

Progressive Islam in Practice

Takfir Series: Part I

Introduction to Takfir

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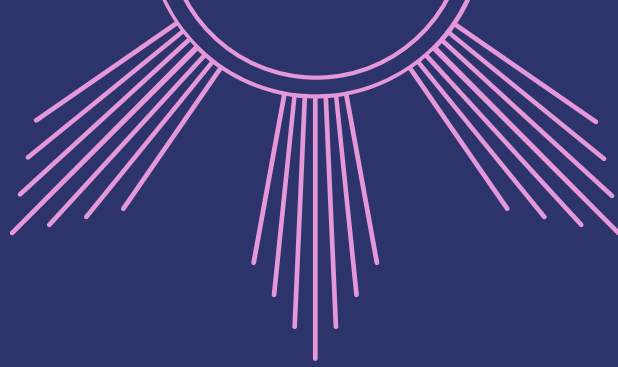


MUSLIMS FOR
PROGRESSIVE VALUES

&



Alliance
of
Inclusive Muslims



Takfir

/tak'fɪə/

noun

The action or practice of declaring that a fellow Muslim is guilty of apostasy (i.e. not believing in the essential tenets of Islam) and therefore no longer a Muslim.

Oxford English Dictionary

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

TAKFIR

The roots of *takfir* are in the words *kafir* (one who hides or covers) and *kufr* (ingratitude/unbelief/vice)

Kufr (ingratitude/unbelief/vice)

- It's generally acknowledged there are two types of *kufr*.
- The first type of *kufr* sees the disparaging of the fundamental teachings of Islam.
- The second type of *kufr* sees the commission of vice, whether it be theft, ingratitude, or murder.
- According to a number of Hadith & Quranic verses (featured in the next slides) in which the term *kufr* is employed, sinning is not means for excommunication nor does it denote falling out of the religion. Additionally, no Hadith indicate that Prophet Muhammad ever takfired an individual for not being 'Muslim' enough.

Kafir (infidel/denier)

- A pre-Islamic term that refers to farmers burying seeds.
- In its modern application, it refers to an individual who hides or covers the truth.

“

However, he who is grateful [to God] is but grateful for his own good; and he who is ungrate-ful [kufur] [should know that], verily, my Sustainer is self-sufficient, most generous in giving!”

The Qur'an, 27:40

”

So what is Takfir?

- The practice of labeling Muslims as nonbelievers or apostates to legitimize violence and oppression against them.
- Originally, the term was used to sanction violence against leaders (and their supporters) of Islamic countries and states who did not apply a radical interpretation of Shari'a law in their political rule.
- In recent decades, the term and its application has expanded to incorporate different Islamic groups and denominations as a way to sanction violence against individuals or groups, who are ex-Muslims, or "not Muslim enough".

"Abusing a Muslim is fusuq (an evil doing) and killing him is kufr (disbelief)."

Al-Bukhari and Al-Turmuzi

In the above Hadith, the word *kufr*, as it pertains to fighting with, violence towards, or the murder of a fellow Muslim, refers to disbelief. However, we cannot assume *kufr* as it is used here to mean leaving Islam.

"Hence, if two groups of believers fall to fighting, make peace between them"

The Qur'an 49:9

Instead, the Qur'an calls on Muslims who are fighting to make peace and refers to both as believers. Nowhere does inter-fighting, which is *kufr*, result in the exclusion of one group from the religion.

A POST QURANIC TERM

- It's important to highlight that the term *takfir* was never mentioned in the Qur'an nor was it ever uttered by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).
- The term is a post-Quranic term, first used nearly 100 years after the death of the Prophet (PBUH).
- Although the phrase didn't exist, instances of apostasy occurred during Prophet Muhammad's lifetime but the way in which he dealt with them, i.e. the Islamic way, differs greatly from how individuals treat cases of apostasy today, i.e. in an unIslamic way.

For example, when a group of Muslims was seeking refuge in Ethiopia from the persecution of the Quraysh in Mecca, one of the Companions, Ubaydallah bin Jahsh left Islam and became Christian. Upon hearing the news, the Prophet (PBUH) did nothing, refusing to order him to be punished.

A POST QURANIC CONCEPT

- In addition to being a post Quranic phrase, the concept of takfir, as it is applied today by extremist groups and ordinary Muslims, did not exist in the time of the Quranic revelation and the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)
- As we will learn about later in the series, the Qur'an promoted the tolerance of other religions and reminded Muslims that they had no place to judge others, that all judgement remained with God and that they had no authority to coerce others into agreement with them.

**"There shall be no coercion
in matters of faith"**

Qur'an 2:256

How do People Apply Takfir?

- Despite having no basis in the Qur'an or Sunnah, today *takfir* is used by a number of radical extremists who claim that the following Muslims are apostates and therefore worthy of death:
 - Muslims who commit sins;
 - Rulers who do not rule according to the Shari`ah, and their followers;
 - Muslims who are not members of their group (e.g. IS, Boko Haram, al-Qaeda);
 - Muslims who refuse to label individuals/groups '*kafir*' whom the groups consider to be '*kafir*';
 - Muslims who live in an 'un-Islamic' society and do not migrate; and
 - Muslims residing in dar al-harb (lands ruled by non-Muslims).

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