



DeenPath

Islam, Mercy & the Sanctity of Life

An Introduction to the Islamic Teaching on Human Dignity

A clear guide to mercy, peace, justice and the sanctity of human life

Sanctity of Life

One soul carries the weight of
all humanity

Mercy at the Centre

Allah is Ar-Rahman and
Ar-Rahim

Justice, Not Terror

Islam protects civilians and
forbids transgression

The Sanctity of Human Life

Islam begins from the sacred dignity of human life.

A life is sacred by decree of God

The Qur'an establishes the inviolable sanctity of human life in absolute terms:

'Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption done in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely.' (Qur'an 5:32)

This verse, comparing the life of one person to all of humanity, captures the Islamic understanding of human dignity. Life is not merely protected by law in Islam; it is sacred by decree of God.

A Religion Whose Name Means Peace

The word 'Islam' shares its root (S-L-M) with 'Salam', the Arabic word for peace. The Islamic greeting 'As-salamu Alaykum', 'Peace be upon you', expresses the faith's fundamental orientation toward peace, safety and wholeness.

A Mercy to All the Worlds

The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, is described in the Qur'an as: *'A mercy to all the worlds.'* (21:107). A religion defined by its founder being a mercy to all creation is not one that permits the killing of innocents.

Mercy and Human Life

The Prophet, peace be upon him, set clear moral boundaries.

What the Prophet Said About Human Life

The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, gave explicit instruction:

'Do not kill any old man, infant, or woman.' (Abu Dawud)

'The termination of the world is easier with Allah than the killing of a Muslim.' (Tirmidhi)

'A believer remains within the scope of his religion as long as he does not kill a person unlawfully.' (Bukhari)

These are not isolated sayings. They reflect a consistent, coherent position codified throughout Islamic legal scholarship.

Mercy as a Core Attribute of Allah

The Qur'an begins with *Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim*: 'In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.' This opening is repeated before each of the 114 chapters of the Qur'an. Two of Allah's most frequently mentioned names are Ar-Rahman, The Entirely Merciful, and Ar-Rahim, The Especially Merciful.

Mercy Is Central, Not Secondary

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: *'Allah is more merciful to His servants than this mother is to her child.'* (Bukhari & Muslim), pointing to a mother cradling her infant. Mercy is not secondary in Islam; it is central.

Justice, Not Transgression

Islamic teaching rejects terror and protects innocent life.

Islam Condemns Terrorism

Major Islamic institutions have consistently and unequivocally condemned terrorism:

- The Amman Message (2004), signed by over 500 Muslim scholars from 50 countries, declared that acts of terrorism cannot be justified under any interpretation of Islamic law.
- Al-Azhar University in Cairo, the world's oldest and most authoritative Sunni institution, has repeatedly declared terrorism haram, forbidden, and a betrayal of Islamic values.
- The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, representing 57 Muslim-majority states, unanimously declared terrorism contrary to Islam.

The consensus is not ambiguous, not reluctant and not recent. It reflects 1400 years of Islamic scholarship on the sanctity of human life.

Justice, Not Transgression

The Qur'an distinguishes between lawful response to oppression and transgression:

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

Even in conflict, Islam sets clear limits. The deliberate targeting of civilians to create political fear, the definition of terrorism, violates every boundary Islamic law establishes. It is not a different interpretation of jihad. It is its direct opposite.

Further Reading

- 'Islam Condemns Terrorism' article: deenpath.org/article/islam-condemns-terrorism
- 'Islam & Peace' learning path: deenpath.org/islam-peace
- Full Qur'an with translation: deenpath.org/quran
- Hadith collections: deenpath.org/hadith