

# Understanding Islam

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## Who are Muslims?

One billion people from a vast range of races, nationalities and cultures across the globe from the southern Philippines to Nigeria are united by the Muslim faith. About 18 percent live in the Arab world while the world's largest Muslim population lives in Indonesia; substantial parts of Asia and most of Africa are Muslim.

## What do Muslims believe?

Muslims believe in one unique, incomparable God; in the angels created by him; in the prophets through whom his revelations were brought to mankind; in the day of judgment and individual accountability for actions; in God's complete authority over human destiny and in life after death. But God's final message to man, a reconfirmation of the eternal message and a summary of all that has gone before was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through Gabriel.

## How does someone become a Muslim?

Simply by saying, 'There is no god apart from God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God.' By this declaration, the believer announces his or her faith in all God's messengers, and the scriptures they brought.

## What does Islam mean?

The Arabic word "Islam" simply means "submission," and derives from a word meaning "peace." In a religious context it means complete submission to the will of God. "Mohammedanism" is thus a misnomer because it suggests that Muslims worship Muhammad rather than God. "Allah" is the Arabic name for God, which is used by Arab Muslims and Christians alike.

## What does Islam say about war?

Like Christianity, Islam permits fighting in self-defense, in defense of religion, or on the part of those who have been expelled forcibly from their homes. It lays down strict rules of combat that include prohibitions against harming civilians and against destroying crops, trees and livestock. As Muslims see it, injustice would be triumphant in the world if good men were not prepared to risk their lives for a righteous cause.

According to the Quran, "Fight in the cause of God against those who fight you, but do not transgress limits. God does not love transgressors." (2:190) "If they seek peace then you seek peace. And trust in God for he is the One that heareth and knoweth all things." (8:61)

War, therefore, is the last resort, and is the subject to the rigorous conditions laid down by the sacred law. The term jihad literally means "struggle," and Muslims believe there are two kinds of jihad. The other "jihad" is the inner struggle which everyone wages against selfish desires, for the sake of attaining inner peace.

## What about Muslim women?

Islam sees a woman, whether single or married, as an individual with the right to own and dispose of her property and earnings. Men and women should dress in a way which is dignified; the traditions of female dress found in some Muslim countries are often the expression of local customs.

## How does Islam guarantee Human Rights?

The life and property of all citizens in an Islamic state are considered sacred whether a person is Muslim or not. Islam is a religion open to all people from any race or background.

## What is Islam?

For one-fifth of the world's population, Islam is a religion and a way of life. Islam is based on the principles of peace, mercy and forgiveness. Followers of Islam believe in God, who they call Allah and believe that Muhammad was a prophet of Allah. The Quran is the holy book for Muslims.

## On the homefront Islamic relations with the A&M community

By Kim... THE ST...

Since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, students at Texas A&M have found themselves in a common, peaceful understanding. Many students, such as a "Middle-Eastern" student, Bin Laden. Through this, it has been found that this frustration between people about what the Muslims and who they are.

To clear up some common misconceptions, members of the Texas A&M Muslim Student Association (MSA) met and discussed their faith after the Sept. 11 attacks.

One problem identified is that A&M students' lack of understanding of Islam and its culture and practices has led to a dilemma between the Muslim and non-Muslim.

One male focus group participant, a petroleum engineering student, said, "We believe that there are many diverse ... but, the interaction between cultures at the university level is not always positive."

One result of the Sept. 11 attacks and the resulting Muslim paranoia since Sept. 11, Kamran Sabir, an MSA member, said, "The students were watching the news on TV, and they were seeing things that were not really happening."

Other participants expressed a noticeable paranoia of Muslims and non-Muslims. "What the events have done is that they have put a divide on both sides for either American or Muslim, and you have uncertainty in everyone," he said.

The participants also noted that they noticed a sense of people they came in contact with the attacks. One male participant said, "I thought he was a doctor and thought he was coming toward me. Begum said in which a couple were in an elevator to avoid riding the stairs. All participants said they were looking at each other and staring at each other."

The paranoia exists on the non-Muslim side, but it has been uneasy since the Sept. 11 attacks.

"I think we all felt after Sept. 11," a male participant said. "A lot of us started going in public after the Sept. 11 attacks. But still, going in public, you see people looking at you all over the place of people, you know, all kinds of things."

He said that even though he was thinking anything near there. He said it is a combination of security and other people's fear.

"That's such a tragedy that are lost," he said. "These things ... but there is nothing in the mind of us, but we are conscious of these things? Do they wear a Muslim? Misrepresentation, generalization, and that means God." Or people's religion; the Muslim's condemnation. "The people they know."

The Bryan and Coleman groups were told to be careful of anything were to happen to American soldiers.

The Sept. 11 event has been a challenge for the Muslim community. One participant, a graduate student, said,

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Special thanks to the members of the Muslim Student Association who participated in this project.