

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 & TERRORISM

Fact Sheet

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

- On September 11, 2001 the United States of America was attacked by terrorists using hijacked commercial passenger airplanes, which were flown into the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington DC, and a field in Pennsylvania.
- The Twin Towers at the World Trade Center in New York City were destroyed, the Pentagon suffered serious damage, and a third target escaped damage when the passengers aboard United flight 93 attempted to retake the plane causing it to crash in Shanksville, PA.
- The attacks were carried out by 19 members of an international terrorist organization known as Al-Qaeda.
- 2,996 people died in the attacks, including the 19 hijackers.
 - About 266 people died on the four flights involved in the attacks.
 - An additional 125 people died in the Pentagon.ⁱ
 - Approximately three times as many men died as women.ⁱⁱ
 - A total of eight children, on two different flights, died.ⁱⁱⁱ
 - Though there is no accurate measure of how many members of different religious denominations died, victims represented all of the world's major religions and hailed from approximately 90 countries.^{iv}
 - More than 400 rescue workers died on 9/11. Among them were 343 firefighters and 60 police officers from New York City and the Port Authority.^v
 - Approximately 1,000 first responders have died since the attacks, many from cancer.^{vi}
- Following 9/11, there was an increase in hate crimes directed against Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim.^{vii}

AL-QAEDA

- Al-Qaeda is a religiously-identified extremist militant group founded sometime between 1988 and 1989 in Pakistan by Osama bin Laden, who was heavily influenced by Islamic author and thinker Sayyid Qutb (1906 – 1966).

- According to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the stated ideology and goals of Al-Qaeda include:
 - Creating a single “Islamic state” that would bring together all Muslims around the world under a single government and would follow a single interpretation of Sharia as state law.
 - Removing the leadership of Muslim majority countries that Al-Qaeda perceives to be permitting corrupted or “apostate” forms of Islam as well as profane Western influences (e.g. all Western, but especially American, occupation and cultural influence.)
 - Removing American military, as well as all Western economic and cultural influences, from the Middle East and from historically Muslim countries.^{viii}
- Al-Qaeda has no fixed home base. Rather, it maintains cells in countries around the world.
- Since 1998, Al-Qaeda has been responsible for attacks in several countries including the U.S., U.K., Spain, Turkey and Yemen, as well as U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.^{ix}
- Al-Qaeda tactics include the use of bombings and suicide attacks.
- Several fatwas have been released regarding the issue of terrorism and the September 11th attacks; these statements have come from authorities based in North America, India, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Britain, Indonesia, New Zealand, Tunisia, Egypt, Spain, Pakistan, Syria, Turkey, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Afghanistan and Russia.^x Fatwas are religious opinions concerning Islamic law traditionally given by a scholar of Islam. Fatwas from various scholars can offer differing interpretations about the same issue or question. Muslims are not obligated to follow any particular leader or fatwa, and independently choose which fatwa to follow or whether they accept a particular fatwa or the decisions of a particular scholar as binding.^{xi}
- The following is an excerpt from a fatwa that Osama bin Laden, an engineer by training, purported to issue in 1998, in which he authorized the killing of American civilians and their allies:

“In compliance with God’s order, we issue the following fatwa to all Muslims: The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa mosque and the holy mosque [in Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim.”
- A number of 9/11 victims were Muslim. Some members of Al-Qaeda relied on Sayyid Qutb’s concept that many Muslims should be viewed as apostates (those who have forsaken their religion) as a justification for the killing of other Muslims. This view is a subject of debate among Muslims and also within Al-Qaeda. The idea also fuels controversy over fighting the “near enemy” (“apostate” Muslim governments) as opposed to the “far enemy” (the West, especially supporters of “apostate” governments).^{xii}
- Although Al-Qaeda leaders say that they work in the name of Islam, they do not represent the beliefs and practices of mainstream – and the vast majority of –

Muslims. Note, for example, the fatwa issued on September 27, 2001 by six senior Middle Eastern Muslim clerics who called the 9/11 attacks un-Islamic and gave permission to Muslims in the U.S. armed forces to fight in the war in Afghanistan. The ruling was requested by the U.S. military's top Muslim chaplain. The fatwa was signed by:

- Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Grand Islamic Scholar and Chairman of the Sunna and Sira Council, Qatar
- Judge Tariq al-Bishri, First Deputy President of the Council d'etat, Ret., Egypt
- Dr. Muhammad S. al-Awa, Professor of Comparative Law and Shari'a, Egypt
- Dr. Haytham al-Khayyat, Islamic Scholar, Syria
- Mr. Fahmi Houaydi, Islamic Author and Columnist, Egypt
- Sheikh Taha Jabir al-Alwani, Chairman of the North America Fiqh Council, Sterling, Va.

▪ Parts of the fatwa read:

If the terrorist acts that took place in the U.S. were considered by the Islamic Law (Shar'iah) or the rules of Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh), the ruling for the crime of "Hirabah" (waging war against society) would be applied to their doers. God (Glory be to He) said: "The recompense of those who wage war against God and His Messenger and do mischief on earth is only that they shall be killed..." 5: 33-34.

Therefore, we find it necessary to apprehend the true perpetrators of these crimes, as well as those who aid and abet them through incitement, financing or other support. They must be brought to justice in an impartial court of law and punish them appropriately, so that it could act as deterrent to them and to others like them who easily slay the lives of innocents, destroy properties and terrorize people. Hence, it's a duty on Muslims to participate in this effort with all possible means, in accordance with God's (Most High) saying: "And help one another in virtue and righteousness, but do not help one another in sin and transgression." 5:2.

In this case [where a Muslim is a citizen of a state and a member of a regular army], he has no choice but to follow orders, otherwise his allegiance and loyalty to his country could be in doubt. This would subject him to much harm since he would not enjoy the privileges of citizenship without performing its obligations.

The Muslim (soldier) must perform his duty in this fight despite the feeling of uneasiness of "fighting without discriminating." His intention (niyya) must be to fight for enjoining of the truth and defeating falsehood. It's to prevent aggression on the innocents, or to apprehend the perpetrators and bring them to justice...Moreover, even if fighting causes him discomfort spiritually or psychologically, this personal hardship must be endured for the greater public good, as the jurisprudence (fiqhi) rule states.^{xiii}

- Muslim groups and leaders across the globe have denounced Al-Qaeda and its actions as un-Islamic. These include religious leaders, politicians, academicians, journalists and public figures.
- Osama bin Laden was the leader of Al-Qaeda until his death in 2011.

DEATH OF OSAMA BIN LADEN

- On Sunday evening, May 1, 2011, President Obama reported that Osama bin Laden had been killed earlier that day in a “targeted operation” carried out by Navy Seals and CIA operatives.^{xiv}
- Bin Laden had been hiding at a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. Officials report that they first suspected that bin Laden might be in this compound in August 2010.
- Built in 2005, the compound had high concrete walls and did not have telephone or internet service. Residents burned their garbage for extra security.^{xv}
- According to President Obama, great care was taken to avoid civilian casualties. Besides Bin Laden, others killed in the operation were Bin Laden’s courier, his courier’s wife, his courier’s brother and one of Bin Laden’s sons. No children or Americans were harmed.^{xiv}
- Initial accounts of the siege stated that Bin Laden held a weapon and shot at U.S. troops. Later reports were revised to state that Bin Laden was unarmed, but that he appeared to show some resistance before being killed.
- The U.S. also retracted an early report that one of Bin Laden’s wives was killed when he used her as a “human shield.” The wife who was with him did not die during the siege, although she was shot in the calf. The U.S. does report that a different woman died. There is no substantial evidence to suggest that any of the female victims were used as “human shields.”^{xvi}
- Operatives found Bin Laden’s handwritten journals and computer files, both of which contained information regarding plans for a large-scale attack against the United States to correspond with the 10th anniversary of 9/11.^{xvii}
- In his announcement, President Obama made clear that the U.S. is not at war against Islam, stating that “Bin Laden was not a Muslim leader; he was a mass murderer of Muslims.” Several Muslim groups have released statements echoing this sentiment.^{xviii} This sentiment is aligned with the statements made by President George W. Bush just following 9/11.^{xix}
- The U.S. announced that U.S. troops had buried Bin Laden at sea in accordance with Muslim law. Muslim tradition requires burial within 24 hours of death. Several other Muslim burial customs were followed, including washing the body prior to burial, wrapping the body in a plain white shroud, and reciting the traditional Muslim funeral prayer, *Janazah*, in Arabic. These proceedings differ from those traditionally observed at the funeral of a martyr.^{xx}
- Many scholars and religious figures have said that in Islam, burial at sea is only allowed in extraordinary circumstances, such as when a body is on a ship and cannot be buried on land, and that Bin Laden’s death did not constitute such a case.^{xxi}

- A U.S. official stated that “Finding a country willing to accept the remains of the world's most wanted terrorist would have been difficult.” Additionally, it has been speculated that the burial at sea would prevent the possibility of followers creating a shrine to Bin Laden at the site of his grave.^{xxi}
- President Obama did not release photographs of Bin Laden’s body.
- In the hours following the announcement of Bin Laden’s death, celebratory gatherings took place in New York City (Times Square and Ground Zero), Washington, DC (the White House) and other locations across the country.^{xiv}
- A statement by Al-Qaeda publicly acknowledging Bin Laden’s death was issued on May 3, 2011 and published online on May 6, 2011. The statement affirmed the continuity of Al-Qaeda and included new threats against the United States.^{xxii}
- On June 16, 2011, Al-Qaeda announced its new leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri of Egypt. Al-Zawahiri was the operational commander of Al-Qaeda for several years and became increasingly visible following the September 11th attacks.^{xxiii}

MAINSTREAM ISLAM’S POSITION ON TERRORISM

Islam views terrorism and suicide bombings as actions that are totally prohibited. Both the Qur’an (Muslim scripture) and *hadith* (prophetic sayings) place supremacy on the sanctity of life and the importance of security and peace. In fact, taking an innocent life is considered one of the most condemnable acts in Islam. Terrorism is a modern day aberration that was adopted in the 20th century. In addition to being a tactic practiced by various extremist Islamic groups, it is also used by non-Muslim organizations, such as the Tamil Tigers and the IRA. Such actions are alien to Islam's 1400 years of history, teachings, and tradition.

Terrorism – which is defined as the use of violence and threats to intimidate, coerce, or terrify people, especially for political purposes – directly contradicts Islamic rules of conduct during war, which explicitly prohibit targeting civilians. These principles are based on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and his early successors, who forbade harming civilians during wartime, specifically women, children, clergy, and the elderly. These teachings also prohibit damaging churches, cutting down trees, poisoning wells, and slaughtering civilians’ livestock. In a modern context, this means avoiding the destruction of any infrastructure that affects the lives of civilians, such as food sources, water, hospitals, roads, and bridges.

Suicide is also prohibited in Islam based on the belief that no one has the right to take away a life given by God, except God. To engage in a suicide bombing where one takes one’s own life, as well as the lives of innocent people, is thus one of the acts that is most condemned in Islam.

Islam’s laws of warfare are comparable to “Just War” beliefs from other traditions in that they stipulate that war should only be fought between combatants, not with civilians, and should be fought in self-defense or against oppressive forces, but not as an act of aggression.

Terrorists who maintain that their actions are based on Islam are misappropriating the religion, just as many extremists and extremist groups from a variety of backgrounds misappropriate their religions to justify their actions.

Dozens of scholars of Islam issued a statement condemning the violent attacks of September 11th. "We are grief-stricken at these horrifying events," they wrote; "the murder of innocents can never be justified and must not be tolerated." The co-signers of the statement are the steering committee and members of the Section for the Study of Islam at the American Academy of Religion. They represent many scholarly societies in the United States and Canada.^{xxiv}

Among those who have spoken out is Dr. Ingrid Mattson, professor of Islamic studies and Muslim-Christian relations at Hartford Seminary in Hartford, and president of the Islamic Society of North America, who stated in October, 2001:

"Islamic law is very clear: terrorism is not permitted. Even in a legitimate war — even if Osama bin Laden were a legitimate head of state, which he's not — you're not permitted to indiscriminately kill civilians, just to create terror in the general population."^{xxv}

Shaikh Hamza Yusuf, scholar, author, religious leader, and renowned media figure, and founder of Zaytuna College, agreed:

"These are mass murderers, pure and simple...there's no Muslim who understands his religion at all who would condone this [suicide bombing]...Suicide bombers have cited a Koranic verse that says, 'Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord.' That is meant for people who are legitimately defending the lands of Islam or fighting under legitimate state authority against a tyrannical leader. There is no vigilantism in Islam. Muslims believe in the authority of government."^{xxvi}

WORLDWIDE TERRORISM STATISTICS

The National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), part of the U.S. Department of State, releases the annual Country Reports on Terrorism. In 2005, NCTC adopted the definition of "terrorism" that appears in the 22 USC § 2656f(d)(2), i.e., "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents."

The 2010 NCTC report was released on August 18, 2011, with an information cut-off date of March 23, 2011. The report pulls its statistics from open source information. Thus, specific details about victims are limited because open source information frequently fails to include such data. According to this report:

- The number of terrorist attacks worldwide in 2010 was 11,604, an increase of about 6 percent from 2009. Approximately 40.5 percent of these attacks resulted in at least one death.
- The total number of terrorism victims worldwide in 2010 was 49,901.
- Of these victims, a total of 13,186 people were killed.
 - 30,665 were injured and 6,050 were kidnapped.
- Among all who have been harmed by terrorism, the group with the most terrorism victims worldwide is the Muslim community. According to the NCTC report, most terrorist attacks in 2010 occurred in "predominantly Muslim countries."
 - Iraq had the largest overall number of terrorism victims with 12,087, of whom 2,704 died.

- Afghanistan had the second largest number of terrorism victims at 7,039; 2,475 died.
- Pakistan had 5,555 victims; 1,680 died.
- According to the NCTC report, extremists within the Sunni Muslim community committed almost 60 percent of all worldwide terrorist attacks, causing about 70 percent of terrorism-related deaths. This marks an increase from 2009, when that figure was about 62 percent.
- Christian extremist attacks fell from 1,052 in 2009 to 321 in 2010, marking a decrease of about 64 percent.
- More than half of those killed by terrorist attacks worldwide in 2010 were civilians. More than 600 of these victims were children, representing about 4.5 percent of total terrorism-related deaths.
- More than 2,000 victims were police or other paramilitary or private security officers. This marks an increase of nearly 2 percent from 2009 to 2010.^{xxvii}

ⁱ Tom Templeton and Tom Lumley, "9/11 in Numbers," The Guardian UK, August 18, 2002 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/aug/18/usa.terrorism>>.

ⁱⁱ "9/11 by the Numbers," New York Magazine, 2002 <<http://nymag.com/news/articles/wtc/1year/numbers.htm>>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Diana Lynne, "Littlest Victims Often Overlooked," World Net Daily December 21, 2001 <http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=25771>.

^{iv} Jael Goldstein. Phone Interview with Official from Tribute WTC Visitor Center, May 26, 2011

^v Henry Goldman, "New York, U.S. Commemorate Sept. 11 Anniversary With Ceremonies, Protests," Bloomberg September 12, 2010 <<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-09-11/new-york-u-s-commemorate-sept-11-anniversary-with-ceremonies-protests.html>>.

^{vi} Michael McAuliff, "As death toll of 9/11 responders nears 1,000, pols want autopsy standards to pinpoint causes," NY Daily News, November 11, 2010 <http://articles.nydailynews.com/2010-11-11/local/27080879_1_death-toll-autopsy-responders>.

^{vii} "How 9/11 Changed America: In Statistics," BBC September 1, 2006 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/629/629/5305868.stm>.

^{viii} "Terrorism: Al Qaeda," Anti-Defamation League 2012 <http://www.adl.org/terrorism/profiles/al_qaeda.asp>.

^{ix} Jayshee Bajoria, "Backgrounder: al-Qaeda (a.k.a. al-Qaida, al-Qa'ida)," Council on Foreign Relations August 29, 2011 <<http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations/al-qaeda-k-al-qaida-al-qaida/p9126#p9>>.

^x Sheila Musaji, "Muslim Voices – Part I – Fatwas & Statements by Muslim Scholars & Organizations," The American Muslim January 28, 2011 <http://theamericanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/muslim_voices_against_extremism_and_terrorism_part_i_fatwas>.

^{xi} George Makdisi, "Scholasticism and Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West," Journal of the American Oriental Society 109.2 (1989): 175-182. Web. 28 June 2011. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/604423>>.

^{xii} Kimberly and Fred Kagan, "How Not to Defeat al Qaeda," Institute for the Study of War, October 5, 2009, 15: 3 <<http://www.understandingwar.org/otherwork/how-not-defeat-al-qaeda>>.

^{xiii} Yusuf al-Qaradawi et al. "In The Name of God, The Compassionate, The Merciful: Legal Fatwa," Translation. September 27, 2001 <http://www.unc.edu/~kurzman/Qaradawi_et_al.htm>.

^{xiv} Peter Baker, Helene Cooper and Mark Mazzetti, "Bin Laden is Dead, Obama Says," The New York Times May 1, 2011 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/02/world/asia/osama-bin-laden-is-killed.html>>.

^{xv} "How the US tracked couriers to elaborate bin Laden compound," MSNBC.com May 3, 2011 <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/42853221/ns/world_news-south_and_central_asia/>.

^{xvi} Haroon Siddique, "Osama bin Laden: US changes account of al-Qaida leader's death," The Guardian UK May 3, 2011 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/03/osama-bin-laden-us-changes-story>>.

^{xvii} "U.S. investigators poring over materials from bin Laden's compound," WQOW.com <<http://www.wqow.com/Global/story.asp?S=14678239>>.

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- ^{xviii} “Obama’s Remarks on Bin Laden’s Killing,” The New York Times May 2, 2011 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/02/world/middleeast/02obama-text.html>>.
- ^{xix} “Transcript of President Bush’s address,” The New York Times September 21, 2001 <http://articles.cnn.com/2001-09-20/us/gen.bush.transcript_1_joint-session-national-anthem-citizens?_s=PM:US>.
- ^{xx} Joseph Neese, “Islamic expert dissects bin Laden burial,” WLOX.com May 4, 2011 <<http://www.wlox.com/Global/story.asp?S=14566710>>.
- ^{xxi} Ian Black and Brian Whitaker, “Sea burial of Osama bin Laden breaks sharia law, say Muslim scholars,” The Guardian UK May 2, 2011 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/02/sea-burial-osama-bin-laden>>.
- ^{xxii} Greg Miller, “Al-Qaeda confirms Osama bin Laden’s death, vows retaliation,” The Washington Post May 6, 2011 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/al-qaeda-confirms-osama-bin-ladens-death-vows-retaliation/2011/05/06/AFFEtn7F_story.html>.
- ^{xxiii} Mary Beth Sheridan, “Zawahiri named new al-Qaeda leader,” The Washington Post June 16, 2011 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/al-zawahiri-named-new-al-qaeda-leader/2011/06/16/AGNk87WH_story.html>.
- ^{xxiv} “Scholars of Islam Speak Out Against Terrorism; Clarify Position of Islam,” Council on American-Islamic Relations September 17, 2001 <<http://www.cair.com/AmericanMuslims/AntiTerrorism/ScholarsofIslamspeakoutagainstterrorism.aspx>>.
- ^{xxv} Jacques Steinberg, “A NATION CHALLENGED: THE KORAN; Experts Say Bin Laden Is Distorting Sacred Text,” The New York Times October 8, 2001 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/10/08/us/a-nation-challenged-the-koran-experts-say-bin-laden-is-distorting-sacred-text.html>>.
- ^{xxvi} Richard Scheinin, “Expert says Islam prohibits violence against innocents,” San Jose Mercury News September 16, 2001 <<http://www.jannah.org/resources/hamza.html>>.
- ^{xxvii} “National Counterterrorism Center: Annex of Statistical Information,” U.S. Department of State August 18, 2011 <<http://www.state.gov/g/ct/rls/crt/2010/170266.htm>>.

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