

Some terms relating to Islam

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- **ALAWITE**
An offshoot of Shia Islam, often considered heretical, located primarily in Syria where it makes up approximately 12% of the population.
- **ALLAH**
Arabic for "God."
- **BURKA**
A full-body and face covering worn by some Muslim women in compliance with an interpretation of a Quranic verse that instructs Muslims to dress "modestly."
- **CALIPHATE**
An Islamic State where Sharia is the basis of governance; usually used in reference to past Islamic empires in the Middle East.
- **CIVILIZATION JIHAD**
Term used by the U.S. Muslim Brotherhood in a 1991 document to describe its strategy to gradually destroy the United States from within.
- **DAWA**
The proselytizing of Islam.
- **FATWA**
A legal ruling made according to Sharia (Islamic law)
- **FGM**
Female Genital Mutilation - Partial or complete removal of the external female genitalia usually carried out on girls from a few days old to puberty. Considered a religious obligation by some Islamic authorities in order to control women's sexual desires.
- **GRADUALISM**
Islamist strategy often used by the Muslim Brotherhood that calls for incremental, pragmatic change of societies towards compliance with Sharia governance.
- **HADITH**
Recorded collection of the acts and sayings of Mohammed, the founder of Islam who Muslims believe was a prophet; "ahadith" refers to the body of collections, each viewed with varying credibility.
- **HAJJ**
Pilgrimage made to Mecca that is required of all capable Muslims.
- **HALAL**
Arabic word for "permissible" under Islamic law (Sharia).

- **HIJAB**
Veil often worn by Muslim women that covers the scalp but leaves the face exposed in compliance with an interpretation of an Islamic command to dress "modestly."
- **HONOR KILLING**
The murder of a family member for allegedly "shaming" the family with un-Islamic behavior.
- **HUDNA**
Islamic term for temporary truce.
- **HUDUD**
The term *Hudud* in Sharia (Islamic law) usually refers to the most serious criminal punishments.
For example, the punishment for apostasy, adultery and homosexuality is execution; thievery is punishable by having a hand severed and premarital sex is punishable by 100 lashings.
- **IKHWAN**
Arabic for "Brotherhood," usually in reference to the Muslim Brotherhood.
- **IMAM**
Religious authority figure; usually the leader of a mosque.
- **ISLAMISM**
The interpretation of Islam as a governmental system in which strict Sharia law must be enforced; synonymous with Political Islam.
- **ISLAMOPHOBIA**
Unwarranted fear of Muslims; term frequently used by Islamist groups and their allies to label critics of Islamic extremism as bigots in order to stifle criticism.
- **JIHAD**
A holy war waged against non-Muslims on behalf of Islam considered to be a religious duty; also, a personal struggle in devotion to Islam.
- **MAHDI**
The Mahdi is a figure who, according to certain Islamic believers, will unify Mankind under Islam after vanquishing a false messiah; Shiites sometimes refer to him as the "Hidden Imam."
- **MASJID**
Arabic for "mosque;" Islamic house of worship.
- **MUJAHIDEEN**
Religiously-motivated fighters that volunteer to wage Jihad against the enemies of Islam.
- **MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD**
A worldwide Islamist organization founded in Egypt in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna that seeks to implement Sharia-based governance globally.

- **NIKAH MUT'AH**
A marriage contracted for a limited period, for a certain sum of money. Such marriages are still legal among Shiites, but are considered prohibited by Sunnis. (Dictionary of Islam, by Patrick Hughes).
- **NIQAB**
A face veil, worn by some Muslim women, that exposes only the eyes in compliance with an interpretation of an Islamic command to dress modestly.
- **POLITICAL ISLAM**
The interpretation of Islam as a governmental system; synonymous with Islamism.
- **QURAN**
The book that Muslims believe records the prophecies received by Mohammed by God.
- **SALAFIST**
Islamic movement formed in the early 20th century that holds that Muslims must reject much of modernity and replicate the lifestyle of Mohammed and early Islamic authorities; often used synonymously with Wahhabism.
- **SALAT**
Arabic for "prayer," required by Islamic law (Sharia) to be performed five times per day.
- **SAWM**
Arabic for "fasting."
- **SHAHADA**
A declaration required by Islamic law saying that a person believes that Allah is the one God and Mohammed is his messenger.
- **SHARIA**
A legal framework to regulate public and private aspects of life based upon specific Islamic teachings. Sharia is a strict system which views non-Muslims as second-class citizens, sanctions inequality between men and women and prescribes cruel and unusual punishments for crimes.
- **SHARIA FINANCE**
Investments into funds approved by Islamic scholars as being Sharia-compliant; often referred to as "Islamic banking."
- **SHEIKH**
A Muslim preacher with recognized religious authority.
- **SHIITES**
Branch of Islam that represents 10-15% of Muslims. Shiites believe that Muhammed divinely ordained his cousin and son-in-law Ali to be the next caliph making Ali and his direct descendants Muhammed's successors.
- **SUFI**
Practice of Islam that emphasizes mysticism and whose followers organize into "orders."

- **SUNNA**
Proper behavior as represented by the life of Mohammed and written in the ahadith; often used synonymously with ahadith.
- **SUNNIS**
Branch of Islam that represents 85-90% of Muslims. Sunnis believe that Abu Bakr, the father of Muhammad's wife Aisha, was Muhammad's rightful successor and that the method of choosing leaders is the consensus of the Muslim community.
- **SURA**
Chapter of the Quran.
- **TAKFIR**
The act of declaring ones fellow muslim to be a non-believer. It is a legal categorization for which the sentence is traditionally death, which must be handed down by an Islamic Court. Most notably used in recent times on Salman Rushdie, who was declared a kafir and sentenced to death in a fatwa issued by Ayatollah Khomeini because of passages in Rushdie's book The Satanic Verses.
- **TAQIYYA / TAQQIYA**
Arabic for "deceit" or "dissimulation." According to certain Islamic interpretations, Muslims are allowed to lie in certain situations such as to deceive their enemies, particularly non-Muslims.
- **UMMAH**
Worldwide community of Muslims.
- **WAHHABI**
Term used to describe a puritanical form of Islam like that is instituted in Saudi Arabia; inspired by the preaching of Mohammed al-Wahhab.
- **ZAKAT**
Obligatory donation of income in Islam.