

Jihad Fatwa for Gaza: Muslim Scholars Speak, Governments Falter

News:

In March 2025, the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS) issued an official fatwa declaring it obligatory (fard) for Muslims to engage in jihad to liberate Gaza. The fatwa calls on both individuals and governments to provide military, financial, and political support to the Palestinians, urging Muslim states to sever ties with the wretched illegal Jewish entity and take decisive action against the ongoing genocide.

The situation in Gaza, following the entity's intensified military campaign since October 2023, has resulted in severe civilian casualties, siege, and the destruction of essential infrastructure. Despite the fatwa's strong stance, the response from Muslim-majority governments, including Malaysia, has largely been cautious, limited to condemnations and humanitarian aid – in short, lukewarm.

Comment:

The fatwa reflects a critical reaffirmation of Islamic principles, emphasizing that jihad is a noble duty to defend oppressed Muslims, not an act of extremism. It stresses that protecting Gaza is a religious obligation deeply rooted in Islam, particularly when local populations are unable to defend themselves.

However, the tepid response from Muslim governments has been a source of deep regret. Despite the fatwa, leaders across the Muslim world have largely refrained from acting beyond diplomatic statements. Malaysia, while traditionally supportive of Palestine, similarly limited its response to aid and advocacy without taking the stronger measures the fatwa envisages. Fear of geopolitical consequences and internal caution appear to have outweighed religious duty, exposing the political paralysis afflicting much of the Muslim leadership. By contrast, civil society, NGOs, and independent scholars across the Muslim world have embraced the fatwa's spirit. From Malaysia to the broader Muslim world, public support for Gaza has been strong and unwavering, with grassroots calls for political action, boycotts, and greater solidarity reflecting the deep resonance of the fatwa among the masses.

While the fatwa itself does not explicitly call for the re-establishment of the Khilafah (Caliphate), it exposes the fundamental weakness of the Muslim world's current division. Without a unified leadership, such as that which the Khilafah once provided, the collective will of the Ummah remains fragmented and ineffective. The fatwa indirectly points to the urgent need for a political structure capable of mobilizing the Ummah's strength in defense of the oppressed.

In essence, the fatwa is more than a call to action for Gaza; it is a mirror reflecting the Ummah's disunity and the desperate need for a courageous, unified leadership. While governments falter, the heart of the Ummah remains alive, yearning for justice, solidarity, and a leadership that can fulfill its rightful duties.

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