

## *The Protection of Human Life: A Survey of the Qur'an and the Sunnah*

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**Abstract:** This research paper provides a comprehensive exploration of the profound importance placed on the sanctity of human life within Islamic teachings, as derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The study underscores the emphasis Islam places on the protection, preservation, and respect for human life as a foundational principle in its doctrine. Through a detailed analysis of key Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions, the paper examines the ethical, moral, and practical implications of these teachings in multiple spheres of human life. These include areas such as medical ethics, where the protection of life takes precedence, social justice, which emphasizes fairness and the welfare of all individuals, conflict resolution, advocating for peace and the sanctity of human life even in times of war, and environmental stewardship, which promotes the preservation of life by caring for the planet. The research sheds light on how these principles shape Islamic perspectives on contemporary global issues and their relevance in today's complex world.

**Key Words:** : human life, Blood money, sanctity of life, Qisas and Diyat

**Introduction:**

The Qur'an and the Sunnah profoundly underscore the sanctity and protection of human life. This paper aims to elucidate the core principles highlighted in these Islamic sources regarding the reverence for life and the implications of these teachings in contemporary society. Allah created the Human Being with an absolute beauty and called it احسن تقويم. With this, ALLAH blessed the Human Being with intellect and put their reverence on top of everything, and announced the reverence of his life in His Glorious Book Al-Quran “Do not kill a person, whom Allah has given sanctity, except rightfully”<sup>i</sup> (Al- An’ām 32).

Islam upholds the principle of ensuring the sanctity of life for all individuals, irrespective of their religious beliefs. Within the Islamic perspective, each human life is regarded as sacred, and every person is endowed with inherent and universal rights granted by Allah from the moment of their birth. As stated by the Almighty: “And indeed We have honored the Children of Adam, and We have carried them on land and sea, and have provided them with lawful good things, and have preferred them to many of those whom We have created with a marked preferment. (Al Bani-Israel,70)”<sup>ii</sup>

The honor bestowed by Allah upon humanity during creation was the gift of a sanctified inviolability, expressed through the entitlements to life, liberty, and property. The primary and paramount universal right, originating from the Shari’ah and classical Islamic Law, is the acknowledgment of the right to life.

**1. Sanctity of Human Life in the Qur'an:**

Here are a lot of Quranic Verses that describes the dignity and sacredness of human life and protect it through laws.

"يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْقَتْلِ-الْحُرُّ بِالْحُرِّ وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالْأُنثَىٰ بِالْأُنثَىٰ-فَمَنْ عَفَىٰ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ شَيْءٌ فَاتَّبِعْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدَاءُ إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ-ذَلِكَ تَخْفِيفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ-فَمَنْ اعْتَدَىٰ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ". (178Al Baqara)<sup>iii</sup>

“O you who have believed, prescribed for you is legal retribution for those murdered - the free for the free, the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. But whoever overlooks from his brother anything, then there should be a suitable follow-up and payment to him with good conduct. This is an alleviation from your Lord and a mercy. But whoever transgresses after that will have a painful punishment.”

"ولكم فى القصاص حياة"<sup>iv</sup> ( Al Baqarah, 179).

“And there is for you in legal retribution [saving of] life, O you [people] of understanding, that you may become righteous.”

"وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ-وَمَنْ قُتِلَ مَظْلُومًا فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لَوْلِيهِ سُلْطٰنًا فَلَا يُسْرِفُ فِى الْقَتْلِ-إِنَّهُ كَانَ مَنصُورًا"<sup>v</sup>. ( Al Bani Israel, 33)

“And do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden, except by right. And whoever is killed unjustly - We have given his heir authority, but let him not exceed limits in [the matter of] taking life. Indeed, he has been supported [by the law].”

"وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَدْعُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ وَ لَا يَقْتُلُونَ النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَ لَا يَزْنُونَ وَ مَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ يَلْقَ أَثَامًا" ( Al Furqan, 68) <sup>vi</sup>

“And those who do not invoke with Allah another deity or kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed], except by right, and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse. And whoever should do that will meet a penalty.”

"مَنْ أَجَلَ ذَلِكَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَى بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنَّهُ مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَ مَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَ لَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولُنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنْهُمْ بَعَدَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْأَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُونَ" ( Al Maidah, 32) <sup>vii</sup>

“And those who do not invoke with Allah another deity or kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed], except by right, and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse. And whoever should do that will meet a penalty.”

## 2. Protection of Human Life in the Sunnah:

**Hadiths on Preservation of Life:** Highlight key Hadiths from the Sunnah that emphasize the protection and preservation of human life, such as those stressing the importance of love, mercy, and kindness among believers.

Hazrat Muhammad (ﷺ) said: "Indeed the first cases to be judged between the people are those of bloodshed." <sup>viii</sup> ( Sunan Tirmizi)

Bara' bin Azib narrated that Hazrat Muhammad (ﷺ) said: “If this world were to be destroyed, that would be less significant before Allah (SWT) than the unlawful killing of a believer.” <sup>ix</sup> (Sunan Ibn Majah)

Hazrat Muhammad (ﷺ) said, "None of you should point out towards his Muslim brother with a weapon, for he does not know, Satan may tempt him to hit him and thus he would fall into a pit of fire (Hell)" ( Sahih Bukhari). <sup>x</sup>

Hazrat Muhammad (ﷺ) said, "The biggest of Al-Ka`ba'ir (the great sins) are (1) to join others as partners in worship with Allah, (2) to murder a human being, (3) to be undutiful to one's parents (4) and to make a false statement," or said, "to give a false witness." (Sahih Bukhari) <sup>xi</sup>

Abdullah narrated that Hazrat Muhammad (ﷺ) said: “The first matter concerning which judgment will be passed among the people on the Day of Resurrection will be bloodshed.” (Sunan Ibn Majah) <sup>xii</sup>

Abdullah bin ‘Amr narrated that:

“I saw the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) circumambulating the Ka’bah and saying: ‘How good you are and how good your fragrance; how great you are and how great your sanctity. By the One in Whose Hand is the soul of Muhammad, the sanctity of the believer is greater before Allah than your sanctity, his blood and his wealth, and to think anything but good of him.’” (Sunan ibn Majah) <sup>xiii</sup>

## 3. Suicide in islam:

Suicide is the act of killing one's own life voluntarily and intentionally. Committing suicide is strictly forbidden in Islam. Life is blessed and should not be ended because of lack of resources, poverty or hopelessness.

The Al Mighty says: "And do not put your own hands into destruction and becomes spiritual excellence, Allah loves those who do the good."( Al-Baqara, 195) <sup>xiv</sup> Imam Baghawi says in Ma'alemTanzil, "it refers to the suicide of a Muslim"<sup>xv</sup>.

In Hadith The Hazrat Sabit bin Dhahhak (RA) described that Hazrat Muhammad (ﷺ) said: "Whoever commits suicide with anything in hell if they (always) the same thing with the torment will go."( Sahih Muslim)<sup>xvi</sup>

#### 4. Qisas and Diyat; importance and rules:

Qisas means "to follow", or "to cut" or "to relate"<sup>xvii</sup>. In Islamic law it means "retaliation in kind", "eye for an eye", or "revengeful justice". According to Islam qisas is applied in cases of killing and of non-fatal wounding. Qisas is obligatory on Muslims as described in the Holy Quran, but the necessity of qisas is related to the state authority and not to an individual or a specific group whether that group is in the minority or the majority.

The state will ensure the qisas and implement it so that the heirs of the deceased could not want to take revenge on their own and they could not be guilty of atrocities in a state of provocation due to emotions. Qisas is not the only principle of Islam but it was obligatory in other religions as well. Historically, qisas is a legal concept similar to the principle of "eye for an eye" , which is recorded for the first time in the Code of Hammurabi.<sup>xviii</sup>

Qiṣāṣ (lit., equivalence) juridically requires that the retaliation or retribution must be equivalent to the harm inflicted and should be taken in the same way, and if possible by the same means that he used in killing or hurting his victim. The punishment should, in other words, be equal to the crime as far as possible. Qiṣāṣ under Islamic law applies to a murderer who kills with the intention to kill or with the intention to cause bodily injury that is likely to cause death. The use of a weapon or lethal instrument in homicide is often indicative of the intention to cause death on the part of its user.

#### 5.Types of Murders in Islamic Law:

Muslim jurists, both Sunni and Shia, have classified homicide into three main types:

1. murder (qatl al-‘amd), which is punishable by just retaliation (qiṣāṣ);
2. killing that is a result of error (qatl al-khaṭā’), such as when a hunter shoots and kills a human being whom he mistook for game (this is punishable by payment of blood money (diya) to the heirs of the deceased plus an expiation (kaffārah) that consists of charity to the poor or of atonement by fasting.
3. culpable homicide (qatl shibh al-‘amd), such as when A strikes B with a stick without intending to kill him but his hostile act actually kills B (this too is punishable by payment of blood money (diya)).

#### 6. Blood money in Islam

In the realm of Islamic jurisprudence, "Diya" (دية) represents the monetary recompense offered to the victim or their descendants in instances of accidental murder, physical injury, or unintentional property damage. Serving as an alternative to the concept of qisas. In Arabic, the word means both blood money and ransom, and it is spelled sometimes as diyah or diyeh".<sup>xix</sup>

Diya is obligatory in qatl khata and when the murderer is a child or a mental patient. It is optional between qisas and diya in qatl-e-amd. In qatl-e-amd if both parties are agreed for diya then diya is paid to victim's family, otherwise qisas is applied.

Historically, Diya compensation rates have exhibited variability depending on the gender and religious affiliation of the victim. In contemporary times, the concept of Diya continues to hold significance within the legal frameworks of Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Notably, in Iran and Pakistan, the Diya remains consistent for both Muslims and non-Muslims. Conversely, in Saudi Arabia, the compensation varies based on the religious identity of the victim.

**Blood money of various murders:**

Murders type	Camels	Gold	Silver	Cow	Goat	Dresses
Qatl al-‘amd	Qisas/forbidden/diya (100 camels 4 types or what is decided in both parties)	1000 dinar	12000 dirham	200 cows	2000 goats	200 dresses
Qatl al-khaṭā’	100 camels of 5 types	1000 dinar	12000 dirham	200 cows	2000 goats	200 dresses
Qatl shibh al-‘amd	100 camels of 4 types	1000 dinar	12000 dirham	200 cows	2000 goats	200 dresses

**Who will pay blood money?**

- 1- In Qatl al-‘amd the murderer himself will pay the blood money.
- 2- in Qatl al-khaṭā’ and qatl shiba al-amd the nearer relatives will pay it by contribution.

**When blood money will be paid?**

- 1- In Qatl al-‘amd the blood money will be paid immediately.
- 2- In Qatl al-khaṭā’ and qatl shiba al-amd the blood money can be delayed up to 3 years.

**Blood money of Dhimmi:**

There are three views among Islamic scholars about Dhimmi if he is murdered by mistake:

- 1- His blood money will be half of Muslims. (Imam Maik)
- 2- His blood money will be one third of Muslims. (Imam Shafi)
- 3- His blood money will be the same as Muslims. (Imam Abu Hanifa)

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## 7. Historical Context

The Prophet SA had implemented qisas in both murder and injury.

Qisas in Murder:

Example of revenge by more than one man for the murder of one man in the period of Hazrat Umar RZ. 7 persons killed one man.

Qisas in Injury:

A Jew crushes a girl's head with a stone and Muhammad SA crushes Jew's head with a stone in revenge (Qisas).

## 8. Contemporary Relevance

The death penalty is considered injustice, inhuman and human rights violation in the 19th century. Human Rights activists and Amnesty International (London based international organization for human rights) are opposed the death penalty in all crimes without exemption –regardless of the nature or circumstances of the crime, guilt or innocence or method of execution or who is accused. They have begun to reform the death penalty and convert it to the prison system. Amnesty International has been campaigning to abolish it for more than 40 years, and had achieved its goal in most of the countries. Now most of the countries have abolished death penalty and use prison system or other punishments as an alternative like England. ( <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/death-penalty/>

)<sup>xx</sup>

Still there are some countries, in which people are punished with death penalty for severe crimes including murder, rape, corruption, drug-related offenses, treason, homosexuality.

These are the methods of execution used nowadays:

- 1- Lethal injection
- 2- Hanging
- 3- Shooting
- 4- Beheading

10<sup>th</sup> October is declared as “World Day Against the Death Penalty”, which “unifies the global abolitionist movement and mobilizes civil society, political leaders, lawyers, public opinion, and more to support the call for universal abolition of capital punishment.”

## 9. Islam and The Death Penalty

Islam, like many other major world religions, addresses the matter of the death penalty. Islamic sharia is believed to cover all aspects of human’s life. The aims of the Islamic laws are to protect the five indispensables as essential ideologies. These five indispensables are:

- The protection of life.
- The protection of religion
- The protection of offspring, or an individual’s lineage

- The protection of property
- The protection of an individual's intellect

To ensure the protection of these five indispensables, Islam has recognized two methods:

1. Moral Education: Islamic teachings emphasizes the importance of cultivating piety, tolerance, patience, forgiveness, and goodness. Muslims believe that Allah Al-Mighty is aware of all deeds of them and that they will finally face His judgement in the hereafter.

“Be mindful of your duty to God. Lo! God is well acquainted with all that you do”.( Quran 5:8)<sup>xxi</sup>

2. Punishment: Islam recommends forms of punishment, which establish the criminal justice systems of Islam.

Protection of human life is the prime objective of Islamic law, for which Qisas is obligatory. In Quran Allah says:

“And there is for you in legal retribution [saving of] life, O you [people] of understanding, that you may become righteous”.( Al Baqar, 179)<sup>xxii</sup>

Islamic law is based on the fundamental principle to “accrue benefit” for the the individual as well as for the public interest and “repelling harm” away from them. Thus, the death penalty is a way of preventing sin and crime in Islam and keep away harm from the masalih.

Although, the Quran does mention the concept of qisas (retaliation) in case of murder, it also emphasizes forgiveness and mercy.

“And therein We had ordained for them: 'A life for a life, and an eye for an eye, and a nose for a nose, and an ear for an ear, and a tooth for a tooth, and for all wounds, like for like. But whosoever forgoes it by way of charity, it will be for him an expiation. Those who do not judge by what Allah has revealed are indeed the wrong-doers”.( Al Maidha, 45)<sup>xxiii</sup>

The Quran encourages the Heirs of the deceased to forgive the committer, and seek financial benefits called blood money – “Diya” as an act of assistance or in compensation for crime.

In Islamic law, death penalty may be applied for certain crimes, including murder and apostasy, but the application of these penalties is expected to be carried out with a high degree of fairness, evidence, and due process. Islam also emphasizes on the importance and implementation of justice.<sup>xxiv</sup>

“O you who believe, be upholders of justice - witnesses for Allah, even though against (the interest of) your selves or the parents, and the kinsmen. One may be rich or poor, Allah is better caretaker of both. So do not follow desires, lest you should swerve. If you twist or avoid (the evidence), then, Allah is all-aware of what you do”.( An Nisa, 135)<sup>xxv</sup>

However, In Islam the death penalty is allowed only in four conditions

1. Qisas- retaliation
2. Zina- adultery
3. Riddah - apostasy
4. Hirabah – waging war against god and society

## 10. Practical Implications in Various Spheres:

Islamic teachings have a significant impact on medical ethics, with a strong emphasis on the sanctity of human life. While there is diversity of opinion within the Islamic world, certain principles are widely accepted and influence perspectives on medical issues, including Making the forbidden things lawful when necessary, and medical interventions.

- **Making the forbidden things lawful when necessary to save life**

Allah has allowed in Quran to eat

"إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أُهْلَ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَ لَا عَادٍ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ". (Al Baqara, 173).<sup>xxvi</sup>

“He has only forbidden to you dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah. But whoever is forced [by necessity], neither desiring [it] nor transgressing [its limit], there is no sin upon him. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful”.

- **Medical Interventions:**

Islam enforces the patient to seek medical treatment. The Prophet Muhammad said many times, "Make use of medical treatment, for Allah has not made a disease without appointing a remedy for it."<sup>xxvii</sup>

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, "Healing is in three things: cupping, a gulp of honey or cauterization, (branding with fire) but I forbid my followers to use cauterization (branding with fire)". ( Sahih Bukhari)<sup>xxviii</sup>

“A man came to the Prophet and said, "My brother has some abdominal trouble." The Prophet said to him "Let him drink honey." The man came for the second time and the Prophet said to him, "Let him drink honey." He came for the third time and the Prophet said, "Let him drink honey." He returned again and said, "I have done that ' The Prophet then said, "Allah has said the truth, but your brother's abdomen has told a lie. Let him drink honey." So, he made him drink honey and he was cured”. ( Sahih Bukhari)<sup>xxix</sup>

- **Abortion:**

Views on abortion vary within the Islamic world, but many scholars emphasize the sanctity of life from the moment of conception. Abortion is often only considered permissible in specific circumstances, such as when the mother's life is at risk.

"وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ إِمْلَاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ إِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ كَانَ خِطَاً كَبِيرًا".<sup>xxx</sup> (Al Bani Israil)

“And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you. Indeed, their killing is ever a great sin”.

- **Withholding and Withdrawing Treatment:**

There is a consensus among Islamic scholars that withdrawing or withholding treatment is permissible when it is deemed medically futile or excessively burdensome for the patient.

- **Spiritual Considerations:**



Islamic teachings emphasize the spiritual and ethical dimensions of end-of-life care, with an emphasis on compassion, maintaining the dignity of the dying, and involving family in decision-making.

In summary, Islamic teachings on medical ethics, grounded in the sanctity of human life, guide Muslim perspectives on medical interventions. These teachings emphasize the ethical principles of compassion, mercy, consent, and the obligation to preserve life while recognizing the limits of human intervention in the divine order. It's important to note that interpretations may vary, and individuals may consult with religious scholars or ethicists to address specific medical ethical dilemmas in light of Islamic principles.

### Conclusion:

In conclusion, the Qur'an and the Sunnah lay a firm foundation emphasizing the sanctity and protection of human life. These teachings have practical implications in contemporary society, influencing ethical, moral, and legal considerations. The principles drawn from Islamic sources provide guidance in various spheres, ensuring the respect, protection, and preservation of human life in all its manifestations.

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<sup>xxviii</sup> Sahih Bukhari, book 71, hadith number 585. 1422 H.

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