominantly women and children, while more than 103,000 others have incurred injuries. These assaults have not only caused considerable fatalities but also prompted essential inquiries concerning ethics and justice in military operations. The repercussions have intensified the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, with hospitals and public facilities under attack. These measures have intensified global pressure on Israel to adhere to humanitarian laws and halt violence against Palestinian people (Astro Awani 2024).

The United Nations (UN) and human rights organizations have charged Israel with war crimes and crimes against humanity in the aftermath of its assaults on Gaza. A report by the UN Commission indicated that Israeli strikes specifically targeted civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, which functioned as key shelters for people. These actions constitute egregious breaches of international law, as they entail assaults on safeguarded establishments and non-combatants. These claims have heightened pressure on Israel to cease practices that violate the ethics of combat and humanitarian values. The assaults have inflicted significant distress onto Palestinians, subjecting them to hazards of harm, displacement, and deprivation of humanitarian assistance. This circumstance has intensified worldwide demands for justice and the safeguarding of civilians in Gaza (Ikhsan Abdul Hakim 2024).

Furthermore, as reported by the Astro Awani (2024), Malaysia has denounced Israel's conduct via its Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN), Datuk Dr. Ahmad Faisal Muhamad. He vehemently condemned Israel's persistent military aggression in Gaza and the West Bank, emphasizing the deteriorating humanitarian crisis that has resulted in civilian casualties and the devastation of critical infrastructure. He urged for prompt international engagement to tackle the urgent crisis, advocating for more diplomatic pressure on Israel. Malaysia has articulated its endorsement of global initiatives aimed at terminating violence and facilitating unobstructed humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian populace. This statement demonstrates Malaysia's resolute position in championing justice for the Palestinian people and calling for a peaceful conclusion that upholds human rights and international law.

In summary, Islam delineates values of justice and compassion in armed conflict, prioritizing the safeguarding of people, including women, children, and the defenceless. The Quran and Hadith enable fighting exclusively for self-defence and the maintenance of justice, imposing stringent restrictions against actions that transgress ethical limits. Within the framework of the Israel-Palestine conflict, these principles function as essential directives for both factions, notwithstanding frequent criticism of Hamas's actions under Yahya Sinwar for their impact on civilians. Simultaneously, Israeli assaults that do not differentiate between targets have garnered extensive international censure. Consequently, Islamic war ethics, emphasizing a balance between rigor and compassion, ought to provide a framework for pursuing a just resolution that honours human rights.

CONCLUSION

In summary, Islam, as delineated by the Quran and hadith, has instituted explicit ethics in battle that emphasize justice and mercy. These principles categorically forbid all activities that inflict cruelty upon innocent humans, including women, children, and civilians. In Islam, warfare is sanctioned solely for self-defence and the maintenance of justice, with all military operations required to conform to the ethical principles established by Shariah. These principles embody elevated humanitarian values, depicting Islam as a faith that honours life, even during strife.

Within the setting of the Israel-Palestine conflict, these teachings offer a crucial basis for assessing the behaviour of both parties. Yahya Sinwar and Hamas frequently rationalize their armed operations by invoking the Islamic principle of jihad. Nonetheless, assaults on civilians have elicited global condemnation, prompting inquiries about the pragmatic implementation of Islamic wartime ethics in contemporary conflicts. This scenario highlights

the difficulty of reconciling the tenets of justice and compassion within the context of modern conflict.

Israel's military operations frequently encounter extensive international censure for their inability to differentiate between military and civilian targets, resulting in substantial humanitarian disasters. These actions are regarded as violations of international humanitarian law, which requires the safeguarding of people in armed conflict. The massive loss of civilian lives, devastation of critical infrastructure like hospitals and schools, and the relocation of thousands have highlighted the disproportionate nature of these attacks. These actions not only contravene essential rules of engagement but also undermine universal values of justice and human rights. In this context, Islamic principles of wartime ethics provide a pertinent and crucial framework for resolving these transgressions. These doctrines underscore the imperative of restricting violence to fighters while preserving the rights and dignity of non-combatants. They promote justice and compassion even within conflict, serving as a moral compass for the preservation of human rights and the encouragement of accountability in contemporary warfare.

The fundamentals of Islamic warfare underscore that justice and compassion should underpin all activities, including in times of battle. These principles provide a balanced approach, ensuring that rigor in defence or conflict is moderated by compassion and ethical considerations. Islamic wartime ethics offer a pertinent framework for navigating contemporary conflicts, directing all parties towards just resolutions that respect the rights and dignity of every individual involved. By prioritizing justice as the foundation of all actions, these principles advocate for compliance with international humanitarian norms and foster accountability in warfare. This strategy strives to mitigate civilian harm while promoting reconciliation and enduring peace. In conflicts like the Israel-Palestine struggle, Islamic ethics function as a moral compass, advocating for temperance, equity, and the search of resolutions that honour the rights of all parties while seeking enduring justice and harmony.

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