

“Holy War” is not an Islamic term?

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Linda Sarsour’s use of the word *jihad* at the recent convention of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) raised quite a few eyebrows, with many non-Muslims claiming that Sarsour was calling for a “holy war” against the Trump administration.

Many Muslims immediately responded by stating that those non-Muslims misunderstood the true meaning of the word *jihad*. One Muslim, Imam Kifah Mustapha ElMera’bi [sic], went even farther. He recently [wrote this](#) about Sarsour’s use of the word *jihad*:

Following verbal attacks against Linda Sarsour from Islamophobes and remarks from concerned Muslims that she should have used a different term than Jihad, I say this: Jihad is NOT Holy War. "Holy War" is not an Islamic term...

Imam EIMera'bi is one of the imams of the Mosque Foundation, located in Bridgeview, Illinois. The Mosque Foundation wants to become

the leading mosque in the United States in providing Islamic guidance and services to the community.

With this lofty goal in mind, one would think that Imam EIMera'bi has to be correct in his assertion that *jihad* is not "Holy War," and that "Holy War" is not an Islamic term.

But if that is true, then that misunderstanding of the word *jihad* is rampant in the Muslim community, e.g.:

1. *Jihad: Striving, holy war.* (Dictionary of Islamic Words & Expressions, Darussalam publishers in Saudi Arabia.)
2. *...the earliest (and therefore fundamental) Qur'anic reference to the question of jihad, or holy war...* (The Message of the Qur'an, n. 167, p. 51. This is the translation of the Koran endorsed and distributed by CAIR, the Council on American-Islamic Relations.)
3. *...he was taken prisoner in a jihad – that is, a holy war...* (The Message of the Qur'an, n. 72, p. 284.)
4. *...a woman taken captive in a "holy war" (jihad)...* (The Message of the Qur'an, n. 58, p. 727.)
5. *And He (Allah) said: Jihad (Islamic holy war) is ordained for you (Muslims)...* (Sheikh 'Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Humaid, "The Call to Jihad (Fighting For Allah's Cause) in the Qur'an," Interpretation of the Meanings of The Noble Qur'an (Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam, 1994), p. 1046.)
6. *...the Prophet nevertheless said to his companions that they had returned from the lesser holy war to the greater holy war, the greater jihad being the inner battle...* (Seyyed Hossein Nasr, The Spiritual Significance of Jihad)
7. *The holy war (jihad) is a collective duty...* (The Mainstay Concerning Jurisprudence (Al-Umda fi 'l-Fiqh), in a chapter titled "The Book of the Holy War (Kitab al-Jihad), p. 313.)
8. *"Holy War." See Jihad.* (Subject Index to Reliance of the Traveller ('Umdat al-Salik), A Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law, p. 1162.)

Perhaps Imam EIMera'bi will contact CAIR, and the authors and publishers of these works, and let them know that they are perpetuating an un-Islamic understanding of the word *jihad*. I'm sure a trip to Saudi Arabia to visit with the folks at Darussalam publishers about this could be very enlightening for the Imam.