

Frequently Asked Questions about the Taliban

Here is a small list of Frequently Asked Questions that we have provided about the Taliban. If there are any questions you feel that are not answered here, please e-mail us onazzam@azzam.com and we will include their answers in our next update of this section insha-Allah.

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1. What does the word Taliban mean?

The word Talib in Arabic comes from the Arabic root 'ta la ba', which means 'to search for', 'to seek' or 'to procure'. In Islamic terminology, Talib means student of Islamic knowledge. Taliban is a plural variation of Talib, and thus means 'students of Islamic knowledge'.

2. Who is the leader of the Taliban?

The leader of the Taliban Islamic Movement and the Ameer-ul-Mumineen (Leader of the Believers) of Afghanistan is Sheikh Muhammad Umar (also known as Mullah Muhammad Umar or just Mullah Umar). Mullah Umar was born around 1959 and he studied Islamic knowledge from a young age. In the 80's and 90's he participated in the Jihad against the Soviets, during which he was seriously wounded several times, losing his right eye. One account of how he lost his eye says that during a battle, his eye was hit by shrapnel and began to hang half-way out of his socket. Seeing that there was nothing he could do to save it, he pulled it out with his own hands, wiping the blood on the walls of a mosque, and continued fighting. His knowledge, piety and wisdom are unquestionable. Those who

have had the honour to meet him describe him as a pious individual, upon whose sight one's Iman (faith) in Allah is increased. He never utters a sentence without mentioning Allah's name in it. Hearts automatically love him at first sight. Despite being the leader of millions of people, he eats simple food and sleeps on the floor. He refuses to live a life of luxury, preferring instead to live the simple lives that the Prophet (SAWS) and his Rightly-Guided Caliphs lived 14 centuries ago. For this and other reasons, many Muslims describe him as reminding them of the Sahabah, the Noble Companions of the Prophet (SAWS). He once said to a Pakistani journalist, Rahimullah Yusufzai:

"We took up arms to achieve the aims of the Afghan Jihad and save our people from further suffering at the hands of the so-called Mujahideen. We had complete faith in Allah the Almighty. We never forgot that. He can bless us with victory or plunge us into defeat."

3. Who chose Mullah Umar to be the leader of the Taliban?

In Islam, leadership is a responsibility, not a fame-giving position of power. The leader of a group of practising Muslims is chosen by the people because he is the best amongst them in his piety, justice, knowledge, action, wisdom, bravery and understanding amongst other qualities. Mullah Umar was thus chosen by the leading Islamic scholars of Afghanistan to be the leader of the Taliban. He did not go round canvassing votes and support for this position.

4. Who gave him the title Ameer-ul-Mumineen (Leader of the Believers) when this term is normally only used to mean the Khaleef (Caliph) of all Muslims over the World?

Again, this title was given to Mullah Umar by the leading scholars of Afghanistan. Ameer-ul-Mumineen was a title given to the Rightly-Guided Caliphs after the death of the Prophet (SAWS), such as Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali and Umar bin Abdul-Aziz. However, in this case, it only means the leader of the believers in Afghanistan. Mullah Umar has never claimed to be the Khaleef of the Muslims all over the World and nor have the leading scholars of Afghanistan claimed that he is. Therefore, he is only the Ameer-ul-Mumineen in Afghanistan and was given this title as an Islamic title as opposed to President, Prime Minister, King or Emperor. After all, the leader of a country trying to implement Shariah would not be called anything other than this.

5. How long have the Taliban been around? Why did we only hear of them in the last few years?

The founders of the Taliban have a history of Islamic work in Afghanistan since even before the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. During the war, they participated in the Jihad against the Soviets for several years and many were injured or disabled during this period. Once the Soviets withdrew and the Communists were defeated, these scholars and students of knowledge went back to learning and teaching Islam in the Madrassahs (Islamic schools). They re-emerged on the scene in 1994 when they began to establish law and order in Afghanistan, under the title of the 'Taliban'. Therefore, the Taliban are not people who are new to Afghanistan, although this title is only a few years old.

6. What sect of Islam are the Taliban from?

The Taliban are Sunni Muslims who follow the established Islamic school of thought of Imam Abu Hanifah, which is the predominant school of thought in the region.

7. I heard that the Taliban have a deviant 'Aqeedah' (Islamic Creed) and that they allow grave-worshipping and Bid'ah (innovative) practices to take place freely in Afghanistan. Is this true?

Every Muslim country in the World from Saudi Arabia to Indonesia has practices involving Bid'ah and Shirk (polytheism). Afghanistan is no exception. Yes, there are people in Afghanistan who participate in these activities of Bid'ah and sometimes, Shirk. However, it is necessary for one to firstly look at the leading scholars of that country, and then the majority of the people. For example, 20% of the population of Saudi Arabia is Shia, but the leading scholars of Saudi Arabia have nothing to do with this. The leadership of the Taliban, which comprises leading scholars of Afghanistan, do not agree with, endorse or encourage these Bid'ah and Shirk practices. However, one must understand that it takes time to cleanse a society and people of Bid'ah and Shirk: it does not happen overnight. With regards to the same example above, scholars in Saudi Arabia have been teaching Tawheed for several decades yet they have still not managed to cleanse Saudi Arabia of Bid'ah and Shirk. Therefore, how are the Taliban expected to do this in a matter of a few years, especially when they have many other problems to do with and without the support of the Muslims around the World?

8. Have the Taliban shut down Madrassahs and institutes run by Arabs following the Hanbali school of thought (e.g. from the Arabian Gulf countries) because the Taliban say that they are Wahabis?

At the time that Taliban came to power, there were many Islamic institutes in Afghanistan representing various schools of thought. Some of these were run with sincere agendas, whilst others were exported by Governments as hidden political agendas. When the Taliban came to power, they held a narrow-minded, strict interpretation of the Hanafi school of thought, as is predominant in Afghanistan. Therefore, they proceeded to close most of these institutes that were run by foreigners. As time went on, and the influx of Foreign Mujahideen from different countries who supported and helped the Taliban, increased, the Taliban leadership became more relaxed and accomodating in their attitude. This change in attitude did not come about with container-loads of glossy leaflets, books and part/time callers to Islam spending a few days in Afghanistan, then leaving. Rather, it came about by the influence of people who settled in Afghanistan, lived with the people, supported them and helped them, even though the living conditions there were difficult. This is similar to the early Muhajireen (emigrants) that the Prophet (SAWS) sent to Madinah, such as Musab bin Umair, in order to teach the people and prepare the foundations for the Islamic State, so that when the Prophet (SAWS) finally declared Madinah to be the Islamic State, the people accepted it wholeheartedly and supported it. To say that the Taliban are against the Hanbali or other schools of thought is wrong, because there have been some large Shariah institutes in Afghanistan opened during the last few years, which have teachers from Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Mauritania, Egypt and other Muslim countries. The majority of the students in these institutes are Afghans and the institutes run with the full support of the Taliban. One must build up a trust with an isolated people, before teaching them something that they do not know. This trust takes time, effort and sacrifice.

9. Who are the Taliban fighting in the North of the country?

The Taliban are fighting a group of people, some of whom are Muslims and some of whom are Communists, known as the Northern Alliance. Their leader is Burhanuddin Rabbani (currently in exile in Tajikistan) and their military commander is General Ahmad Shah Masood.

10. If the Taliban are so firm upon Shariah, why are they fighting Muslims when it is forbidden and a

major sin for Muslims to fight Muslims?

Allah says in the Quran: "And if two parties from the believers fight amongst themselves, then make peace between the two. And if one of the two parties rebels against the other, then FIGHT the party that is rebellious until the order of Allah does come to pass..." [Quran 49:9]. Therefore, sanction is given to fight rebellious Muslims if they stand in the way of making peace and establishing Shariah. It is true that Ahmad Shah Masood was a great commander against the Soviets, and scholars like Sheikh Abdullah Azzam spoke highly of him during that period. Once the Communists were defeated, he changed and became thirsty for power, whatever the cost. The sincere Mujahideen groups joined the Taliban without firing a single bullet once they knew that the Taliban were not power-hungry, but only intent on establishing Shariah in the land, the reason for which the Jihad was waged in the first place. However, others like Rabbani and Masood rebelled and could not accept the fact that someone other than them could lead the country. Therefore they rebelled and began to fight the Taliban.

It is no secret that Russia, India, Israel, France and the U.S. have been and are still supporting Ahmad Shah Masood with advisors, money and weapons. Some of these foreign advisors have even been captured by the Taliban in recent years. The enemies of Islam know that it is not possible to fight the Taliban directly at the expense of the anger of the Muslim World. Therefore, they are fighting the Taliban through Ahmad Shah Masood, then creating propaganda amongst the Muslims that it is a civil war of Muslim versus Muslim, so the Taliban are not sincere Muslims. The recent one-sided arms embargo against the Taliban is proof of this hypocritical and biased attitude. If the enemies of Islam were really sincere for peace in the region then they would impose an arms embargo on both sides. However, this action of theirs in itself is proof of their double-standards and their real intentions in Afghanistan: to prevent the establishment of a righteous Islamic State in Afghanistan.

Islam allows Muslims to be fought by other Muslims if they stand as an obstacle in the establishment of the Shariah. As for those on the rebellious sides who are killed fighting because they were ignorant and thought they were fighting for the Truth, or forced to fight by their commanders, then they will be raised up according to their intentions.

11. It is clear to everyone that the United Nations is an organisation founded on Kufr (disbelief) and secular, man-made laws. Why are the Taliban so adamant on seeking U.N. membership if they wish to do everything according to Shariah?

It is true that the United Nations Charter is founded on secular, man-made laws. The Taliban leadership understand this and they do not hold these secular laws as part of their religious beliefs. However, they feel that they should be given membership of the United Nations for two principal reasons: (i) For strategic political benefit in the interest of Afghanistan and (ii) To prove the hypocrisy of the U.N. in refusing membership to the Taliban despite them satisfying the U.N. 'requirements' for membership. In our opinion, we disagree with this stance that the Taliban have taken as regards the U.N. because the United Nations will never act in the interests of the Muslims of Afghanistan, regardless of whether membership is granted to the Taliban or not. We believe that it is in the interests of the Muslims of Afghanistan for the Taliban to stay away from the United Nations. Nevertheless, this should not be an issue that causes the Muslims to abandon the Taliban and their efforts to implement Shariah.

If the Taliban believed in the secular ideals of the United Nations as part of their religious beliefs and

a methodology to implement Shariah in Afghanistan, then this is an act of Shirk, and the Taliban leadership would thus become apostates by this act. However, according to their (mistaken) political analysis, they consider this to be in the interests of the Muslims of Afghanistan. A strategic decision concerning current affairs does not classify its holders as deviant or anti-Islamic on that basis alone, even if the decision is wrong. What does classify a Government as anti-Islamic is a number of things such as the constitution of the Government and the laws it is committed to uphold. Therefore, despite the fact that it is wrong for the Taliban to seek U.N. membership, this should not prevent the Muslim Ummah from supporting and helping them. Rather, once the Taliban see the support of the Muslims, they will consider it unnecessary to seek any assistance from the U.N. in the first place. We ask Allah to change the hearts of the Taliban leadership so they cease seeking U.N. recognition.

12. Why are the Taliban oppressing women by shutting down all girls' schools, denying healthcare to women and forcing women to stay at home?

This is one of the biggest lies circulating about the Taliban. Please read our section on Taliban and Women and the reports by the American journalists and the Canadian physician about this. At the time Taliban came to power, most of the educated elite of Afghanistan were, and still are, Communists. This includes the female teachers. For this reason, the Taliban shut down those schools (for both boys and girls) which were teaching a secular, Communist-based education, by Communist teachers. There is not much point trying to build an Islamic society and a country based on Shariah if the teachers are teaching the young boys and girls, secular, Communist values, such as feminist concepts, sexual freedom and atheism. There are many girls' schools functioning in Afghanistan which are run by practising Muslim teachers. Some of these schools have been founded and established by practising Muslim teachers (both men and women) from the West. These schools teach arts, languages and sciences in an Islamic environment. The Muslims around the World are in a position to change this situation if practising Muslim teachers emigrate to Afghanistan and establish schools for the children. To sit back and make criticising comments instead of going there and helping does not really help the situation.

Likewise, it is a lie that women are denied healthcare in Afghanistan and that they are confined to their homes. Anyone can travel through the major cities in Afghanistan and they will see women freely roaming the streets and markets, accompanied and unaccompanied by male relatives. They are, however, covered Islamically, as would be required in an Islamic country anyway. If any Muslim considers Hijab as oppression for women, then perhaps they need to go back and study their religion from the basics.

13. Why does the Taliban permit terrorist training camps in Afghanistan?

There are no terrorist training camps in Afghanistan. Military training is an Islamic obligation, mandatory upon every sane, Muslim male who has the means to travel and obtain this training, as Allah says in the Quran: "And prepare against them what you can, of power..." [Quran 8:60]. Terrorism is acts of violence and terror committed against innocent people in order to reach a political objective. Islam permits self-defence and protection against oppression, but it does not permit terrorism as defined by the West. Islam does not permit the harming of innocent, non-combatant civilians who are not fighting the Muslims or driving the Muslims out of their homes or supporting

those who fight or drive the Muslims out of their homes. Islam does not teach a 'turn the other cheek' attitude unlike Christianity. If there are camps in Afghanistan where Muslims can obtain military training, then there is nothing wrong with that according to the Shariah. However, if there are camps that turn Muslims into terrorists, then the Shariah does not permit that. It is interesting to note another double-standard adopted by the West as regards Taliban. Israel only operates dozens of such military training camps for both Israeli and non-Israeli Jews under the Kibbutz scheme. All Israelis and all non-Israeli Jews are entitled to free military training in these camps. Rather, it is encouraged for Jews to go to Israel and obtain this training. Western countries do not mind Jews travelling to Israel to obtain military training, but object to Muslims travelling to countries like Afghanistan to learn a part of their religion, and military training is part of Islam, whether we like it or not, and we cannot do anything about it.

14. Is the Taliban backed by the CIA?

We think it is sufficient to let the current political situation as regards the Taliban answer this question. If the Taliban was backed by the CIA, they would have handed over Usama bin Ladin to America a long time ago. Their refusal to do this, despite sanctions, pressure and isolation is proof of their sincere background.

15. Why should we help the Taliban?

Because the Taliban is the only Muslim government in the World whose constitution is based on Shariah, and who is actually trying to act on this constitution. Due to this, the Taliban is the only Muslim country in that has been isolated from the World. After a few hundred thousand of their people died in the Second World War, the Jews created their own, little state, Israel, in 1948. Today, in a little over 50 years, they have made Israel into one of the most powerful countries in the World, and certainly the most powerful nation in the Middle East. The Israeli Armed Forces are amongst the best-trained in the World. Israeli technology puts Western technology to shame. Almost every Israeli and every Jew around the World contributes a percentage of their income or profits to the Israeli Government, in addition to their skills, expertise and knowledge. That is what has made Israel into what it is today. Jews do not exceed perhaps 20 million or so in the whole World, but their combined and collective efforts have made their state from nothing into something in just over half a century. Are not one billion Muslims around the World, with all their shops, businesses, companies, high incomes, education, degrees, skills, expertise, knowledge and investments, able to turn Afghanistan into a major Islamic power in a matter of decades?

16. How can we help the Taliban?

For a detailed reply, please read our section on What you can do to help the Taliban. In short, anyone who has established or runs a shop, company, mosque or school knows the amount of money, time, effort and sacrifice that goes into it if one wants to do it properly. In the same token, will not establishing and running a country require much more money, time, effort and sacrifice? The Taliban today need educated, practising Muslims to emigrate to Afghanistan and help set up the infrastructure of the country: doctors, dentists, engineers, teachers, Islamic scholars, I.T. consultants, economists, etc. They also need wealthy Muslims who can invest in the country and create employment for the local people through factories, mills, mines, companies, stores etc.

Source: http://ee.1asphost.com/raehatualmisk/taliban_FAQs.html