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Summary:

One of the most frequently quoted Quranic verses is chapter 9 verse 5. This verse is known as "The Verse of the Sword." Muslim terrorists cite it to justify their violent jihad. Correspondingly, critics of Islam claim that it commands Muslims to act with offensive aggression towards the non-Muslims of that period, and contributes to Islam's final theological doctrine of aggression towards all non-Muslims of all times. Apologists for Islam claim that 9:5 is purely defensive. Which side is right?

As the Islamic source materials are examined it will become evident that verse 9:5 is part of the theology of jihad and is meant to be both offensive and defensive. It is directed against Pagans living both near to and far away from Muhammad.

Understanding 9:5 in context requires an examination of the passage in which it is found. This passage consists of 29 to 41 verses or so (depending on which scholar's view you hold). Because of time and space constraints however, I will only review the first 8 or so verses. I believe that they set the passage's tone and belay its directives.

Islam's final theological position regarding the use of violence to further its domain does not rest upon one verse or passage. Rather the entire Quran, other Islamic source materials, and Muhammad's actions and lifestyle (Sunnah) must be examined and evaluated. We'll do that with a view toward Sura 9:5.

I have attempted to keep this article focused on 9:5 within the broad theology of jihad. 9:5 is a foundational stone in the building of jihad and general aspects of jihad must be discussed. There is also the related topic of abrogation, but that has been dealt with elsewhere [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#).

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