

Surah 2. Al-Baqara

Asad: And slay them wherever you may come upon them, and drive them away from wherever they drove you away - for oppression is even worse than killing.¹⁶⁸ And fight not against them near the Inviolable House of Worship unless they fight against you there first;¹⁶⁹ but if they fight against you, slay them: such shall be the recompense of those who deny the truth.

Malik: Kill them wherever they confront you in combat and drive them out of the places from which they have driven you. Though killing is bad, creating mischief is worse than killing. Do not fight them within the precincts of the Sacred Mosque unless they attack you there; but if they attack you put them to the sword; that is the punishment for such unbelievers.

Mustafa Khattab:

Kill them wherever you come upon them¹ and drive them out of the places from which they have driven you out. For persecution² is far worse than killing. And do not fight them at the Sacred Mosque unless they attack you there. If they do so, then fight them—that is the reward of the disbelievers.

Pickthall: And slay them wherever ye find them, and drive them out of the places whence they drove you out, for persecution is worse than slaughter. And fight not with them at the Inviolable Place of Worship until they first attack you there, but if they attack you (there) then slay them. Such is the reward of disbelievers.

Yusuf Ali: And slay them wherever ye catch them and turn them out from where they have turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith.^{205 206}

Transliteration: Wa^oqtuloohum haythu thaqiftumoohum waakhrijoohum min haythu akhrajookum waalfitnatu ashaddu mina alqatli wala tuqatiloohum AAinda almasjidi alharami hatta yuqatiloohum feehi fain qatalookum fa^oqtuloohum kathalika jazao alkafireena

Author Comments

168 - In view of the preceding ordinance, the injunction "slay them wherever you may come upon them" is valid only within the context of hostilities already in progress (Razi), on the understanding that "those who wage war against you" are the aggressors or oppressors (a war of liberation being a war "in God's cause"). The translation, in this context, of fitnah as "oppression" is justified by the application of this term to any affliction which may cause man to go astray and to lose his faith in spiritual values (cf. Lisan al-'Arab).

169 - This reference to warfare in the vicinity of Mecca is due to the fact that at the time of the revelation of this verse the Holy City was still in the possession of the pagan Quraysh, who were hostile to the Muslims. However - as is always the case with historical references in the Qur'an - the above injunction has a

general import, and is valid for all times and circumstances.

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This is probably the most misquoted verse from the Quran. To properly understand the verse, we need to put it into context. Misquoting verses and taking them out of context can be applied to any scripture. For example, in the Bible, Jesus says, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword!" (Matthew 10:34). He also says, "But as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to be their king—bring them here and slaughter them in my presence!" (Luke 19:27). And Moses says, "The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is his name." (Exodus 15:3). For more details, see the Introduction.

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Persecuting Muslims to abandon their faith.

205 - This passage is illustrated by the events that happened at Hudaibiya in the sixth year of the Hijra, though it is not clear that it was revealed on that occasion. The Muslims were by this time a strong and influential community. Many of them were exiles from Mecca, where the Pagans had established an intolerant autocracy, persecuting Muslims, preventing them from visiting their homes, and even keeping them out by force from performing the Pilgrimage during the universally recognised period of truce. This was intolerance, oppression, and autocracy to the last degree, and the mere readiness of the Muslims to enforce their rights as Arab citizens resulted without bloodshed in an agreement which the Muslims faithfully observed. The Pagans, however, had no scruples in breaking faith, and it is unnecessary here to go into subsequent events.

206 - Suppress faith: in the narrower as well as the larger sense. If they want forcibly to prevent you from exercising your sacred rites, they have declared war on your religion, and it would be cowardice to ignore the challenge or to fail in rooting out the tyranny.

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