# Addressing Religious Intolerance in Multi-Faith Societies: A Qur'ānic Proposal

AHMED A. AL-KUBISE[*]

ZIA UL HAQ[**]

## Abstract

*Religious intolerance is a growing concern in today's multi-faith communities. However, the key to solving this problem lies in religious texts. This study looks into the Islamic perspective on sustainable peace, using a hermeneutic analysis of the Qur'ānic texts to examine the relationship between religious tolerance and peace. A qualitative methodology is employed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of religious intolerance. The study decodes the Qur'ānic verses as a means to achieving long-term societal harmony. It has been discovered that one of the causes of religious intolerance in Muslim cultures is a lack of understanding and appreciation of the Qur'ān among Muslims. The study provides fresh insights into the role that religious texts can play in fostering a culture of tolerance and understanding. The findings of this study can be utilized to promote religious tolerance in multicultural societies through the implementation of inter-faith dialogue programmes and educational initiatives.*

## Keywords

Qur'ān, tolerance, violence, harmony, coexistence, Medina Charter.

## Introduction

The issue of religious tolerance or its absence has become increasingly salient in contemporary society. The trend of individuals avoiding engagement with those who possess disparate religious beliefs, cultural identities, and political ideologies has contributed to societal fragmentation and the perpetuation of animosity and misunderstanding. There is a growing global apprehension regarding religious intolerance. This concern is particularly prevalent in the Middle East, North Africa, Europe, and the Americas, as highlighted by the Pew Research Center in 2020. Additionally, the increasing polarization and politicization of religion have exacerbated the problem of religious intolerance in many

[*] Professor, College of Sharia and Islamic Studies, University of Sharjah, UAE.

[**] Assistant Professor, College of Sharia and Islamic Studies, University of Sharjah, UAE.

societies. Therefore, interreligious dialogue is of paramount importance in addressing this issue and fostering a more harmonious and peaceful global community.

As technology continues to advance and bring individuals from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds into closer proximity, it becomes increasingly important to leverage religious teachings to cultivate a culture of tolerance. Islam, in particular, is frequently referred to as *al-ḥanīfiyyah al-samḥah*[1] (religion of tolerance) in various religious texts and is said to view religious intolerance as an intellectual affliction that impedes harmonious coexistence among humanity. This highlights the necessity for mutual respect and inter-religious understanding. However, it is also worth mentioning that incidents of violence against non-Muslim communities have been observed in some Muslim societies, thus highlighting the importance of a deeper understanding of the true principles of Islam to foster a more tolerant and peaceful society.

The modern era has seen a high appreciation of religious diversity, largely facilitated by the discipline of anthropology and its focus on comprehending human history through the examination of diverse civilizations and religious beliefs. The accessibility of literature on world religions, coupled with significant migratory movements, has further increased the dissemination of knowledge about different faith traditions. Advances in technology, including the Internet, have furthered the phenomenon of globalization and the interconnectivity of cultures, necessitating greater engagement with diverse religious beliefs.[2]

Radcliffe-Brown argues that the interconnectedness of cultures brought about by technology and globalization requires a new paradigm for religion that upholds the sanctity of individual religious traditions while promoting interreligious reconciliation and mutual appreciation. The implications of the growing awareness of cultural diversity and interconnectedness for religious institutions, traditions, and self-understandings are yet to be fully realized. A harmonious and

---

[1] Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-Mufard*, Kitāb ḥusn al-khuluq, Book 14, No. 287, https://sunnah.com/urn/2302850; Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī, *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, Kitāb al-jihād, al-Faṣl al-thālith, Book 19, No. 61, https://sunnah .com/mishkat:3849.

[2] Gabor Vasmatics, "The Revolution of Communication and Its Effect on Our Life," *Academicus International Scientific Journal* 1 (2010): 100-08.

productive society requires new approaches to the diversity and interconnectedness of human religiousness.[3]

Consequently, it is imperative to develop new modes of communication that are compatible with the diversity and interconnectedness of human religiousness, emphasizing the significance of religious tolerance. Nonetheless, there is currently a dearth of effective strategies to promote religious tolerance and prevent violent conflicts. Muslim societies require the establishment of legal frameworks and intellectual platforms to cultivate a culture of tolerance, both within and beyond their communities, and actively propagate the message of Islam. As such, the subject of tolerance must be brought into academic discourse for thorough examination and analysis, requiring careful consideration and sensitivity.

This study aims to illuminate the subject of religious tolerance by examining the underlying causes of intolerance in multi-faith communities and evaluating potential solutions from a Qur'ānic perspective.

While the major literature on religious tolerance does not engage in a more systematic analysis of the relevant religious text, it does focus on unique cases of religion that have generated either tolerance or intolerance. The ability of a religion to encourage tolerance or intolerance is not the only aspect of religion to take into consideration. The possibility that religion contributes to intolerance may be countered by the possible benefits that religion might bring about in terms of mental health,[4] criminal behaviour,[5] compassion,[6] and other areas. Conducting an in-depth investigation of a subject as complex as religious tolerance is challenging. It is difficult to avoid the desire to contrast one's own religion's positive characteristics with the negative characteristics of other religions. A majority of Western thinkers believe that a religious person cannot be both tolerant and welcoming of others. Moreover, they view that religion has historically acted as a source of bias and an effective instrument for promoting intergroup conflicts, and

---

[3] A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, "Religion and Society," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 75, no. 1-2 (1945): 33-43, https://doi.org/10.2307/2844278.

[4] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1902), 21-22.

[5] Mark Juergensmeyer, "The Logic of Religious Violence," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 10, no. 4 (1987): 172-93, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402398708437320.

[6] Vassilis Saroglou, Vanessa Delpierre, and Rebecca Dernelle, "Values and Religiosity: A Meta-Analysis of Studies Using Schwartz's Model," *Personality and Individual Differences* 37, no. 4 (2004): 721-34.

as such, it should be restricted or eliminated in contemporary society. They argue that religious beliefs can lead to intolerance and discrimination against individuals and groups who hold different beliefs. A recent study published by the Woolf Institute concluded that religion is a red line for the majority of people, particularly Muslims and that while the majority of people are tolerant of people of different ethnic or national backgrounds, many have negative attitudes toward people of different religious backgrounds.[7] However, it is important to note that not all religious individuals or traditions promote bias and intergroup conflicts. There are also many examples of religious individuals and communities who actively promote tolerance, understanding, and mutual respect. Additionally, many scholars argue that religion can also act as a force for peace and reconciliation, by promoting shared values and common humanity.

It is also to note that the relationship between religion and conflict is complex and multifaceted. Many political, economic, and social factors can also contribute to intergroup conflict. It is not always accurate to attribute it solely to religious beliefs. It is also important to acknowledge that the interpretation of religious texts and teachings can vary widely, and some interpretations may be more conducive to tolerance and peace than others.

A second group of academics in the emerging human sciences feel that religion creates dispositions and behaviours that benefit communities by providing them with a sense of structure and a network of people who share similar religious beliefs. These facets of life can have a profoundly beneficial effect on one's mental and spiritual health. In this context, Juergensmeyer asserts that religion can assist people in coping with stress by reducing aggressive and destructive impulses and boosting their commitment to their beliefs.[8] Similarly, religion, according to Saroglou and others can provide special reinforcement for adherence to moral rules and advocate peace and good relations among people.[9]

Religion has long been viewed as a beacon of hope and peace, promoting harmony and understanding among people. The Dalai Lama,

---

[7] Russel Powell and Steve Clarke, "Religion, Tolerance, and Intolerance: Views from Across the Disciplines," in *Religion, Intolerance, and Conflict: A Scientific and Conceptual Investigation*, ed. Steve Clarke, Russell Powell, and Julian Savulescu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1-35, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199640911.003.0001.

[8] Juergensmeyer, "Logic of Religious Violence," 172-93.

[9] Saroglou, Delpierre, and Dernelle, "Values and Religiosity," 721-34.

the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people, once noted that religion should be a force for peace and not a cause of conflict.[10] Hans Küng, a well-known theologian, believes that achieving global peace will be impossible without harmonious coexistence among various religious traditions.[11] Mahatma Gandhi, one of the greatest advocates of nonviolence, saw a deep connection between love, life, peace, and religion. He believed that where there is love and peace, there is a path for religions to flourish.[12] Nelson Mandela, the South African anti-apartheid revolutionary, saw religious tolerance as the cornerstone of a peaceful society. He stressed the importance of respecting the beliefs and practices of others, even if we do not understand or agree with them.[13]

Religion, according to the findings of a third group of academics who appear to be more objective in their conclusions, produces two distinct modes of human conduct: one that fosters compassion and fraternity, as well as concern for others, and another that fosters intolerance, prejudice, and crime. Possibly, there were opposing impulses linked with diverse characteristics of religiosity (or styles of religiosity) that social scientific instruments were unable to capture satisfactorily. Gordon Allport, a well-known psychologist, has characterized religion as the ultimate paradox when it comes to intolerance. Religious belief, according to Allport, is both the source and the cure of prejudice. While the main faiths' creeds are universalistic and advocate brotherhood, their practice may be divisive and harsh at times. Alport argues that because of the atrocities performed in the name of religious aspirations, the majestic nature of religious goals is somewhat diminished.[14]

The aforementioned perspectives posit that religion has the potential to serve as a source of discord and violence, as deeply ingrained convictions can occasionally trigger strife. Throughout history, there have been numerous instances of wars ignited by disagreements about religious beliefs. However, it is important to note

---

[10] Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, and Douglas Abrams, *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World* (New York: Viking, 2016), 30-31.

[11] Hans Küng, *Christianity: Essence, History and Future*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Continuum, 1995), 40-42.

[12] Mary A. King, *Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.: The Power of Nonviolent Action* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1999), 155-56.

[13] Nelson Mandela, *Nelson Mandela by Himself: The Authorised Book of Quotations* (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 10-11.

[14] Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1954), 55-56.

that religion also acts as a formidable agent of tranquillity in numerous individuals. Consequently, it can be deduced that the cultivation of either toleration or intolerance is contingent upon one's familiarity with the doctrines of religion.

In certain Muslim communities, a decline in religious toleration has become apparent, despite the clear emphasis on such principles in Islamic teachings. This phenomenon can be attributed to a lack of understanding of these teachings among the younger generations. Thus, this investigation endeavours to investigate the central Islamic message of tolerance and peace through an examination of Islamic religious scriptures.

The study aims to build a culture of tolerance, improve communication mechanisms across varied populations while taking into account their cultural, ethnic, and religious identities, and investigate the repercussions of a lack of tolerance in the Muslim world and its detrimental consequences. The study also examines how tolerance promotes understanding, nurtures a spirit of peace, and reduces extremism in all of its forms. The study also looks into the Qur'ānic perspective on tolerance and how it values religious, cultural, ethnic, and racial variety among communities.

The study uses a descriptive research methodology combining library research and content analysis to understand religious toleration. The methodology involves collecting sources such as academic journals, books, and newspapers for analysis. The information is then analysed to understand the impact of religious toleration, its correlation to negative discourse, and its personal and societal effects. The aim is to provide an in-depth understanding of the subject by carefully selecting and examining relevant literature.

## Tolerance and the Importance of the Culture of Tolerance

Linguistically, the term tolerance refers to bearing something. It alludes to the Arabic word *tasāmuḥ* which means softening or easiness.[15] In this context, tolerance refers to the purposeful decision to refrain from forbidding, delaying, or otherwise coercively interfering with behaviour that one does not agree with, even though one has the authority to do so.[16] In technical terms, *tasāmuḥ* refers to gentleness and avoidance of

---

[15] Bahman Baktiari et al., "Voices within Islam: Four Perspectives on Tolerance and Diversity," *Current History* 104, no. 678 (2005): 37-45, https://www.jstor.org/stable/45319715.

[16] A. Bardon and E. Ceva, *The Ethics of Toleration and Religious Accommodations* (London: Routledge, 2018), 434-46.

limits and severity, acceptance of the other, and respect for cultural diversity, varied forms of expression, and human traits at the individual, group, and state levels. Tolerance is defined as a fair, objective, and permissive attitude towards those whose opinions, beliefs, practices, racial or ethnic origins, etc., differ from one's own. It is the antithesis of bigotry.[17]

Tolerance possesses compelling, balanced, caring, and considerate characteristics. It is an open attitude that can take many forms, including retraining community leaders to govern the community by respecting the multiplicity of ideas, cultures, and beliefs, as well as being generous and receptive to hearing alternative points of view.[18] To put it another way, accepting a range of viewpoints while abstaining from the use of coercion to modify behaviour or views.

## Various Forms of Tolerance

Tolerance comes in a variety of forms relating to social ties between individuals and organizations, as well as state-to-state relations, the most famous of which is tolerance for different religions. The Qur'ān says, "Allah prevents you not from dealing gently and justly with those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor push you out of your homes, for Allah loves those who are just."[19] This is perhaps the most religious tolerance possible, as the Qur'ān forbids discrimination against religious opponents and emphasizes justice and equity in dealings with them. Muslims were urged to handle their affairs in line with divine wisdom. They mingled with non-Muslims in their communities throughout Islamic history. ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb hired Christian Romans to work in the Islamic state's offices, and it was a wise decision on his part to create a society built on tolerance and mutual understanding. A culture of religious tolerance is an imperative necessity for preserving society's unity because tolerance is built on justice in the face of differences. A serious consideration of religious diversity results in epistemic humility, which can foster greater religious tolerance.[20]

---

[17] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. J. Simpson and E. Weiner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 20:66-68, s.v. "tolerance."

[18] Abdullah Saeed, "Towards Religious Tolerance through Reform in Islamic Education: The Case of the State Institute of Islamic Studies of Indonesia," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 27, no. 79 (1999): 177-91, https://doi.org/10.1080/13639819908729941.

[19] Qur'ān 60:8; the translation is of A. Y. Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'ān: Text, Translation, and Commentary in Modern English* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2006), 37-38.

[20] James Kraft and David Basinger, eds., *Religious Tolerance through Humility: Thinking with Philip Quinn* (London: Routledge, 2016): 96-97, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315244617.

## Multi-Faith Societies and the Contemporary Challenges

Multi-faith societies are characterized by the coexistence of people from different religious and cultural backgrounds. While such societies can be rich in diversity, they can also present significant challenges related to peace and conflict resolution. One of the most pressing challenges is the potential for religious and cultural differences to fuel inter-group tensions and conflicts. These conflicts can be driven by a variety of factors, including political, economic, and social grievances, as well as ideological differences related to religion and culture.[21]

Another challenge of multi-faith societies is the potential for extremist groups to exploit religious and cultural differences to promote violence and conflict. Such groups may use religious or cultural ideologies to justify their actions and mobilize support, leading to a cycle of violence and counter-violence that can destabilize the entire community.[22]

In addition, multi-faith societies may also face challenges related to identity and belonging. Individuals from different religious and cultural backgrounds may struggle to find a sense of community and belonging in a diverse society, which can lead to feelings of alienation and marginalization. These feelings can, in turn, fuel social and political unrest and contribute to the breakdown of social cohesion. To address these challenges, it is important to promote interfaith dialogue and understanding, as well as to establish inclusive policies and institutions that promote social inclusion and equal opportunities for all members of society. Additionally, education and awareness-raising initiatives can help to promote greater tolerance and respect for diversity, while also building bridges between different communities. By addressing these challenges proactively and collaboratively, it is possible to build more peaceful and harmonious multi-faith societies that can promote the well-being of all their citizens.

## Sustainable Peace and Abrahamic Religions

All three of the Abrahamic faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—affirm the value of tranquillity for human communities. These faiths hold that peace is crucial to the development of a just and equitable

---

[21] I. A. Malik, "Challenges of Building a Multifaith Society: The Malaysian Experience," *Journal of Religion and Society* 21 (2019): 1-13.

[22] Birgit Schaebler and Leif Stenberg, eds., *Globalization and the Muslim World: Culture, Religion, and Modernity* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004).

society, and hence a vital component of human flourishing and well-being.

Shalom (peace) is one of the most fundamental ideas in Judaism. Jews are obligated, on a religious level, to seek and promote peace and reconciliation within themselves, their communities, and the wider world.[23] Like Judaism, Christianity views peace as fundamental to its teachings. The New Testament echoes the idea of shalom from the Old Testament by referring to Jesus as the Prince of Peace. Christians are obligated to establish a more peaceful and just world by fostering these values in their daily interactions with others. Islam emphasizes the value of tranquillity for human communities. The Arabic word *salām* (peace) is the root of Islam. Muslims consider peace to be an essential part of their faith and consider it everyone's duty to contribute to establishing a just and peaceful society.[24]

As a whole, the Abrahamic faiths agree that peace within human communities is crucial to building a more just and equitable global society. They preach that everyone has a role to play in fostering peace, both locally and globally, and that these goals can be attained by acts of justice, compassion, and mercy.

## Five Principles of Religious Tolerance in the Qur'ān

The Qur'ān makes it very clear that Muslims must fulfil five holy commandments to encourage tolerance and understanding among diverse religions.

a) Regardless of one's creed, colour, ethnic origin, gender, or social status, each individual's human dignity must be respected.[25] Humans must treat one another with complete dignity, respect, and loving kindness because God, the Creator of all, created everyone.

b) Islam says that humans follow different religions by divine will. As a result, all religions must be tolerated because they are based on God's will.[26]

c) The Qur'ān makes it quite clear that religious liberty is a God-given right.[27]

---

[23] David L. Johnston, *The Bible and Peace*, ed. Atalia Omer, R. Scott Appleby, and David Little (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015): 35-49.

[24] Lewis Mudge and Matthew T. Mathews, eds., *Making Peace with the Earth: Action and Advocacy for Climate Justice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 96-100.

[25] Qur'ān, 17:70.

[26] Ibid., 10:99.

   d) According to the Qur'ān, the final judgement of all humanity rests with God to whom we will all ultimately return.

   e) God admires those who seek justice, particularly when it comes to those who are dissimilar to them in any way, including their religious views.[28]

## The Qur'ān's Position on Promoting Tolerance among Society's Members

The Qur'ān lays out a solid criterion for everyone, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, based on common ideals of equal rights, from acknowledging distinctions to encouraging Islamic ethics. The Qur'ān's ultimate goal is peace, and to establish peace, tolerance is essential.[29] Not only physical characteristics and social and cultural events but also the ability to select one's faith are all examples of diversity.

Tolerance is a notion that appears in the Qur'ān in a variety of forms and terms. Many verses directly indicate that religious persecution is prohibited; other passages appear to convey the same message in a variety of ways. Throughout Muḥammad's (peace be on him) Prophetic career, significant shifts occurred in key Qur'ānic perspectives regarding religious tolerance. The Qur'ān promotes the idea of tolerance and respect for the beliefs of others. The following verse highlights this: "To you be your way and to me mine."[30] This verse encourages individuals to respect the diversity of beliefs and practices and to coexist peacefully with those who hold different beliefs.[31] The Qur'ān states alluding to both the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds, "We shall have our acts and you will have yours; may peace be upon you, for we do not wish the ignorant."[32]

The Qur'ān also criticizes previous nations' attitude towards religious extremism, stating, "As for monasticism, they invented it—We never ordained it for them."[33] 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd said, "Follow and do not innovate (in religious matters) for you have been sufficed. Every newly invented matter is an innovation and innovation in religion is a

---

[27] Ibid., 2:256.

[28] Ibid., 5:8.

[29] Mustafa Köylü, "Peace Education: An Islamic Approach," *Journal of Peace Education* 1, no. 1 (2004): 59-76, https://doi.org/10.1080/1740020032000178302.

[30] Qur'ān 109:6.

[31] Shadi Nafisi, "Tolerance in Islam," *HTS Theological Studies* 74, no. 3 (2018), https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i3.5145.

[32] Qur'ān 28:55.

[33] Ibid., 57:27.

misguidance."[34] Moreover, he warned, "Beware of innovation, beware of slander, beware of deepening, and adhere to the ancient religion." Ibn Kathīr comments on this the following: "It contains a warning against exaggeration in religion, and disobedience in worship by carrying on oneself in what the *sharī'ah* did not permit."[35]

The Qur'ān encourages the principle of tolerance through its general and detailed laws. This can only be fulfilled by standing on the principle of difference and plurality to prepare the path for the acknowledgement of others. "Had your Lord so desired, He would have undoubtedly made humanity one single community of believers but they will always choose to differ—except those offered mercy by your Lord—and thus He created them to choose freely."[36] So diversity is a divine truth, not a source of discord and strife. Non-acceptance and rejection of the other will lead to a breach of society's security and peace, causing immense harm to humanity and destroying all bridges of understanding and reconciliation. Why do we look the other way when it comes to pluralism? In all the worlds of creatures, it is a divine, cosmic, and unwavering practice.

Diversity and plurality are two healthy states that result in the convergence and exchange of ideas and experiences that will develop and flourish lifestyles, as well as relieve people of their negative feelings towards others and rid them of hatred and ignorance. Members of society learn to respect the other and win him over with affection and kindness, rejecting all forms of extremism and fragmentation, by declaring tolerance and consolidating its culture at all levels. The Qur'ān states, "Everyone turns to their own direction of prayer." We should compete with one another in doing good.[37]

As a result, the principles upon which the first Islamic state in Medina was created strove to protect the rights of all people, giving no weight to their various beliefs, races, or colours. Islam has called for coexistence and mutual respect with people of other religions since its inception. This integrated approach allowed non-Arabs to participate in the development of the Arab Islamic civilization, which was the first civilization in human history to be built on the principles of acceptance and diversity. It was a time when individuals of various cultures, beliefs,

---

[34] Tallal M. Zeni, trans., *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah on Divine Wisdom and the Problem of Evil* (Cambridge: Islamic Text Society, 2017), 201-04.

[35] Ismā'īl b. 'Umar b. Kathīr, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* (Beirut: Maktabat Dār al-Salām, 2000), 3:221-22.

[36] Qur'ān 11:118-19.

[37] Ibid., 2:148.

and nationalities maintained their relationships under the principles of pluralism, based on the Qur'ānic value of equality and moderation. The proclaims, "And so We have made you believers an upright society."[38] According to an authentic Prophetic tradition, an upright society is founded on justice,[39] which should govern the interactions of the various parties, resulting in a shift from injustice, aggression, extremism, and closed-mindedness to justice, tolerance, peace, and openness. In this context, the Qur'ān encourages constructive discourse with opponents, saying, "Respond to evil with what is best, then the one you are in a feud with will be like a close friend."[40]

A Prophetic tradition reads, "Whoever remains patient, Allah will make him patient. Nobody can be given a blessing better and greater than patience."[41] God commands that we treat our adversaries with respect and love. This Qur'ānic principle encourages security and peace, as well as a better outcome in achieving justice. The Qur'ān speaks in this regard: "O humanity! Indeed, we created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another."[42]

The plan for restoring a tolerant culture among different groups and civilizations is a healthy and helpful project for long-term peace and harmony. It is a revolutionary reformist approach. The Qur'ān establishes a common point for Muslims and people of the divine books:

> [O Prophet] Say, "O People of the Book! Let us come to common terms: that we will worship none but Allah, associate none with Him, nor take one another as lords instead of Allah." But if they turn away, then say, "Bear witness that we have submitted to Allah alone."[43]

To move on to the period immediately following the migration to Medina, we should examine the well-known document known as the Medina Charter, which included a clause acknowledging the Jews' distinct legitimate religion, stating that "the Jews [have] their religion, and the believers [have] theirs."[44]  It acknowledges the existence and

---

[38] Ibid., 2:43.

[39] Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb al-imārah, Bāb faḍīlat al-imām al-'ādil, Book 20, No. 4493, https://sunnah.com/muslim:1827.

[40] Qur'ān, 41:34.

[41] Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb al-zakāh, Bāb al-ist'fāf 'an al-mas'alah, Book 24, No. 548, https://sunnah.com/bukhari:1469.

[42] Qur'ān, 49:13.

[43] Ibid., 3:64.

[44] Mark Cohen, "Islam and the Jews: Myth, Counter-Myth, History," in *Jews among Muslims: Communities in the Precolonial Middle East*, ed. Shlomo Deshen and Walter P.

legitimacy of religions other than Islam in the Arabian peninsula. It is hardly a stretch of the imagination to say that this passage depicts the very early attitudes of Islam towards other religions, which were willing to tolerate the existence of other religions in the Arabian Peninsula at the time.

The Qur'ānic scheme, as explained by Goddard, stresses the importance of coexistence between Muslims and People of the Books as follows:

> There is no clearer or more complete system than the Quranic system in making clear how important it is to live together in peace. Because, as wide as the common ground between Muslims and the People of the Books is, there will always be a wider room for peaceful coexistence among Muslims themselves, but this coexistence does not imply that we are in agreement in everything.[45]

As a result, it is critical to consider the question of advancing containment and fostering a spirit of tolerance. In particular, Muslims require a thorough civilized restoration project to recover their vitality, historical and social efficacy, and cultural authenticity. Scholars and politicians should consider strengthening the issue of tolerance as an academic discourse in achieving moderation and as a social act requiring the highest levels of intelligence, awareness, effectiveness, and authenticity, and subject to a clear civilized approach proportional to the size of the problem.[46]

While the Qur'ān encourages all of this, it also emphasizes that any change or progress must come from inside society, not from without, as the Qur'ān states, "Allah will never change a people's state of favor unless they change their own state of faith."[47] This suggests that God does not deprive people of their well-being until they change themselves by oppressing and transgressing against one another.[48]

The Prophet Muḥammad states, emphasizing this concept:

> O people, your Lord is one, and your father Adam is one. There is no advantage given to an Arab over a foreigner, nor a foreigner over an Arab,

---

Zenner (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 98-99, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-24863-6_4.

[45] Hugh Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations* (Amsterdam: New Amsterdam Books, 2000), 106-07.

[46] Zia Ul Haq, "Much Ado about Nothing: Problems with Logical Reasoning in Theism-Atheism Debate," *Religions* 13, no. 11 (2022): 1092, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13111092.

[47] Qur'ān 13:11.

[48] Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabāri, *The History of al-Ṭabāri*, trans. W. M. Watt and M. V. McDonald (New York: SUNY Press, 1989), 6:89-90.

nor white skin over black skin, nor black skin over white skin unless righteousness is applied.[49]

He declared them equal in religious and worldly rights and gave none of them a leg up in terms of bloodline, fortune, or physical attractiveness. As a result, Islam made equality a fundamental concept of human interaction and cooperation. It demonstrates Islam's universal nature, which encompasses all aspects of life.

Learning about different cultures can bring a desire to learn more and to make connections with others. These connections can lead to a deeper understanding of things and will allow us to obtain information and add to it. When left to their own devices, people will generally resort to self-serving ways of getting what they want; as a result, without forgiveness and convergence, we will never be able to comprehend the facts that form our positions and ideas. We will never be able to converge or arrive at an agreement without tolerance.

## The Qur'ānic Perspective on the Importance of Tolerance and the Abolition of Extremism

While recognizing a wide diversity of religious groups, the Qurān establishes the foundations for tolerance in the following verses. The Qur'ān 17:70 tells us that we are given a good position in the ranks of all of God's creatures. Since God entrusted us with the job of vicegerent (*khalīfah*) on earth,[50] we must look after the whole of creation.

In a similar vein, the Qur'ān 5:32 and 6:98 both refer to humanity's common roots, which serve as a common thread that connects all people. Tolerance is linked with justice and equality. The Qur'ān instructs the Prophet Muḥammad to be just in his interactions with his people and urges Muslims to emulate and follow his example. Tolerance, according to the Qur'ān, is only the first step in achieving long-term harmony between peoples.[51] A consequence of this is that Muslims are urged by the Qur'ān to engage in civil discourse with others, particularly with the People of the Book: "Come to an equitable understanding

---

[49] Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, ed. Shuʻayb al-Arnaʼūṭ and ʻĀdil Murshid (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʻIlmiyyah, 2012), vol. 8, ḥadīth No. 23489.

[50] Qur'ān, 17:70.

[51] Thaddeus B. Umaru, "The Challenge for Tolerance and Peaceful Coexistence between Christians and Muslims in Northern Nigeria," in *Religious Stereotyping and Interreligious Relations*, ed. Jesper Svartvik and Jakob Wirén (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 123-33, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137342676_11.

between us and you that we shall not serve anyone except Allah and (that) we shall not associate anything with Him."[52]

The Qur'ān upholds the right of individuals to practice the religion of their birth, regardless of its denomination and stipulates that the state must guarantee and protect this right. The ultimate judgement of one's faith is delegated to God. If an individual is to convert to Islam, such as a *dhimmī* or a trustee, their adherence to Islam is not considered valid until they embrace Islam voluntarily, freely, and without coercion. In the absence of evidence of voluntary conversion, an individual who dies in this state is considered to be a follower of their original religion.[53]

The Qur'ān also acknowledges the diversity of beliefs within Muslim society. This has been recognized by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. For example, Gustave Le Bon observed that force was never used as a means of spreading Qur'ānic teachings and that conquered non-Muslims were allowed to freely exercise their religious beliefs. If some Christians chose to embrace Islam and adopt Arabic as their language, it was often due to the just treatment they received at the hands of the Arab conquerors, which was unparalleled in their prior experiences.[54] This is a powerful rebuttal from a fair orientalist to those who say that Islam was promoted through the sword rather than through tolerance and debate. According to Katherine Watt, "The victorious Muslims treated the Christian Arabs with great tolerance since the first century of migration, and this tolerance continued in the succeeding centuries, and we can rightly judge that the Christian tribes that embraced Islam did so by choice and free will and that the Christian Arabs who live in Muslim communities today are a testament to this.[55] According to Sadurski, freedom of speech in the Qur'ān includes not only an individual's ability to communicate with others but also the potential outcome of sound thoughts and free belief, whether the view itself has become entrenched as a belief or is still being questioned and remains uncertain. Whether the thought is true or not, it must be communicated to others, and nothing kills an idea like silence or blocking it from reaching others.[56]

---

[52] Qur'ān 03:64.

[53] 'Abd Allāh b. Qudāmah, *al-Mughnī* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1405 AH), 9:220-21.

[54] G. Le Bon, *The World of Islamic Civilization* (New York: Tudor Publishing, 1974), 6-7.

[55] Katherine Watt, "Thomas Walker Arnold and the Re-evaluation of Islam, 1864-1930," *Modern Asian Studies* 36, no. 1 (2002): 1-98, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X02001014.

[56] Wojciech Sadurski, *Freedom of Speech and Its Limits* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publisher, 2001).

The Qur'ān, as a religious text, guides interfaith dialogue. The text emphasizes the principles of respect and tolerance towards individuals of differing religious beliefs. It exhorts Muslims to engage in dialogue with representatives of other faith communities peacefully and respectfully, avoiding the use of coercion or aggression. The Qur'ān acknowledges the existence of religious diversity and posits that all religions have a common origin and ultimate objective, which is the submission to the divine will of God. Qur'ānic verses such as "Let there be no compulsion in religion"[57] and "To you be your way, and to me, mine"[58] serve to highlight the importance of preserving religious freedom and diversity, from a Muslim perspective. By adhering to these principles, as outlined in the Qur'ān, it can be argued that Muslims may participate in productive and meaningful interfaith dialogues, which could contribute to a greater understanding and cooperation among individuals of different religious backgrounds, from a Muslim perspective.

The Qur'ān instructs Muslims to present their arguments in a manner that is respectful and free of insults and provocative language, as stated in the verse "Tell My servants to say only what is best. Satan certainly seeks to sow discord among them."[59] This can be interpreted as promoting constructive discourse and avoiding behaviour that might lead to conflict and animosity. The Qur'ān further emphasizes the importance of respectful communication in the verse "O believers! Do not insult what they invoke besides Allah or they will insult Allah spitefully out of ignorance."[60]

To facilitate cooperation, understanding, and openness between civilizations, it is important to cultivate an environment that emphasizes love, dialogue, and tolerance and rejects injustice, aggression, and arrogance. The study of tolerance and dialogue requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses knowledge accumulation and the development of a strategic analytical framework for addressing the challenges of civilized interaction. The current priority in this area of study is to establish a sound analytical unit or framework for managing difficulties in civilized interaction.  As a result, relying on the imperative of tolerance and educating societies on this lofty principle save the entire world and rid it of extremist reductionism, because extremists cannot marginalize the Qur'ān's principles and tolerance by

---

[57] Qur'ān 2:256.

[58] Ibid., 109:6.

[59] Ibid., 17:53.

[60] Ibid., 6:108.

spreading fear of it and the delusion that the Qur'ān seeks to exclude others and incite conflict with them. The time has come to put an end to extreme views that claim Islam does not tolerate diversity and is therefore unfit to serve as a rational and adaptive code of life for humanity.

## Religious Intolerance and Extremism

The failure to cultivate a culture of tolerance has the potential to cause substantial harm to the fabric of civil society. This is due to the adverse effect it has on inter-group relations and the exchange of ideas between its various segments. This lack of a tolerant culture can be attributed to a multitude of factors, including weak religious literacy, a lack of trust and respect, resistance to alternative perspectives, the promotion of retaliation, and a fear of criticism.

The inadequate understanding of religion, particularly of Islam, and its teachings of peace and tolerance, can contribute to the rise of extremism and violence.[61] Moreover, the presence of discord and rancour, as well as resistance to accepting differences, can further exacerbate the problem. Isolationism, which occurs when individuals refuse to acknowledge alternative viewpoints, also plays a significant role in promoting intolerance. The promotion of retaliation and the lack of consideration for the public good and the laws of life can also contribute to the problem. Finally, a fear of criticism and an aversion to exposure to constructive criticism can present additional barriers to the promotion of a culture of tolerance.

It is important to note that religion, including Islam, is not inherently linked to intolerance. Rather, intolerance is a social phenomenon that arises from specific adverse conditions in various cultures and their impact on religion.[62] This highlights the importance of understanding the essence of religious messages and recognizing the difference between the teachings of a religion and its perceptions and practices. The absence of an understanding of these teachings, particularly those related to tolerance and peace, can result in damaging beliefs and actions.

---

[61] Atalia Omer, "Religion and the Study of Peace: Practice without Reflection," *Religions* 12, no. 12 (2021): 1069, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12121069.

[62] Alice B. Randall, *Theologies of War and Peace Among Jews, Christians, and Muslims* (Ontario: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), 88-89.

## Recommendations

To develop a culture of tolerance, the following steps must be taken: 1) Incorporating the teachings of the Qur'ān and Prophetic *sunnah* on human pluralism, freedom, justice, moderation, and combating extremism into religious education and curriculum; 2) Addressing the root causes of extremism and promoting compassion through Islam's intellectual and moral system based on the Qur'ān and Prophetic *sunnah*; 3) Promoting a culture of tolerance through harmonious relations and democratic discourse.; 4) Improving public/government communication channels and increasing citizen satisfaction; 5) Instilling a tolerance for differences and utilizing technology to reinforce this understanding; 6) Rejecting extremism through educational seminars and conferences and promoting forgiveness and constructive debates on important issues; 7) Acknowledging the challenge of imbalanced tolerance culture within Arab and Muslim societies and implementing a project aimed at mitigating the risk of marginalization and exclusion while promoting diversity.

## Conclusion

The results of this study indicate a strong correlation between the teachings of the Qur'ān and an individual's temperament, belief system, and interpersonal behaviour concerning tolerance. The Qur'ānic principles serve as a steadfast guide for human conduct, shaping attitudes towards tolerance and intolerance. To cultivate a peaceful society, it is imperative for the Muslim community to propagate the discourse of peace through a Qur'ānic lens and to embrace cultural and religious pluralism. By fostering connections between individuals of diverse spiritual backgrounds and avoiding the pitfalls of exclusivism and conflict, a harmonious coexistence can be facilitated. The crucial importance of a nuanced comprehension of religious teachings cannot be overstated, as religion often plays a central role in inter-national conflicts. Fundamentalism and antipathy towards reason can lead to misconceptions regarding religious convictions, making education a vital component in the cultivation of culturally informed and knowledgeable communities. Ultimately, it is the collective individuals who hold the power to shape the development of civilizations.

* * *