

# I am a Jihadi



## This is the view of a Sunni Muslim

July 2021; the English men's football team finally got to the finals in an important international tournament. The whole country was hooked. 31 million people tuned in to watch- that is almost half of the population. After covid, it brought people together, it gave us something to care about and feel united about that didn't matter in a life and death sort of way. People smiled at each other in the street and invited neighbours to watch, they dyed their hair red and baked cakes and just felt good. It was lovely.

Then what what happened? After the narrow defeat, a few vile individuals beat up some Italian fans and posted racist comments about some of the players online. It felt like such a slap in the face to the tens of millions of people who had enjoyed and benefited from the wonderful playing of the team and managing of the manager and we couldn't believe it. Not only did we feel defensive for those people who had been attacked but we felt tarred by association. The rest of the world was looking at the vileness of the English and their hooligan supporters. These nasty individuals got to represent the rest of us, all of whom have in the weeks building up to the final, been chuffed to call themselves England fans too. Actually, it doesn't matter how ardently, persistently and creatively we present the reality to the rest of the world... the very small minority has reinforced a negative stereotype. English football fans are terrorists. Oh; hang on they don't use that word ... English football fans are 'hooligans'.

Welcome to our world. I mean the world of being Muslim. Being misunderstood is something you get used to.

Who hasn't heard the words 'jihad' and 'jihadi' used in a very negative way by the media? Since the turn of the century, it must be one of the most misunderstood words there are.

One of the problems that give rise to misunderstandings is that most of us listen to the headlines and look at the picture. If an issue or headline is not of personal interest to us, then we don't look beyond. However, I don't think that this is the problem here. The misunderstanding of the term jihad is because there are violent extremists who have taken the word and used it to illustrate their own terrible activities and the media have liked the sound of the word and created a symbol out of it. The media should come under scrutiny for not doing their homework. It is lazy journalism at best. However, as a rule, journalists are neither lazy nor stupid and so it falls to us to consider that the media misuse of the term jihad is a deliberate provocation to stoke hatred and sell stories.

Jihad is not what they tell you it is. Jihad is beautiful. From your very earliest years you have been told (probably in a different language) to do jihad too and you continue to be told to do it now. You know for certain that jihad is something that you can't succeed in any respect without.

Jihad is constant striving. It is striving even when you are tired, even when you are struggling, even when you want to give up. It is knowing that the outcome is based on what you put in. It is about resilience, struggle and keeping patient even when it feels like there are no benefits.

The word jihad is Arabic for 'struggle/striving'. For Muslims, everything we do should be in the name of Allah. That means every footstep and every heartbeat, every action and every intention should be done for the sake of pleasing Allah. Because what is pleasing to Allah is the most beautiful actions and intentions, our actions will also be beautiful to other people and everyone will benefit from them. The striving is to do this as best we can, not to expect perfection. No one is perfect. The Muslim who does

very little but strives is doing better than the Muslim who does a lot but finds it easy. Every Muslim must strive.

I am a jihadi. I work to build jihad into my being and into my life. Any second without jihad is a second wasted of this gift of life we have been given. I would not shout this from the roof tops, it is a secret between myself and my Lord. I pray I can live a life of jihad and die in jihad too.

**Task: Read the account of jihad**

**All:** What does jihad mean?

**Most:** Give 4 examples of how someone could be a jihadi in their everyday life.

**Some:** Find a headline which contains the word jihad or jihadi and the associated picture. A) Explain what is said and what the picture is. B) Do you think they have given a misleading view of jihad? Explain your answer.