

## Purchasing Paradise

### Why Many Moderate Muslims Become Terrorists



By Khalil Ullah

Why do so many “moderate” Muslims trade civility for the savagery of extremist forms of Islamic fundamentalism? Are the allurements of sensual delights in paradise, bloodlust, and the spoils of war truly compelling reasons why otherwise “normal” Muslims engage in jihad, or “Islamic holy war”? To simply answer this question in the affirmative is not an adequate explanation.

Islamic fundamentalists include educated and rich Muslims who willingly eschew their relative comfort and safety for the rigors and risks of the battlefield. It is also common to hear of Muslims “converted” from their pleasure-seeking ways in bars, nightclubs, and brothels only to become suicide bombers. Such conversions are often accompanied by instantaneous changes in outward behavior.

From today’s western point of view such actions seem incomprehensible. They are not, however, inexplicable. To understand the appeal of Islamic fundamentalism for “mod-

erate” Muslims one must consider the Islamic teaching of how a true believer enters paradise.

The Quran, which is considered by Muslims to be Allah’s literally-dictated word, and thus the most authoritative Islamic text, portrays paradise as something to be purchased – a bartering between the believer and Allah. Sura (chapter) 9, verse 111, is both indicative and representative of this idea:

Allah has bought the believers’ lives and wealth so that they may have paradise. They fight in the way of Allah – they kill and are killed. It is a promise in the Torah, the Gospel, and the Quran to which He is obligated. Who is more faithful in [keeping the terms of] his contract than Allah? Rejoice then in your bargain with which you bargained with him. That is the great victory.



# Until All Have Heard

How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? – Romans 10:14

Mark Brink

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In the spring of 1997 our family arrived in Islamabad, Pakistan to join a team of workers who were reaching out to the Muslim population. The day our family stepped off the plane coincided with the Muslim festival of Eid ul-Adha (The Feast of Sacrifice) – during which Muslims offer a sacrificial animal in commemoration of Abraham’s offering of his son. As we left the airport and traveled down the streets of Islamabad to our new home, many of the houses we drove by showed the evidence of the “sacrifice”. Blood from the slaughtering of animals stained and trickled down the driveways of residences. We watched as imams prayed over the butchering of unsuspecting goats, lambs and cows.

The celebration of Eid ul-Adha comes at the comple-

tion of the annual Hajj pilgrimage in Mecca. Muslims worldwide join those in Mecca to offer an animal sacrifice. The Quran, in its depiction of this event, states that as Abraham prepared to offer his son, Allah ransomed the son with a “momentous sacrifice” – by providing a ram (37:107). The Quranic account of this event mirrors in some ways the Biblical account, but according to Islamic tradition (Hadith) the son offered was Ishmael, not Isaac. For Christians the sacrifice of Isaac foreshadowed our heavenly Father sending His only begotten Son to offer Himself as the spotless, sinless Lamb of God, satisfying the payment for our sins. The Quran and Islamic traditions exalt the faith of Abraham and Ishmael in this “sacrifice” drama, but explicitly reject the deity of Christ and the sacrificial price that Christ paid to secure our salvation.

As you read this edition of *Intercede*, remember that Muslims across the globe will celebrate Eid ul-Adha during the second week of September. By keeping this ceremony Muslims show their piety and dedication to Allah and his demand that they submit to his path. For Muslims, the sacrifice of a spotless “Lamb” is not required to take away their sins – but rather piety, dedication and submission to Allah. “It is not their meat nor their blood that reaches Allah; it is your piety that reaches Him” (Quran 22:37).

It is through acts of piety and dedication to ritual that Muslims base their hope for eternity in paradise. The last decade has witnessed a dramatic increase in terrorism, often reflecting a terrorist’s “act of piety in the name of Allah” in hopes of “purchasing paradise”.

As you intercede for Muslims during these next two months, never forget the amazing sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Our Lord loves every single Muslim – even those who are errantly trying to “purchase paradise”. For the world’s 1.6 billion Muslims, please join with me in praying the following scripture:

“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3).





### **Convert Hopes for Appeal**

*Iran*

A convert from Islam sentenced to five years in prison on a concocted charge of “disturbing the national security of Iran” is expected to be granted an appeal after waiting more than a year for a hearing.

Although there is no evidence that any action will be taken other than to confirm his sentence, Ebrahim Firoozi, 31, is expected to have the hearing on his sentence, according to advocacy group Middle East Concern (MEC).

A judge in Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in April 2015 sentenced Firoozi to five years in prison for “creating a group with the intention of disturbing national security” for his role in organizing Christian meetings and conducting evangelical work. Firoozi appealed but has been waiting for a year for a hearing with no resolution. – *Morning Star News*

### **Christian Family Flees Blasphemy Accusation**

*Pakistan*

A Pakistani Christian and his family have fled their home in the religiously conservative city of Gujrat, after he was accused of committing blasphemy by sending an offensive message via mobile-phone text.

Nadeem James, 23, from the Yaqoobabad area of the city, and his family are on the run after a friend of the family, Yasir Bashir, 30, went to the police saying that James had sent him a blasphemous poem, which was against Islam and its prophet, using the WhatsApp texting service.

One of James’s brothers, Faryad, told *World Watch*

*Monitor* that police then “forcibly took away and beat” two of Nadeem’s sisters-in-law, including one who has an 18-month-old son, in order to pressure them to provide information of James’s whereabouts.

However, the police told local newspapers that the two women were being kept in “protective custody” and would be released if any organisation took responsibility for their safety. – *World Watch Monitor*

### **Preacher Murdered; Six Suspects Arrested**

*Nigeria*

A female preacher was hacked to death in the early hours of July 9 near Nigeria’s capital. Eunice Elisha, a mother of seven, had gone out to preach as was usual, her husband, Olawale Elisha, a Redeemed Church of God Pastor, told local media.

Later, two of their sons, who had been practicing football, heard that a woman had been killed while preaching. “I told my children that it couldn’t be their mother, but they insisted we should go there and check,” Elisha said. “When we got there, we didn’t see anybody, they had even covered her blood with sand.”

A police officer confirmed a killing had taken place and that the body had been taken to a police station in Kubwa, on the outskirts of Abuja. “At the entrance of the station I saw a pickup van coming out,” Elisha said. “Inside it I saw the lifeless body of my wife at the back of the pickup van. At this point, my children and I burst into tears.”

Police have arrested six suspects, and an investigation continues. – *World Watch Monitor*

According to this verse, paradise can be obtained by believers (Muslims) through spending their wealth and giving their lives to “fight in the way of Allah,” a synonymous phrase in the Quran for jihad. This means that paradise is promised to both those who become warriors and those who provide material support for the sake of promoting Islam by means of jihad. The focus of these paradise-promised believers is to shed others’ blood (“they kill”) – while death, instead of something to be feared and avoided is transformed into something glorious by portraying it as martyrdom (“and are killed”).

As important as is this notion of jihad and martyrdom in exchange for paradise, so too is the inextricable idea that believers have negotiated a contract with Allah and come out of the exchange as winners (“That is the great victory”). If they will but give of themselves and their wealth for jihad, they obligate Allah to give them paradise. In other words, believers have leverage with Allah. This prospect generates a hope within Muslims that the rest of Islam utterly fails to provide for them.

To better appreciate this hope one must consider two principal characteristics of Islam and their practical effects on Muslims: Islam is deistic and legalistic. Islam teaches there is only one deity – Allah, the creator of the universe. Its monotheism, however, is not synonymous with the Bible which witnesses to God’s triune nature of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The concept of Allah in Islam is a monad in which there is no possibility of plurality and thus no possibility of loving relationships within his nature. Allah in Islam is unitarian, not trinitarian.

At best, the Islamic unitarian understanding of Allah can only allow for deism – meaning the concept of Allah is impersonal and non-relational. An entity devoid of love is incapable of loving others or of being loved. It is not surprising, therefore, that the relationship between Allah and believers is defined in Islam as that of a master to his slaves. Orthodox Islamic theology does not allow for intimacy or personal relationship with Allah.

Muslims conclude from the deistic teachings of Islam that Allah is not truly concerned for them. Although Muslims believe that Allah created human beings on a higher level than the rest of creation by enduing them with intelligence, they nevertheless have no assurance that this uniqueness indicates that they are valued by Allah. Al-



Ghazali, the famous medieval, Sunni Muslim theologian, is quoted, as if Allah were speaking:

These to bliss (Paradise) and I care not; and  
these to the fire (Hell), and I care not.<sup>i</sup>

This sentiment means that there is no difference between believers and unbelievers regarding their importance to Allah. By this a perverse equality is granted to unbelievers – though they perish in hell, they are nonetheless equal to believers in the following respect: as Allah has no concern for them, neither does he have any concern for the inhabitants of paradise. He is ultimately uninterested in all people, including Muslims. Allah in Islam is equally ambivalent towards all people. Such a thought is both unnerving and demoralizing.

As if the notion of an ambivalent deity were not a sufficient curse for any group of people, Muslims also bear the inconsistency that Allah is angry with them.<sup>ii</sup> He is quick to punish and never fails to exact revenge on those

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who disobey him whether on earth or in the afterlife. Even when it is impossible for believers to obey a given command, Allah still holds them responsible. For instance, Muslims are commanded to pray five times a day as well as to fast during the daylight hours during the month of Ramadan. A woman's prayers and fastings, however, are nullified if she is menstruating. Even if a female Muslim were to pray and fast during this time, Islam teaches that Allah rejects these actions. Thus a Muslim woman may find herself under constant guilt simply for being a woman!

This frustration and helplessness before Allah in Islam extends beyond female Muslims. All Muslims are subject to Allah's commands even if nature itself prevents them from obeying him! They can only hope that he will show them mercy in the afterlife though they can never be assured of it. In sum, Islam teaches through its deism that Allah is both ambivalent towards them as well as angry with them. This creates an atmosphere of great despair and guilt for Muslims.

The second characteristic of Islam to consider in light of our main subject is that of legalism. Islam is a religious system filled with numerous commands and prohibitions. Muslims are taught that they get extra credit with Allah for doing "good" works:

The likeness of those who expend their wealth in the way of Allah is as the likeness of a grain of corn that sprouts seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains. So Allah is as the likeness of a grain of corn that sprouts seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains. So Allah multiplies unto whom He wills; Allah is all-embracing, all-knowing.<sup>iii</sup> (Sura 2:262)

The idea that a Muslim's good works will be exponentially multiplied is corroborated by a number of passages in the various collections of Hadith (purported sayings of Muhammad that were not literal dictations of the Quran). A representative passage is found in Bukhari, the earliest of all the Hadith collections and the most authoritative among Sunni Muslims:

Verily, Allah has recorded good and bad deeds and He made them clear. Whoever intends to perform a good deed but does not do it, then Allah will record it as a complete good deed. If he intends to do it and does so, then Allah the Exalted will record it as ten good deeds up to seven hundred times as much or even more. If he intends to do a bad deed and does not do it, then Allah will record for him one complete good deed. If he does it then Allah will record for him a single bad deed. (Sahih Al-Bukhari, Kitab Al-Riqaq, [81], 6491; some English versions list it as

This hadith reinforces the concept mentioned earlier in Sura 9:111 – a Muslim is in a constant state of transaction with Allah. In spite of what should be a very easy way to accumulate good works, Muslims are still unable to honestly testify to having any assurance that their sins are forgiven. Islam fails to recognize how flawed people are because of their sinfulness. The more a Muslim tries to keep the laws of Islam, the more he realizes that it is impossible to do so. The result of vain attempts to "do good" ultimately produces increased feelings of guilt before Allah.

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Another aspect of legalism in Islam is that of outward compliance, which is considered sufficient for the performance of religious duties. For instance, the repetition in Arabic of the *shahada* (confession of faith), which says: “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger/apostle” is considered as affirmation of faith in Islam, regardless of intent or conscious understanding.<sup>iv</sup>

A second example is that of *salat* (the five daily prayers). A Muslim must go through the rituals of prayer, regardless of the attitude of his heart. There is no demand on inward purity such as is found in Psalm 66:18 – “If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear” or as in Matthew 6:15 – “But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions”. From the standpoint of a “moderate” Muslim who senses his guilt before Allah, the stifling demands of Islam with its unbearable burdens can be overcome by means of outward compliance with jihad. If Sura 9:111 is true, this creates hope for the Muslim in at least two significant ways:

**1. Assurance of paradise.** Instead of feeling like one is continually losing out in the struggle to acquire more good works than bad deeds, the reward of jihad is an appealing panacea for one’s sins. The Muslim now feels that he has struck a successful deal with Allah.

**2. Allah’s attention.** If a Muslim can have leverage with Allah by way of jihad, this means just for once, even if it should never happen again, the Muslim has made Allah pay attention to him.

Understanding these effects of Islam is an important key to understanding the appeal jihad or Islamic terrorism has on many “moderate” Muslims. Jihad or Islamic terrorism involves far more than being motivated by the promised sensual pleasure of paradise, bloodlust, and the spoils of war. Islam creates a ready acceptance among Muslims for outward compliance to an external command that promises a change in behavior of a disinterested, adversarial deity, prone to lashing out in anger. Obedience to Sura 9:111 and verses like it doesn’t require sorrow over past wrongdoings, yet places the “obedient” Muslim on the winning side of the negotiating table with Allah.

Considering the factors above, it is no wonder so many “moderate” Muslims find themselves attracted by the offer to purchase paradise. In light of these sobering reminders, may we who are redeemed by the blood of Christ be faithful in proclaiming the Gospel to Muslims. Let us be full of faith in our prayers for their salvation.

<sup>i</sup> W.H.T. Gairdner, *God as Triune, Creator Incarnate, Atoner: A Reply to Muhammadan Objections and an Essay in Philosophic Apology* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society for India, 1916), 58.

<sup>ii</sup> In reality, a completely ambivalent deity could not also be angry. Allah in Islam, however, is not subject to any principle of consistency. He is who he is and needs no explanation regardless of the angst it may cause believers.

<sup>iii</sup> Although not the main reason for quoting this verse, one is struck by the fact seen in the previous quote of Sura 9:111, Muslims are commended for spending their wealth “in the way of Allah,” which is synonymous with jihad.

<sup>iv</sup> According to most interpretations of Islamic law, a person who recites the *shahada* in Arabic automatically becomes a Muslim – even with no intent of conversion, or knowledge and understanding of Arabic. 

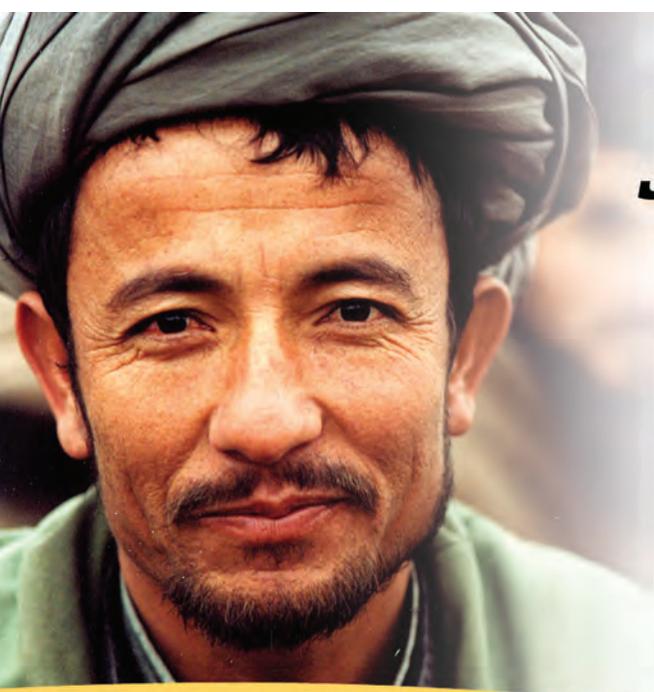
## Prayer Profile: Mazandarani, Iran



The Mazandarani (pop. 3,198,500) are a mix of Turkic tribes and Russian immigrants. They survive on agricultural, fishing and horse breeding industries. Their Palari language is similar to Farsi. The Mazandarani are 100% Muslim. Pray for:

1. Iranian Christians to reach the Mazandarani.
2. A missionary agency currently trying to engage the Mazandarani.
3. Dreams and visions for the Mazandarani.

\*For more information, see [joshuaproject.net](http://joshuaproject.net)



# JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

*Jumaa Prayer is now on  
Facebook. Please join today:  
Facebook.com/JumaaPrayer*



**Friday, Sept. 2, 2016. Please pray for**

*...Institute of Islamic Studies classes in Brussels during Sept. 5-9 and 12-16.  
...Andean Institute of Islamic Studies classes in Colombia during Sept. 5-9 and 12-16.  
...Institute of Islamic Studies classes in Romania during Sept. 5 - Oct. 7.*

**Friday, Sept. 9, 2016. Please pray for**

*...1.6 billion Muslims, who begin Eid ul-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice) at sundown today.  
...Institute of Islamic Studies classes in Argentina during Sept. 12-16.  
...newly baptized Christians from Muslim backgrounds in Europe; many have families that are still committed to Islam.*

**Friday, Sept. 16, 2016. Please pray for**

*...Raheem (pseudonym), a new believer in Saudi Arabia who needs a place to stay.  
...succor for refugees fleeing the war in Syria.  
...protection and favor for church planters in Muslim villages of Indonesia.*

**Friday, Sept. 23, 2016. Please pray for**

*...a Muslim Awareness Seminar in Florida during Sept. 23-26.  
...a major European Diaspora Consultation in Germany during Sept. 27-30.  
...Afghans attending churches in Europe; many have believed and been baptized.*

**Friday, Sept. 30, 2016. Please pray for**

*...a strategic "Who is My Neighbor?" seminar in New York state on Oct. 1.  
...a new secure Farsi chat room ministry which has been inundated with an average of 2,000 messages a day.  
...a Muslim Awareness Seminar in an Asian country during Oct. 4-14.*

**I URGE, THEN, FIRST OF ALL THAT REQUESTS, PRAYERS, INTERCESSION AND  
THANKSGIVING BE MADE FOR EVERYONE. – 1 TIMOTHY 2:1, NIV**

# JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

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Facebook. Please join today:  
[Facebook.com/JumaaPrayer](https://www.facebook.com/JumaaPrayer)*



**Friday, Oct. 7, 2016. Please pray for**

*...Christian churches in Zanzibar, Tanzania; regularly threatened by radical Muslims.  
...Arabic Scripture distribution in the Middle East and North Africa.  
...the protection of Muslim background believers in Mauritania, where it is against the law to convert.*

**Friday, Oct. 14, 2016. Please pray for**

*...a Muslim Awareness Seminar in Michigan during Oct. 17-18.  
...a prominent Muslim haji and his family in Burkina Faso who have turned to Jesus.  
...coffee house outreaches to Muslim students in the West Bank of Palestine.*

**Friday, Oct. 21, 2016. Please pray for**

*...a Muslim Awareness Seminar in New York state on Oct. 22.  
...Ali (pseudonym) in Yemen; he recently saw Jesus in a dream and has become a Christian.  
...outreach ministries to Muslim children in Paris, France.*

**Friday, Oct. 28, 2016. Please pray for**

*...Muslims who are disillusioned by violent Islam; that they will turn to Christ.  
...spiritual breakthrough among Arab migrants coming to Bosnia and Herzegovina.  
...for at least 2,000 women and children in Nigeria kidnapped by the radical Islamic group Boko Haram.*

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