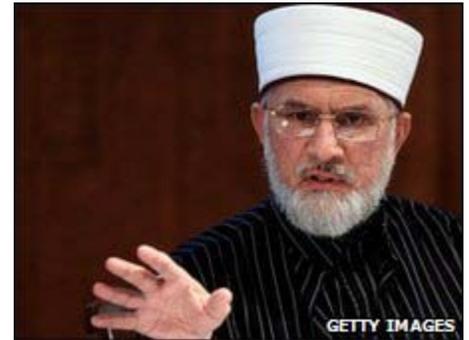


Islamic scholar Tahir ul-Qadri issues terrorism fatwa

By Dominic Casciani
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An influential Muslim scholar has issued a global ruling against terrorism and suicide bombing.

Dr Tahir ul-Qadri, from Pakistan, says his 600-page judgement, known as a fatwa, completely dismantles al-Qaeda's violent ideology.



Dr Tahir ul-Qadri: 600-page ruling

The scholar describes al-Qaeda as an "old evil with a new name" that has not been sufficiently challenged.

The scholar's movement is growing in the UK and has attracted the interest of policymakers and security chiefs.

In his religious ruling, delivered in London, Dr Qadri says that Islam forbids the massacre of innocent citizens and suicide bombings.

Although many scholars have made similar rulings in the past, Dr Qadri argued that his massive document goes much further by omitting "ifs and buts" added by other thinkers.

He said that it set out a point-by-point theological rebuttal of every argument used by al-Qaeda inspired recruiters.

The populist scholar developed his document last year as a response to the increase in bombings across Pakistan by militants.

'Heroes of hellfire'

The basic text has been extended to 600 pages to cover global issues, in an attempt to get its theological arguments taken up by Muslims in Western nations. It will be promoted in the UK by Dr Qadri's organisation, Minhaj ul-Quran International.

Dr Qadri spoke for more than hour to an audience of Muslims, clergy, MPs, police officers and other security officials.

"They [terrorists] can't claim that their suicide bombings are martyrdom operations and that they become the heroes of the Muslim Umma [global brotherhood]. No, they become heroes of hellfire, and they are leading towards hellfire," he said.

"There is no place for any martyrdom and their act is never, ever to be considered jihad."

Acts of vengeance

The document is not the first to condemn terrorism and suicide bombing to be launched in the UK.

Scholars from across the UK came together in the wake of the 7 July London attacks to denounce the bombers and urge communities to root out extremists.

But some scholarly rulings in the Middle East have argued that the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is an exceptional situation where "martyrdom" attacks can be justified.

Dr Qadri said he rejected that view saying there were no situations under which acts of vengeance, such as attacks on market places or commuter trains, could ever be considered a justifiable act of war.

Although Dr Qadri has many followers in Pakistan, Minhaj ul-Quran International remained largely unknown in the UK until relatively recently.

It now has 10 mosques in cities with significant Muslim communities and says it is targeting younger generations it believes have been let down by traditional leaders.

The organisation is attracting the attention of policymakers and security chiefs who are continuing to look for allies in the fight against extremists.

The Department for Communities, which runs most of the government's Preventing Violent Extremism strategy, has tried building bridges with a variety of liberal-minded groups, but often found that they have limited actual influence at the grassroots.

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