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Islam denouncews terrorism : God calls to the Abode of Peace and He guides whom He wills to a straight path.

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Abstrak

Since the horrific and tragic events of September 11th, nothing has been more discussed and scrutinised in the public arena than Islam. The world at large has been subjected to a wealth of analysis by 'experts' which has further fuelled people's curiosity about this religion. Book-sellers in Europe and the Middle East have reported an upsurge in interest in the Qur'an, which confirms what one British newspaper editor had to say: 'Islam [..] has never been of greater interest to the people of Britain than it is today.'1 In America, where there are some six million Muslims, Islam is said to be the nation's fastest growing religion, despite there being no systematic form of missionary work.2 Contrary to official praise of Islam by the President of America and the Prime Minister of England, some of the media have bluntly suggested that the action taken after September's event is a war and Islam is at its heart. Despite there being a conscious effort to truly understand Islam and Muslims, there seem to be those who are determined to paint terrorism and Islam with the same brush. Simplified and undifferentiated descriptions of Islam help create an image by which Islam is seen as hostile to Western culture, and a religion of backwardness and oppression. 'A selective presentation and analysis of Islam and events by both scholars and political commentators too often inform articles and editorials on the Muslim world', says John Esposito, Director of the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, at Georgetown University in Washington. 'This selective analysis fails to tell the whole story [?] While it sheds some light, it is a partial light that obscures and distorts the full picture.'3 The world community shares this small planet with the Muslim community which comprises some 1.2 billion adherents to the faith, so anyone who understands Islam to be a religion of terror would naturally be concerned. However, these fears are not well-grounded. Writing in Time magazine, Karen Armstrong asserts that: 'If the evil carnage we witnessed on September 11 were ISLAM DENOUNCES TERRORISM ? 8 typical of the faith, and Islam truly inspired and justified such violence, its growth and the increasing presence of Muslims in both Europe and the U.S. would be a terrifying prospect. Fortunately, this is not the case.'4 There seems to be a noticeable discrepancy between knowledge of Islam on the one hand and the certainty of judgements on the other. While the terrorist crime of September 11th may have been the work of some misled individuals, it was certainly not the product of Islam. Islam is a religion that preaches peace, compassion, justice, and frowns upon suicide. The kamikaze assault on innocent civilians stood in direct conflict with Islam's most elementary principles, teachings and spirit ? one does not need to be an expert to realise this. ISLAM and TRADITION If Islam is a religion of peace, why the misunderstanding? How can a religion of peace gain a reputation for being a religion of war and terror? The answer lies in the way that Islamic scriptures are misinterpreted to suit perverted agendas. Words and phrases that are often repeated in the media have been misconstrued by individuals to give incorrect meanings. The deliberate blur between 'jihad' and acts of terror has been a phenomenon that has resulted from those unqualified in the science of Sacred Law. Since the end of the Sunni Ottoman Caliphate in 1924, the Muslim world has been fragmented. The loss of unification created many difficulties from which Muslims are still trying to recover. For one

thing, it has seen the loss of the promulgation of traditional Islam, which has now given way to individuals claiming the right to reinterpret Islamic texts to grant them legitimacy in their own ideas. This has seen a tendency 'toward ambiguity and the careless use of many important terms.'5 Traditional Islam in contrast is related to the notion of orthodoxy, clarity and authority: to continuity and consistency in the transmission of the truth. It places its reliance upon classical scholarship as exemplified in the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence. Within this tradition of Islam, a true Islamic landscape emerges, encompassing the richness of scholarly tradition and its illuminating contribution to the advancement of civilisation.