

Islamic Terminology

Allah: The Islamic term for god. Allah is the creator of the universe. He is considered to be merciful, beneficent, protective, mighty, a provider, the exalted one, lord, all knowing, all hearing, all seeing, magnificent, wise, and eternal. The Qur'an states 99 characteristic names for Allah.

Allahu Akbar: Arabic for "Allah is most great," or "God is great." It is used as a call to prayer.

Assalaamu Álaikum: A general greeting in Islamic culture, which means, "Peace be upon you."

Ayatollah: A spiritual leader among the Shi'ites.

Barakah: Means blessing or divine grace.

Bismillahir rahmanir rahim: A phrase recited before doing any daily activity. It means, "In the name of Allah, the most beneficent, the most merciful."

Caliph: Successor of Muhammad as leader of the Muslim community.

Caliphat: the rule or reign of a caliph or chief Muslim ruler.

Daa'i: A missionary in Islam.

Dar-al-harb: A term used for the non-Muslim world and means "House of War."

Dar-al-Islam: A term that refers to the Islamic world and means "House of Islam."

Da'wah: Its literal meaning is to invite others to Islam and is the Islamic equivalent to the Christian word, "mission."

Dhimmis: These are conquered peoples living under Muslim rule, generally the Jews and Christians who are called "people of the Book." They are protected and can have certain rights such as privately worshipping according to their religion. However, they must pay protection money and are never considered citizens.

Eid: Means a festivity, a celebration, a feast.

Fatwa: This is an Islamic legal ruling or edict.

Hadith: A collection of Muhammad's sayings and deeds, known as the Traditions, which is commonly taught as a part of Islamic theology. Hadiths are explanations and interpretations of Muhammad's living example.

Hajj: * Pilgrimage to Mecca during the twelfth month of the Muslim lunar calendar. Muslims are required to perform hajj at least once in their lifetime, if means and health allow.

Hijra: The flight of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina in A.D. 622 because of increasing opposition. It is also called hegira or hejira.

Imam: A religious leader or head of a local community, or a spiritually qualified leader. He also leads in community political affairs.

Iman: This is a belief or faith in god (Allah).

Injil: It is the Gospel of Jesus and one of Islam's Holy Books.

Islam: The root words of Islam are silm and salam which mean submission.

Jerusalem: is the third holiest site in Sunni Islam after the mosques of [al-Haram](#) in [Mecca](#) and [al-Nabawi](#) in [Medina](#).

It was the first [direction of prayer](#) in Islam, before the [Kaaba](#) in [Mecca](#);

According to the Quran, the Islamic prophet [Muhammad](#) was taken by the miraculous steed [Buraq](#) to visit the Farthest Mosque (which many Muslims believe is the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem), where he prayed, and was then taken to [heaven](#).

Jihad: This is a struggle or effort in god's cause. The great jihad is the inward struggle against the passions. The lesser jihad is a defensive or legal war, to protect the interest of Islam. It is mistakenly called holy war. Jihad is the Muslim obligation to strive to teach, explain, spread, and protect the message of Islam.

Jinn: These are unseen or spiritual beings who are required to follow the orders of Allah and are accountable for their deeds. Like humans, they are given the power to choose between right and wrong.

Ka'ba: A cubic stone structure where the black stone is housed. Located in the center of the Great Mosque at Mecca, Muslims believe that it was the first house of worship built by Adam, which was later reconstructed by Abraham and Isma'il. It is also spelled ka'aba or ka'bah.

Kafir: This is a person who refuses to submit to Allah. This term is generally used by Muslims to refer to those who do not believe in Muhammad and the Qur'an, and who do not believe in god.

Koran: The anglicized form of Qur'an-holy book or sacred scripture. Muslims believe that it was revealed to Muhammad through angel Gabriel, or Jibril. The Koran was not fully composed at one time. Rather, it was revealed piecemeal over a period of 23 years. It is composed of 114 surahs.

Madinah: Originally this city was called Yathrib, and was located about 200 km north of Mecca in Western Saudi Arabia. This was the first city-state that was established under the banner of Islam.. In the city center, (Prophet's Mosque) is a major Islamic pilgrimage site. Its striking Green Dome rises above the tombs of the Prophet Muhammad and early Islamic leaders Abu Bakr and Umar. The Masjid al-Qiblatain (Qiblatain Mosque) is known as the site where the Prophet Muhammad received the command to change the direction of prayer to Mecca.

Mahdi: This term means the guided one.

Masjid: Arabic word translated as mosque.

Mecca: located in a desert valley in western Saudi Arabia, is Islam's holiest city, as it's the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad and the faith itself. Only Muslims are allowed in the city, with millions arriving for the annual Hajj (pilgrimage). Dating from the 7th century, the central Masjid al-Haram (Sacred Mosque) surrounds the Kaaba, the cloth-covered cubic structure that's Islam's most sacred shrine.

Mosque: A place or house of prayer-literally, a place of prostration.

Muhammad: This is the prophet of the Islamic faith. He was born A.D. 570. and died in A.D. 632. Also spelled Mohammad.

Muharram: Muharram is the first month of the Islamic calendar and a festival commemorating the martyrdom of the third Imam.

Mullah: A learned leader, especially in Iran.

Murtad: This term means an apostate or an Islamic person who is converted to another religion.

Muslim: A person who submits to Allah and practices the religion of Islam.

Qibla: Direction toward Mecca that is designated in a place of prayer.

Qur'an: The Arabic word for recitation. See Koran.

Ramadan: Month of fasting which is observed in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Muslims believe that it was during this month that the Quranic revelations began.

Salaam: A salutation, greeting, or blessing which means peace.

Salat: * Worship in the form of ritual prayer that is repeated five times daily.

Sawm: * Fasting, especially during Ramadan. Sawm means total abstinence from food, liquids, and sexual relationships from dawn to sunset, for one lunar month. Also called slyam.

Shahada: * Confessing or bearing witness to god's unity and Muhammad's role as messenger. "I testify that there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his Prophet. A person must recite the shahadah to convert to Islam.

Shari'ah: Shari'ah is Islamic law—the way or divine path of obedience to god. It comprises the writings of the Qur'an and hadith and serves as the guide for worship and ethical living.

Shi'ite: Partisan or follower who believes that leadership should come from descendants of Muhammad's family. The plural is Shi'a.

Shirk: The act (sin) of regarding anything as equal with god. This includes idolatry, polytheism, or attributing divinity to a person.

Sufi: A Muslim mystic who emphasizes strong denial of self for the purpose of communion with god.

Sunni: Ninety percent of Muslims are Sunni. This name is derived from sunna (tradition) for one who follows the tradition of Muhammad (who did not designate a successor). It is the belief that leadership should come from among the Quraish Arabs (Muhammad's tribe). The plural is Sunnites.

Sura: Chapter of the Qur'an, of which there are 114. The plural of surah is suwar, which means chapters. Also spelled surah.

Umma: The whole community of Islam or the ideal society god creates from those who practice and submit to Islam.

Zakat: * The alms or contributions to charity required as a duty to god. Zakat constitutes about 2.5 percent of one's annual wealth.

Indicates one of the Five Pillars of Islam.

Major common terminology.