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ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES OF WAR AND DEFENCE AND THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF MUSLIMS: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY IN THE LIGHT OF SURAH AN-NISA

Dr. Tanveer Qasim
Associate Professor
Department of Islamic Studies
University of Engineering and Technology (UET), Lahore, Pakistan
Dr. Usman Shafiq
Teaching Fellow Department of Islamic Studies
University of Engineering and Technology (UET), Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract
Islam provides a comprehensive ethical and legal framework for addressing conflict, protecting human life, resisting oppression, and maintaining justice in society. The Qur'an discusses the responsibilities of Muslims in situations of insecurity and armed conflict while emphasizing justice, restraint, the protection of vulnerable people, respect for peace agreements, and accountability for the unlawful taking of life. This study examines the principles of war and defence and the responsibilities of Muslims in the light of Surah An-Nisa, with particular emphasis on verses 4:75, 4:84, 4:90, 4:92–94, and 4:135. Employing a qualitative, interpretive, and document-based methodology, the study analyses relevant Qur'anic passages alongside selected scholarly literature on Islamic law and international humanitarian law. The analysis indicates that Surah An-Nisa connects the defence of oppressed people with moral responsibility, but it also places significant restrictions on the use of force through its emphasis on peace, the sanctity of life, the protection of non-hostile parties, and the prohibition of injustice. The study further argues that Muslims' responsibilities extend beyond military considerations to include humanitarian assistance, reconciliation, responsible leadership, legal accountability, and the protection of civilians. It concludes that a balanced understanding of Islamic teachings on armed conflict requires contextual Qur'anic interpretation, engagement with established Islamic jurisprudence, and careful consideration of contemporary humanitarian obligations.

Keywords: Surah An-Nisa, Islamic law, war and defence, social justice, protection of the oppressed, sanctity of life, Islamic ethics, international humanitarian law.

1. Introduction

War and armed conflict are among the most consequential challenges faced by human societies. They threaten human life, undermine social stability, displace populations, damage institutions, and create long-lasting humanitarian crises. Religious and legal traditions have therefore developed moral principles intended to regulate the use of force, protect vulnerable populations, and establish conditions for peace. Within Islam, questions concerning war and defence are addressed through the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the interpretive traditions of Islamic jurisprudence.

Surah An-Nisa, the fourth chapter of the Qur'an, provides important guidance concerning justice, social responsibility, the protection of vulnerable people, the treatment of others during conflict, and the sanctity of human life. Although the surah is not exclusively concerned with warfare, several of its verses address circumstances involving persecution, collective security, peace agreements, armed confrontation, unlawful killing, and judicial fairness.

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One particularly significant passage is Qur'an 4:75, which calls attention to the plight of oppressed men, women, and children who appeal for deliverance from unjust conditions. This verse establishes a strong ethical connection between faith and concern for vulnerable people. Nevertheless, its interpretation must be considered alongside the wider Qur'anic framework, including the requirements of justice, the recognition of peaceful alternatives, and the prohibition of unlawful aggression.

Surah An-Nisa also emphasizes that armed conflict does not remove the obligation to act responsibly. Qur'an 4:90 states that when opposing parties withdraw from fighting, refrain from hostilities, and offer peace, Muslims have no justification for fighting them under the circumstances described in that verse. Verses 4:92–93 address the grave consequences of killing and the obligations associated with unlawful loss of life. Verse 4:135 further commands believers to uphold justice even when doing so conflicts with their personal interests or relationships.

Contemporary scholarship has identified important areas of convergence between Islamic law governing armed conflict and international humanitarian law, particularly in the protection of civilians, humane treatment, and restrictions on the conduct of hostilities (Al-Dawoody, 2017; International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC], 2020). These comparisons require scholarly care because the two legal traditions have different historical foundations, legal methods, and institutional frameworks.

This study therefore examines the principles of war and defence in Surah An-Nisa through a thematic analysis of selected Qur'anic verses. It aims to clarify the ethical responsibilities of Muslims, distinguish legitimate defence from unlawful aggression, and explore the relevance of these teachings to contemporary humanitarian and legal discussions.

2. Statement of the Problem

Discussions of Islamic teachings on war sometimes focus on individual verses without adequately considering their historical context, surrounding passages, or relationship to broader Qur'anic principles. Such selective readings can produce incomplete understandings of the relationship between defence, justice, peace, and human protection.

Another difficulty concerns the interpretation of religious obligations in contemporary conflicts. The language of defending the oppressed can be invoked to justify a wide range of actions, even when those actions may violate established legal and ethical constraints. Consequently, a careful academic examination is needed to clarify the relationship between protection from oppression and the limitations governing the use of force.

The central problem addressed by this study is how Surah An-Nisa establishes principles for understanding war and defence while defining the moral, social, and legal responsibilities of Muslims.

3. Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the Qur'anic foundations of war and defence in Surah An-Nisa.
2. To analyse the relationship between defending oppressed people and upholding justice.
3. To identify the restrictions and ethical obligations associated with armed conflict.
4. To investigate the significance of peace agreements, restraint, and the protection of human life.
5. To explain the responsibilities of Muslim individuals, communities, and public authorities during conflict.

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6. To explore the relevance of these principles to contemporary humanitarian concerns and international humanitarian law.

4. Research Questions

This study addresses the following questions:

1. What principles concerning war and defence can be derived from Surah An-Nisa?
2. How does the Qur'an connect the protection of oppressed people with Muslim moral responsibility?
3. What limitations does Surah An-Nisa establish concerning the use of force and the taking of human life?
4. How do peace, justice, and accountability influence the conduct expected of Muslims during conflict?
5. How can these principles contribute to contemporary discussions of civilian protection and humanitarian responsibility?

5. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive, and document-based research methodology. Its primary source is the Qur'an, with particular attention to selected passages from Surah An-Nisa. Relevant English translations are used to identify key themes, while interpretive conclusions are framed cautiously to distinguish the Qur'anic text from later juristic elaboration.

Secondary sources include scholarly studies of Islamic law governing armed conflict and publications examining its relationship with international humanitarian law. These sources provide a comparative framework for discussing civilian protection, restraint, and humanitarian obligations.

The analysis follows four stages:

1. **Textual identification:** Selecting relevant verses concerning oppression, defence, peace, killing, and justice.
2. **Thematic interpretation:** Examining the ethical principles expressed in those passages.
3. **Contextual analysis:** Considering the relationship between individual verses and the wider Qur'anic framework.
4. **Contemporary application:** Discussing the relevance and limitations of applying these principles to present-day armed conflicts.

This research is conceptual rather than empirical. It does not claim to represent every school of Islamic jurisprudence or resolve all differences among Muslim scholars. A more comprehensive juristic study would require detailed engagement with classical tafsir, hadith authentication, legal manuals, and the historical circumstances of particular revelations.

6. Conceptual Foundations of War and Defence in Islam

6.1 War as a Serious Moral and Legal Matter

Islamic teachings treat armed conflict as a matter involving significant moral responsibility rather than unrestricted permission to employ violence. The use of force raises questions concerning legitimate authority, the purpose of defence, the protection of human life, the treatment of opposing parties, and the consequences of hostilities.

Surah An-Nisa addresses these concerns within a broader framework of justice and accountability. The Qur'an's treatment of conflict cannot be adequately understood by isolating passages concerning fighting from passages concerning peace, restraint, and the sanctity of life.

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A responsible interpretation therefore distinguishes between the existence of an armed conflict and the moral or legal permissibility of particular acts committed during it. Even where defence may be justified, the means employed remain subject to ethical and legal evaluation.

6.2 Justice as a Fundamental Principle

Justice is central to the Qur'anic understanding of individual and collective responsibility. Surah An-Nisa 4:135 commands believers to stand firmly for justice and truthful testimony, even when doing so is contrary to their own interests or those of their relatives.

This principle is important in conflict because political loyalty, fear, anger, and collective identity can influence moral judgment. The Qur'anic command requires Muslims to evaluate conduct fairly rather than assuming that every action by their own side is justified.

Accordingly, justice applies to the treatment of allies and opponents alike. The moral legitimacy of a cause does not automatically make every action undertaken in its name permissible.

6.3 The Sanctity of Human Life

Surah An-Nisa strongly emphasizes the seriousness of unlawful killing. Verses 4:92–93 distinguish accidental killing from intentional killing and establish serious moral and legal consequences for the loss of life.

Verse 4:92 describes obligations arising from accidental killing, including compensation and expiation under the circumstances specified in the verse. Verse 4:93 warns of severe consequences for intentionally killing a believer.

These passages demonstrate that human life cannot be treated casually. They also indicate the importance of distinguishing different circumstances and forms of responsibility rather than treating all deaths as morally equivalent.

The specific legal application of these verses requires engagement with Islamic jurisprudence. Nevertheless, their ethical significance is clear: the taking of human life is a grave matter that demands accountability.

7. Defending the Oppressed: Qur'an 4:75

One of the most important verses for this study is Qur'an 4:75, which refers to oppressed men, women, and children who appeal for deliverance from an unjust community.

The verse raises a fundamental ethical question: what responsibility do believers have when people are subjected to persecution, domination, or severe injustice?

7.1 Moral Responsibility Toward Vulnerable People

The inclusion of men, women, and children emphasizes the human dimension of oppression. People experiencing persecution may lack the resources, authority, or physical capacity to protect themselves. The verse therefore provides a basis for considering the defence of vulnerable people a serious moral concern.

The responsibility to assist the oppressed can take different forms, including humanitarian aid, protection of displaced people, advocacy, legal assistance, diplomatic engagement, and support for peaceful solutions.

The verse should not, however, be reduced to an unrestricted authorization for private violence. Its application to armed conflict must be considered alongside other Qur'anic passages, Islamic legal reasoning, questions of authority, and the obligations governing the conduct of hostilities.

7.2 Defence and the Protection of Human Dignity

Defence against oppression is connected with the wider Islamic commitment to justice and human dignity. Oppression may involve physical violence, forced displacement, deprivation of basic necessities, unlawful detention, or the denial of fundamental rights.

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The ethical significance of Qur'an 4:75 extends beyond battlefield action. It calls attention to the suffering of people who are unable to secure their own safety and invites believers to consider what practical measures can alleviate their suffering.

Such measures may include assisting refugees, supporting medical relief, protecting children, helping victims obtain legal representation, and contributing to reconciliation initiatives.

7.3 The Need for Contextual Interpretation

The concept of defending the oppressed requires careful interpretation. The existence of injustice does not mean that every proposed response is lawful, proportionate, or morally defensible. Nor does the claim to represent an oppressed population automatically establish the legitimacy of an individual or group's use of force.

A sound interpretation must consider the circumstances of oppression, the nature of the proposed response, the protection of civilians, the possibility of peaceful alternatives, and the relevant legal framework.

Thus, Qur'an 4:75 should be understood within a broader ethical structure in which the defence of vulnerable people is connected to justice and constrained by responsibility.

8. Responsibilities During Conflict: Qur'an 4:84

Qur'an 4:84 addresses the Prophet's responsibility concerning fighting and encouraging believers. The verse belongs to a specific historical and textual setting and must be interpreted with appropriate attention to its context.

For contemporary ethical analysis, the verse raises questions about leadership, collective responsibility, and the seriousness of decisions involving armed conflict.

8.1 Responsible Leadership

Decisions concerning defence can have far-reaching consequences for entire communities. They therefore require responsible leadership, careful assessment of circumstances, and attention to the welfare of those affected.

Muslim leaders and public authorities have responsibilities that extend beyond military objectives. They must consider civilian safety, the protection of essential services, humanitarian needs, and the possibility of reducing suffering.

Religious language should not be used to exempt leaders from accountability. Rather, the Qur'anic emphasis on justice provides a basis for evaluating leadership according to its conduct and consequences.

8.2 Collective Responsibility and Individual Accountability

The responsibilities associated with conflict cannot be reduced to obedience without moral judgment. Questions of authority, lawful orders, and individual conduct must be assessed through applicable Islamic legal principles and contemporary law.

Individuals also remain responsible for their own actions. Participation in a collective cause does not automatically excuse unlawful violence, mistreatment, or deliberate harm to protected persons.

This distinction is essential for preventing the misuse of religious authority and ensuring that ethical accountability remains meaningful during conflict.

9. Peaceful Relations and Restraint: Qur'an 4:90

Qur'an 4:90 is particularly significant because it addresses circumstances in which opposing parties withdraw from fighting, refrain from hostilities, and offer peace. In such circumstances, the verse states that there is no justification for fighting them under the conditions it describes.

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9.1 Recognition of Peaceful Alternatives

The verse establishes an important limitation on the use of force. It demonstrates that the existence of tension or prior hostility does not eliminate the significance of an opponent's decision to refrain from fighting and pursue peace.

Restraint is therefore an essential component of responsible defence. Where peaceful arrangements are possible, they must be taken seriously rather than dismissed merely because an opposing party has a different political, social, or religious identity.

9.2 Respect for Agreements and Commitments

Peace agreements and security arrangements can protect lives, enable humanitarian assistance, and prevent the expansion of conflict. Qur'an 4:90 explicitly refers to parties connected through a treaty and to those who withdraw from fighting under the circumstances described.

Respect for such arrangements requires good faith, careful communication, and responsible conduct. Violating commitments can intensify hostilities and expose civilians to additional harm.

The precise legal implications of treaties and ceasefires depend on their terms and the applicable legal framework. Nevertheless, the verse supports the importance of taking peaceful commitments seriously.

9.3 Restraint as an Ethical Duty

Restraint does not necessarily mean abandoning legitimate defence. Instead, it requires distinguishing between a genuine threat and a party that is no longer participating in hostilities or is seeking peaceful relations.

This distinction is important in contemporary conflicts, where inaccurate information, collective suspicion, and retaliatory impulses can lead to unlawful harm.

A responsible approach to defence must therefore include the willingness to stop fighting when the relevant conditions for peace are met.

10. The Protection of Human Life: Qur'an 4:92–93

Verses 4:92–93 provide a substantial ethical and legal dimension to the discussion of war and defence by addressing accidental and intentional killing.

10.1 Accountability for Accidental Killing

Qur'an 4:92 identifies obligations arising from accidental killing, including compensation and expiation in the circumstances specified by the verse. It also addresses situations involving different relationships between the deceased and the parties concerned.

The verse illustrates that an unintended death is not necessarily free from legal or moral consequences. Responsibility may remain even when the intention to kill is absent.

In contemporary terms, this supports the importance of careful decision-making, responsible procedures, and attention to the foreseeable consequences of actions that may endanger human life.

10.2 The Gravity of Intentional Killing

Qur'an 4:93 issues a severe warning concerning the intentional killing of a believer. This passage reinforces the gravity of deliberate unlawful violence.

The verse must be interpreted within the wider Qur'anic and juristic framework, including the legal distinctions applicable to armed conflict. It should not be treated as an exhaustive statement of every rule governing every possible situation of war.

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Nevertheless, its warning makes clear that intentional killing is not a morally trivial matter and cannot be justified merely by personal anger, political loyalty, or collective identity.

10.3 The Principle of Accountability

Accountability is essential to the ethical regulation of conflict. It requires that unlawful acts be investigated fairly, that responsibility be established through appropriate procedures, and that victims receive justice where legally warranted.

Muslim institutions and public authorities should therefore support lawful investigations, prevent impunity, and ensure that allegations of wrongdoing are assessed through credible and impartial processes.

The broader principle is that armed conflict does not remove the need for justice. Rather, the destruction and suffering associated with conflict make accountability even more important.

11. Verification and Caution in Matters of Conflict: Qur'an 4:94

Qur'an 4:94 instructs believers to exercise care when encountering people in circumstances involving conflict and addresses the danger of making assumptions about another person's intentions or status.

This verse is relevant to the ethics of verification and the prevention of unjust harm. In situations of insecurity, people may be tempted to make rapid judgments based on suspicion, appearance, identity, or incomplete information.

11.1 The Importance of Verification

Responsible decision-making requires reliable information. Acting on assumptions can result in the wrongful targeting of innocent people, the escalation of violence, and the destruction of trust.

The ethical significance of verification is particularly important where decisions may lead to detention, physical harm, or loss of life.

11.2 Avoiding Unjust Judgments

The verse warns against disregarding relevant signs of peaceful intent and making unjust assumptions about others. Its historical context must be considered carefully, but it provides an important basis for discussing the dangers of hasty judgment.

Contemporary applications require attention to the applicable legal standards and the circumstances of each situation. The broader ethical lesson is that serious decisions should not be based on prejudice or unsupported suspicion.

11.3 Human Dignity and Fair Treatment

Fair treatment requires that people not be subjected to harm merely because they belong to a different community or are perceived as outsiders.

Muslim individuals and institutions should therefore promote accurate information, responsible communication, and safeguards against discrimination and arbitrary treatment.

These measures help reduce the risk that fear or hostility will replace reasoned judgment.

12. Justice Beyond Group Loyalty: Qur'an 4:135

Qur'an 4:135 commands believers to uphold justice even when it conflicts with their own interests or those of their parents and relatives.

This principle has particular importance during war because armed conflict often intensifies group identity and encourages people to excuse misconduct committed by their own side.

12.1 Impartial Justice

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The Qur'anic command requires justice to remain a governing principle even when it is politically inconvenient. The identity of an alleged offender should not determine whether evidence is examined fairly.

This principle supports impartial investigation, fair legal procedures, and equal moral concern for victims.

12.2 Rejecting Collective Blame

A population cannot fairly be treated as collectively responsible for every action attributed to its leaders or armed groups. Ethical assessment requires attention to individual conduct, relevant circumstances, and applicable legal standards.

Collective blame can encourage retaliation against people who have not participated in hostilities. It can also undermine the prospects for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

The emphasis on justice in Surah An-Nisa provides a basis for resisting such generalizations.

12.3 Justice as a Condition of Lasting Peace

Peace cannot be sustained solely through the cessation of violence. It also requires trust, fair institutions, accountability, and meaningful remedies for those who have suffered harm.

Justice is therefore both a restraint on conduct during conflict and an essential element of post-conflict recovery.

13. The Responsibilities of Muslims in Times of War and Defence

The selected verses indicate that Muslim responsibilities in situations of conflict extend beyond the battlefield. These responsibilities can be examined at the individual, community, institutional, and governmental levels.

13.1 Individual Responsibilities

Muslims should seek reliable information, avoid spreading unverified allegations, refrain from inciting hatred, and support measures that protect innocent people.

They should also recognize that religious commitment does not remove personal accountability for unlawful actions. Ethical responsibility requires reflection, restraint, and respect for the rights of others.

13.2 Community Responsibilities

Communities can provide humanitarian relief, support displaced families, assist people who have lost their livelihoods, and contribute to the protection of children and other vulnerable groups.

Religious institutions can help communicate accurate information, encourage reconciliation, and challenge interpretations that disregard justice or human dignity.

Community initiatives should be inclusive and should not discriminate against people on the basis of religion, ethnicity, nationality, or political identity.

13.3 Responsibilities of Scholars and Religious Leaders

Islamic scholars have an important role in explaining relevant Qur'anic passages accurately and placing them within the broader framework of Islamic sources and jurisprudence.

They should distinguish established textual principles from disputed interpretations and avoid presenting complex legal questions as if they had only one uncontested answer.

Religious leaders can also promote peaceful dispute resolution, humanitarian responsibility, and respect for lawful agreements.

13.4 Responsibilities of Governments and Public Authorities

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Public authorities have responsibilities concerning civilian protection, public security, lawful decision-making, humanitarian access, and accountability for wrongdoing.

Where force is used, authorities must comply with applicable domestic and international law. Decisions involving armed conflict should not be treated as purely symbolic expressions of religious identity; they require careful consideration of their legal basis and foreseeable humanitarian consequences.

Governments should also support relief operations, protect essential services, and establish credible mechanisms for investigating alleged violations.

13.5 Responsibilities Toward Victims of Conflict

The protection of oppressed people includes practical assistance to victims. This may involve emergency medical care, food, shelter, education, psychosocial support, legal assistance, and measures to restore family connections.

Humanitarian assistance should be provided according to need and should not be withheld as a means of collective punishment.

Such responsibilities demonstrate that the ethical response to conflict includes reducing suffering as well as considering questions of defence.

14. Islamic Principles and International Humanitarian Law

International humanitarian law (IHL) regulates the conduct of parties to armed conflict and seeks to limit suffering by protecting people who are not, or are no longer, participating in hostilities. It also restricts the means and methods of warfare.

Scholarly work has examined areas of convergence between Islamic law governing armed conflict and contemporary IHL, particularly regarding humanity, civilian protection, and limits on violence (Al-Dawoody, 2017; ICRC, 2020). These areas of convergence provide a useful basis for comparative analysis, although the two legal traditions should not be treated as identical.

14.1 Protection of Civilians

The ethical concern for vulnerable people reflected in Qur'an 4:75 is relevant to contemporary discussions of civilian protection. However, the precise legal rules governing the conduct of hostilities must be established through the applicable legal framework rather than inferred from a single verse alone.

International humanitarian law requires parties to distinguish between civilians and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives. The rules also include restrictions intended to prevent excessive civilian harm.

A responsible contemporary discussion of Islamic ethics and warfare should consider these protections alongside the relevant Islamic legal literature.

14.2 Restraint and Humanitarian Protection

The emphasis on peace in Qur'an 4:90 and accountability in Qur'an 4:92–94 is relevant to broader debates concerning restraint and the protection of life.

In practical terms, humanitarian protection requires measures to reduce foreseeable harm, facilitate relief where required, treat detainees humanely, and avoid unlawful attacks.

The ICRC's scholarship on Islamic law and international humanitarian law provides further discussion of how these legal traditions address the protection of people affected by armed conflict (ICRC, 2017, 2020).

14.3 Areas Requiring Careful Comparison

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The relationship between Islamic law and IHL should be examined through detailed legal analysis rather than general assertions of complete equivalence.

Different historical circumstances, interpretive methods, and legal categories can produce similarities in principle alongside differences in formulation or application. Comparative research should identify both areas of convergence and questions that require further clarification.

This approach supports constructive dialogue between Islamic scholars, legal specialists, humanitarian practitioners, and public institutions.

15. Contemporary Challenges in Applying the Principles of Surah An-Nisa

Although the principles discussed above have continuing ethical relevance, their application in contemporary conflicts presents several challenges.

15.1 Selective Interpretation of Religious Texts

Individual verses may be quoted without sufficient attention to their context or relationship with other Qur'anic passages. Such selectivity can obscure the wider framework of justice, restraint, peace, and accountability.

A more reliable approach requires careful textual interpretation, engagement with recognized scholarship, and clear differentiation between the text itself and subsequent legal opinions.

15.2 Political Instrumentalization of Religion

Political actors may invoke religious language to mobilize support or justify actions that require independent ethical and legal scrutiny.

The Qur'anic emphasis on justice offers a basis for questioning such uses of religion. Claims made in the name of faith should be evaluated in light of the conduct they encourage and the consequences they produce.

15.3 Civilian Suffering and Humanitarian Crises

Modern conflicts frequently expose civilians to displacement, shortages of food and medicine, destruction of infrastructure, and the breakdown of public services.

The concern for oppressed people reflected in Qur'an 4:75 is relevant to these humanitarian challenges. Assistance to affected populations should be organized in ways that protect dignity, reduce suffering, and respect applicable humanitarian principles.

15.4 Misinformation and Collective Hostility

False reports and unverified allegations can intensify hostility and contribute to unlawful harm. Qur'an 4:94 is relevant to the importance of careful judgment in conflict-related circumstances.

Contemporary institutions should therefore encourage responsible reporting, evidence-based assessment, and safeguards against decisions based solely on prejudice or collective suspicion.

15.5 Weak Accountability Mechanisms

When allegations of serious wrongdoing are not investigated fairly, victims may be denied justice and cycles of retaliation may continue.

Effective accountability requires credible institutions, impartial procedures, protection for witnesses, and appropriate remedies for victims. These measures are important to the restoration of public trust and the prevention of future harm.

16. Findings and Discussion

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The thematic analysis produces several principal findings.

First, the defence of oppressed people is an important ethical concern. Qur'an 4:75 highlights the suffering of vulnerable men, women, and children and supports serious moral consideration of their protection. The verse should be interpreted within the broader Qur'anic and juristic framework rather than as an unrestricted authorization for violence.

Second, the use of force is subject to ethical and legal constraints. Surah An-Nisa addresses peace, restraint, and the consequences of killing. These themes indicate that the justification for defence and the conduct adopted during conflict are separate questions requiring careful evaluation.

Third, peace and restraint are substantive responsibilities. Qur'an 4:90 recognizes the significance of withdrawal from hostilities and peaceful relations under the circumstances it describes. The pursuit of peace is therefore not merely a secondary concern but an important element of responsible conduct.

Fourth, human life requires serious protection and accountability. Qur'an 4:92–93 establishes the gravity of killing and identifies consequences associated with different circumstances. These passages support a framework in which the loss of life cannot be dismissed without moral and legal consideration.

Fifth, justice must remain independent of group loyalty. Qur'an 4:135 requires believers to uphold justice even when it conflicts with personal or family interests. This principle is especially relevant where political identity or collective hostility may encourage partial judgment.

Sixth, Muslim responsibilities extend beyond armed defence. Humanitarian relief, assistance to displaced populations, support for victims, responsible leadership, reconciliation, and the protection of essential services are all relevant dimensions of the ethical response to conflict.

Finally, contemporary application requires scholarly and legal precision. The relationship between Islamic law and international humanitarian law contains meaningful areas of convergence, but responsible analysis must also acknowledge differences in legal foundations, interpretive methods, and specific rules.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Surah An-Nisa provides a significant ethical framework for examining defence, oppression, justice, and accountability. Its contemporary relevance is strongest when the selected verses are studied contextually and applied through careful legal and moral reasoning.

17. Recommendations

On the basis of this analysis, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Promote contextual Qur'anic interpretation:** Educational institutions and religious scholars should explain relevant verses in relation to their textual surroundings and the broader Qur'anic framework.
2. **Strengthen Islamic legal scholarship:** Further research should examine classical and contemporary juristic discussions concerning the authority to use force, peace agreements, civilian protection, and the treatment of persons affected by conflict.
3. **Improve humanitarian education:** Islamic studies programmes should include reliable information about civilian protection, humanitarian assistance, and the legal responsibilities of parties to armed conflict.

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4. **Encourage responsible religious leadership:** Religious leaders should promote justice, restraint, reconciliation, and accountability while avoiding unsupported or inflammatory claims.
5. **Protect vulnerable populations:** Governments, humanitarian organizations, and civil society should strengthen practical measures to assist displaced people, children, and other vulnerable communities.
6. **Support impartial accountability:** Allegations of unlawful violence should be assessed through credible, fair, and legally appropriate procedures.
7. **Promote peacebuilding initiatives:** Community dialogue, mediation, humanitarian cooperation, and post-conflict reconciliation should be encouraged wherever feasible.
8. **Expand comparative research:** Future studies should examine Surah An-Nisa alongside relevant classical tafsir, hadith literature, Islamic jurisprudence, and contemporary humanitarian law.

18. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study is limited to a thematic examination of selected verses from Surah An-Nisa. It does not offer an exhaustive interpretation of the entire surah or a comprehensive account of the positions of all Islamic legal schools.

Its use of English translations also means that some interpretive questions would benefit from closer examination of the Arabic text and classical exegetical sources. Furthermore, the comparison with international humanitarian law is introductory rather than a detailed article-by-article legal analysis.

Future research could examine the interpretations of selected verses in major works of tafsir, compare the positions of different schools of Islamic jurisprudence, or investigate how contemporary Muslim scholars address civilian protection and the regulation of armed conflict. Empirical studies could also assess how religious education and humanitarian training influence attitudes toward peace, justice, and the protection of civilians.

19. Conclusion

Surah An-Nisa provides an important basis for examining the ethical responsibilities of Muslims in situations involving war, defence, oppression, and insecurity. Its teachings connect the protection of vulnerable people with justice and accountability while recognizing the importance of peace and restraint.

Qur'an 4:75 emphasizes concern for oppressed men, women, and children. Qur'an 4:90 highlights circumstances in which withdrawal from hostilities and the offer of peace remove the justification for fighting under the conditions described. Verses 4:92–93 underscore the gravity of killing, while Qur'an 4:94 draws attention to the need for careful judgment in conflict-related circumstances. Qur'an 4:135 establishes justice as an obligation that must not be abandoned because of personal interests or group loyalty.

These passages collectively suggest that defence cannot be evaluated solely in terms of military objectives or political claims. It must also be considered in relation to the protection of human life, the treatment of vulnerable people, respect for peace arrangements, and accountability for unlawful conduct.

The responsibilities of Muslims therefore extend to individuals, communities, scholars, institutions, and public authorities. They include providing humanitarian assistance, protecting civilians, supporting lawful and impartial procedures, resisting unjust treatment, and contributing to peacebuilding.

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A balanced interpretation of Islamic teachings on war and defence requires contextual reading, rigorous scholarship, and responsible engagement with contemporary humanitarian law. By placing the protection of the oppressed within a wider framework of justice and restraint, the study highlights the continuing relevance of Surah An-Nisa to discussions of ethical responsibility and the reduction of human suffering in contemporary society.

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Primary Qur'anic passages examined

- Surah An-Nisa 4:75 — The plight of oppressed men, women, and children.
- Surah An-Nisa 4:84 — Responsibilities relating to conflict and leadership.
- Surah An-Nisa 4:90 — Withdrawal from hostilities and peaceful relations.
- Surah An-Nisa 4:92 — Accidental killing and associated obligations.
- Surah An-Nisa 4:93 — The gravity of intentional killing.
- Surah An-Nisa 4:94 — Careful judgment in conflict-related circumstances.
- Surah An-Nisa 4:135 — The obligation to uphold justice.

Declaration concerning originality and research integrity

This manuscript is a conceptual research draft intended for scholarly development. It should be reviewed against the original Arabic Qur'anic text, recognized tafsir works, and relevant Islamic legal scholarship before submission. All borrowed ideas, quotations, and translations should be cited accurately according to the target journal's requirements. No claim of zero plagiarism or guaranteed performance in AI-detection systems is made; originality should be established through proper attribution, independent scholarly revision, and the journal's normal similarity-checking process.