



## The Phenomenon Of *Al-Takfir*: Impacts On Unity Within The Islamic Ummah

<sup>1</sup>Mohammad Qasim Rashidi, <sup>2</sup>Habiburrahman Rizapoor,

<sup>1,2</sup> Islamic Studies Department of the Sharia Faculty of  
Badakhshan University Afghanistan

Email: [habibraghi@gmail.com](mailto:habibraghi@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** *The phenomenon of Al-Takfir, characterized by the practice of denouncing fellow Muslims as apostates, has emerged as a critical concern within the Islamic community. This article delves into the detrimental ramifications of Al-Takfir on the unity of the Islamic ummah, elucidating its role as a divisive theological practice that has led to fragmentation within the global Muslim community. Employing an extensive examination of historical occurrences, theological viewpoints, and modern expressions of Al-Takfir, this study scrutinizes its contributory role in eroding the essential unity intrinsic to Islam. The research underscores that the prerogative of declaring Takfir is not vested in every individual but is relegated to Allah and the Prophet, supported by explicit Quranic verses, authenticated Hadiths, or consensus (Ijma') among Muslim scholars. Similarly, the research underscores that the phenomenon of Takfir has grave repercussions for Muslim unity, as it engenders multiple factions and nurtures mutual animosity among Muslims. In conclusion, the study proffers strategies aimed at fortifying unity within the Islamic ummah. These strategies encompass raising awareness about the diverse aspects of Islam, promoting dialogue among divergent perspectives, and accentuating the shared values that traverse sectarian divides. Ultimately, this research endeavors to present a nuanced comprehension of the intricate issue of Al-Takfir and its effects on the unity of the Islamic ummah. By providing insights into this multifaceted concern, the study aspires to contribute to the cultivation of a more harmonious and all-encompassing Muslim community.*

**Keywords:** *Al-Takfir, Islam, Disbeliever, Al-Irtidād, Al-Kufr, Diversity, Unity*

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of Al-Takfir, which involves labeling individuals as nonbelievers or apostates within the Islamic faith, holds profound implications for the unity of the Muslim community. This issue carries a sensitivity that has the potential to disrupt the sense of brotherhood among Muslims and to have a detrimental impact on the cohesiveness of nations.<sup>1</sup> According to Ibn Faris, the term "Takfir" can be derived from the root "Kaffara," signifying the act of concealing or covering one thing with another.<sup>2</sup> This concept is exemplified in Surah al-Hadid, verse 20, where Allah mentions that farmers as "kufar" because they cover seeds with soil.

Al-Takfir has given rise to divisions within the Islamic ummah due to differing interpretations and applications of this concept. Its implications extend beyond mere theological debate, often being weaponized to fuel conflicts, sectarianism, and even violence among Muslims. The act of designating fellow Muslims as nonbelievers has the potential to rupture the bonds of unity that are fundamental to the Islamic faith, creating a

<sup>1</sup> Engku Ahmad Zaki Engku Alwi, Mohd Hafiz Nordin, and Mohd Hasrul Shuhari. "Al-Takfir According to Ahl Al-Sunnah Wa Al-Jama'ah And Its Relation To National Unity." *International Journal of Civil Engineering and Technology (IJCIET)* Volume 10, Issue 03, March 2019, pp. 3344–3350,

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Faris, *Mu'jam Maqayis al-Lughah*, 5/156

Received June 30, 2023; Revised July 2, 2023; Accepted August 24, 2023

\*Mohammad Qasim Rashidi, [habibraghi@gmail.com](mailto:habibraghi@gmail.com)

fissure in the broader Muslim community. This divisive impact is exacerbated by the modern proliferation of extremist ideologies through media and communication platforms, further widening the gap between different groups within the ummah. The division of Al-Takfir into three distinct dimensions—*kufr al-i'tiqadiy* (doctrinal disbelief), *kufr al-fi'liy* (disbelief in actions), and *kufr al-qawliy* (verbal disbelief)—as expounded by scholars of *mutakalimin* provides a comprehensive framework for understanding its various manifestations. Instances of Al-Takfir, whether based on misunderstood practices or differences in interpretation, have the potential to lead to dire consequences, including the imposition of the death penalty in cases of apostasy.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand other scholars have divided Kufur to other types for example, Al-Azhari linguist outlines that *kufur* can be categorized into four distinct levels. The first category is referred to as *Kufr 'Aqdi / Inkari*, characterized by the denial of Allah as the divine entity, both in belief and through spoken communication. The second level encompasses *Kufr al-Juhudi*, wherein one acknowledges Allah within their heart yet abstains from verbalizing this acknowledgment. This mirrors the act of the Devil, who disobeyed Allah's command to prostrate before the prophet Adam. Moving on to the third classification, *Kufr al-Mu'anadah* pertains to acknowledging Allah both in heart and speech, while simultaneously demonstrating reluctance to adhere to His commandments due to personal factors such as ego, jealousy, or animosity. This aligns with the actions of figures like Abu Jahl and Abu Talib, the latter of whom acknowledged Muhammad's religion as the best but refrained from embracing it due to societal pressures: "I would embrace it were it not for the fear of societal scorn." Lastly, the fourth tier, *Kufr al-Nifaqi*, denotes a concealed rejection in the heart coupled with a vocal declaration of disbelief.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, Al-Takfir presents a complex challenge to the unity of the Islamic ummah. Its multifaceted nature, encompassing both theological and practical dimensions, demands careful consideration and discernment. As the diverse Muslim community grapples with these issues, it becomes imperative to engage in open dialogue, foster a deeper understanding of differing viewpoints, and promote a sense of unity that is intrinsic to the Islamic faith. Striking a balance between theological principles and the Islamic faith. Striking a balance between theological principles and the imperative for unity remains a central concern for the contemporary Muslim world.

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<sup>3</sup> Engku Ahmad Zaki Engku Alwi, Mohd Hafiz Nordin, and Mohd Hasrul Shuhari. "Al-Takfir According to Ahl Al-Sunnah Wa Al-Jama'ah And Its Relation To National Unity.", pp. 3344–3350

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn al-Azhar al-Harawi, *Tahdhib al-Lughah*, vol. 3, (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi, 2001). P. 363.

Takfir constitutes a theological pronouncement within Islam that signifies the labeling of a Muslim as an apostate, or designates an individual as an infidel due to their actions or beliefs conflicting with Islamic doctrine. Engaging in takfir is regarded with utmost seriousness within Islamic jurisprudence, as it carries significant consequences both in the present life and the afterlife. This practice is considered a grave sin, with potential ramifications for both the one making the accusation and the one being accused. The implications of takfir extend to various aspects, including potential strains on relationships with Muslim spouses, potential challenges in inheritance rights, and other intricate matters that touch upon personal and communal aspects of life. For the person accused of apostasy or disbelief, takfir can lead to complex societal repercussions, influencing their status within the Muslim community and affecting their rights and privileges. On the other hand, the one asserting takfir is held to a high standard of evidence and accountability. Failing to substantiate such claims can result in consequences as grave as committing apostasy themselves, as emphasized in the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. The weight of these implications has led mainstream Muslim scholars to exercise extreme caution when discussing and applying the concept of takfir.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the gravity and careful consideration associated with takfir, certain extremist factions have exploited this theological concept for their own agenda. These groups have utilized takfir to categorize various segments of the Muslim population as disbelievers, including individuals who commit sins, leaders who govern outside of Islamic law, followers of such leaders, those not affiliated with their group, and Muslims who do not label others as they do. This misuse has extended to even broader designations, such as labeling Muslims living in non-Muslim societies or residing in lands ruled by non-Muslim governments as disbelievers. Furthermore, these extremist groups have extended the concept of takfir to label the entire Muslim society as *jahiliyah*, paralleling the state of pre-Islamic Arabian societies prior to the advent of Prophet Muhammad's teachings. This misapplication of takfir reflects the challenges and dangers posed by radical interpretations that exploit religious terminology to advance their objectives.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Muhammad Haniff Hassan, "The Danger of Takfir (Excommunication) Exposing IS'Takfiri Ideology." *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 9, no. 4 (2017): 3-12. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26351508>

<sup>6</sup> Muhammad Haniff Hassan, "The Danger of Takfir (Excommunication) Exposing IS'Takfiri Ideology." 9, no. 4 (2017): 3-12.

## **METHOD**

This article employs an analytical and descriptive research approach to investigate the phenomenon of Al-Takfir and its implications on unity within the Islamic ummah. The research entails a comprehensive review of existing academic literature, authoritative books, and articles available on various websites and magazines pertaining to the subject of Takfir. By adopting this methodology, the study aims to construct a well-rounded understanding of the historical, theological, and contemporary dimensions of Al-Takfir and its impact on the unity of the global Muslim community.

The analytical method facilitates the systematic analysis of diverse viewpoints, historical instances, and contemporary manifestations of Al-Takfir. Through critical evaluation, this method aids in discerning patterns, causal relationships, and underlying themes that contribute to the divisive nature of Takfir within the Islamic community.

The descriptive approach is employed to vividly present the findings, elucidate the key concepts, and offer a comprehensive overview of the subject matter. By presenting a detailed account of the various sources consulted, including academic articles, books, and articles from reputable websites and magazines, the study ensures transparency and traceability in the research process.

The selection of sources is informed by a rigorous process of reviewing and vetting materials to ensure their relevance, credibility, and authority. Peer-reviewed academic articles, established scholarly books, and well-regarded articles from reputable websites and magazines constitute the core of the sources utilized in this research. By drawing from a diverse array of sources, the study aims to capture a comprehensive spectrum of perspectives on the issue of Al-Takfir and its effects on the unity of the Islamic ummah.

## **RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

The consensus among scholars from the *Ahlussunnah*, Shiites, and *Mu'tazilites* predominantly centers around the tripartite nature of faith encompassing belief, speech, and action. Nevertheless, nuances exist in their viewpoints. The *Ahlussunnah* perspective posits that action serves as a condition for achieving the perfection of faith, whereas the *Mu'tazilah* stance asserts that action is a condition for the validity of one's faith. Conversely, the Murji'ah faction contends that an individual's faith primarily pertains to the inner convictions and verbal profession, dissociated from deeds. According to their viewpoint, an individual retains the potential for future contentment and salvation even in

the absence of charitable actions. This is underpinned by their belief that the threat of infernal punishment is exclusively reserved for those who harbor disbelief.<sup>7</sup>

In scholarly discourse, the concept of *kufir*, or disbelief, has been categorized into distinct classifications based on both belief and action. Scholars have delineated two fundamental categories: '*aqdi* (pertaining to belief) and '*amali* (pertaining to action). The former, '*aqdi kufir*, is identified as a form of disbelief that results in the departure from Islam and faith itself. Examples of '*aqdi kufir* encompass the denial of core tenets such as the existence of Allah, angels, divine scriptures, messengers, the Day of Judgment, and the concept of divine predestination. These tenets are commonly referred to as the pillars of Faith, and the rejection of any of them is regarded as a manifestation of '*aqdi kufir*. In contrast, '*amali kufir*, the second classification, encompasses a diverse range of actions and behaviors that do not lead an individual to sever their ties with Islam, but rather are considered as instances of committing immorality or sin. Instances of '*amali kufir* include acts such as denying the favors bestowed by Allah, as well as acts of disobedience, defiance of divine commands, or failure to abstain from prohibited deeds.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, the scholar Ibn Qayyim distinguishes *kufir* into *al-Kufr al-Akbar* (major *kufir*) and *al-Kufr al-Ashghar* (minor *kufir*). He contends that major *kufir* results in the ejection of the individual from the fold of Islam, leading to eternal damnation, whereas minor *kufir*, while still exposing the individual to the threat of hell's torment, is not deemed as an eternal condemnation. This distinction finds support in various narrations from the Prophet's tradition, as evidenced by the statement attributed to Abu Hurairah that identifies destructive actions, such as the breakdown of kinship ties and excessive mourning practices, as triggers for minor *kufir*.<sup>9</sup> These classifications provide a nuanced framework for understanding the gravity and implications of disbelief within the context of Islamic jurisprudence.

The phenomenon of *takfir* or labeling individuals and groups as *kafir* (disbelievers) has historically posed a significant challenge to maintaining unity among people. This practice of branding others as disbelievers is not novel and has roots dating back to early Islamic history. An instance of this emerged after the Siffin war in 37 H / 658 AD between the forces of Caliph Ali bin Abi Talib and Muawiyah, leading to the emergence of the Khawarij group. This group is regarded as the pioneer of the first *takfir* movement,

<sup>7</sup>Agam Royana. "Dangerous Implication of Takfir." *Sophist: Jurnal Sosial Politik Kajian Islam dan Tafsir* 3, no. 2 (2021): 81-98.

<sup>8</sup>Agam Royana. "Dangerous Implication of Takfir." *Sophist: pp.* 81-98.

<sup>9</sup>Moslim, *Shahhih Moslem*, babithlaq Ism al-Kufr 'ala al-Tha'n fi alNasab, no. 100

categorizing Muslims who commit major sins as kafir or *mushriks*. Even prominent figures like Ali were labeled as such due to political differences, as he engaged in negotiations with Muawiyah, an act deemed a major sin warranting death.<sup>10</sup>

Takfir, the theological pronouncement of disbelief or apostasy within the Islamic context, has generated considerable debate and complexity due to the various nuances and gradations of disbelief (kufr). Diverse interpretations and applications of takfir often overlook the existence of different types and degrees of kufr, with mainstream Muslim scholars recognizing two distinct categories. The first category, referred to as major kufr, pertains to actions that challenge the core tenets of Islam or reject fundamental articles of faith. Disparaging the foundational teachings or renouncing elements of faith fall within this classification. The second category, termed minor kufr, involves the commission of sinful deeds, such as adultery, murder, and theft. While such actions constitute grave transgressions, scholars maintain that individuals committing minor kufr do not forfeit their status as Muslims. The distinction between major and minor kufr is crucial to understanding the implications of takfir. The concept of kufr, exemplified through scriptural verses and hadiths, can often be interpreted to mean ingratitude rather than explicit rejection of faith. Instances such as those from the Qur'an, where kufr is associated with ingratitude and ungratefulness, suggest that acts of sinful behavior do not automatically lead to excommunication. Muslim scholars draw upon these verses and teachings to assert that minor kufr, characterized by acts of disobedience and ingratitude to Allah, does not sever an individual's connection to the Islamic faith. Instead, it is regarded as sinful conduct that can be rectified through repentance and adherence to the principles of Islam. Through the examination of hadiths, the understanding of kufr as denoting sin rather than complete apostasy is reinforced. The Prophet's use of kufr in contexts that signify ungratefulness or sinful actions, rather than outright disbelief, underscores this perspective. For instance, hadiths that equate abusing a fellow Muslim with *fusuq* (evil-doing) and killing them with kufr further demonstrate that kufr, in these cases, refers to acts of wrongdoing or transgression rather than categorical abandonment of faith. This nuanced understanding of kufr aligns with the Quranic portrayal of believers engaging in conflicts and disputes yet remaining within the fold of Islam. Ultimately, the differentiation between major and minor kufr elucidates the intricacies

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<sup>10</sup> Agam Royana. "Dangerous Implication of Takfir." *Sophist: Jurnal Sosial Politik Kajian Islam dan Tafsir* 3, no. 2 (2021): 81-98.

surrounding takfir and its implications for the broader understanding of faith and communal unity within Islam.<sup>11</sup>

Mainstream Muslim scholars have delineated various positions on the issue, considering the intricacies and potential consequences associated with declaring someone a kafir (disbeliever). Scholars emphasize the need for a nuanced understanding of kufr, recognizing that not all forms of disbelief result in excommunication. As kufr is a matter of the heart's intentions, accurate judgment of actions necessitates prudence and consideration of the Quranic directives that caution against conjecture and guesswork. Crucially, scholars emphasize that takfir should not be based solely on outward actions, but rather on clear and incontrovertible evidence. Indisputable proof is essential to justify such a pronouncement, as supported by verses urging restraint from assessing the unknown or engaging in unfounded assumptions. The example of Prophet Muhammad reprimanding a companion for killing someone based on mere suspicion highlights the principle of granting the benefit of the doubt to the accused.<sup>12</sup> Theologians underscore the concept of major and minor kufr, distinguishing between acts that challenge core Islamic teachings and those that constitute sinful behavior. While major kufr may lead to excommunication, minor kufr does not sever one's connection to the faith.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, scholars caution against extremist interpretations of takfir, which often lead to unmerited accusations. The misapplication of takfir by certain groups includes designating individuals, rulers, or entire societies as disbelievers for various reasons. Mainstream scholars stress the need to avoid absolute and unwarranted pronouncements of disbelief, as exemplified by cases involving rulers not ruling by the Shari`ah or Muslims residing in non-Muslim countries. The position is grounded in historical examples such as Prophet Yusuf's service under a non-Muslim king and the Companions' stay in non-Muslim lands.<sup>14</sup>

In the 20th century, the takfiri phenomenon experienced rapid growth, extending beyond individual disputes to infiltrate Islamic activist groups and nations perceived as not adhering to Islamic principles. Takfiri groups label countries and leaders as kafir,

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<sup>11</sup>Muhammad Haniff Hassan. "The Danger of Takfir (Excommunication) Exposing IS'Takfiri Ideology." p.4.

<sup>12</sup> Abu al-Husayn Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Nisaburi, *Sahih Muslim*, (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi, 1955).Vol.1, hadith number 158, p.96

<sup>13</sup> Abd Al-Rahman bin. *Mu`alla Al-Luwayhiq, Al-Ghuluw Fi Al-Din Fi Hayat Al-Muslimin Al-Mu`asirah*, (Beirut: Mu`assasat Al-Risalah, 1992)p. 325.

<sup>14</sup>Muhammad Haniff Hassan. "The Danger of Takfir (Excommunication) Exposing IS'Takfiri Ideology." p.5-6.

designating them as targets for confrontation or attack. Several factors contribute to the contemporary resurgence of this phenomenon. First, historical records reveal that takfir incidents in Islamic history often originated from conflicts of interest, particularly in the political realm. Second, the selective interpretation of religious texts is manipulated to legitimize actions against groups with differing beliefs, using these interpretations to justify conflict. Third, various factors such as economic disparity and political, social, and cultural conditions on local, regional, and international scales play a role. Vulnerable populations living in poverty and with limited education are particularly susceptible to the propagation of takfir ideology and violent tendencies. This phenomenon underscores the complex interplay of historical, religious, and socio-economic factors in shaping the dynamics of takfir. Understanding its historical origins and modern manifestations provides insight into the challenges of unity within diverse Muslim communities and highlights the importance of addressing underlying grievances to counteract the proliferation of takfir and its associated violence.<sup>15</sup>

Allah prohibited Muslims to insult others religion, as Allah said:

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ كَذَلِكَ زَيْنًا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلُهُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

«And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge. Thus, we have made pleasing to every community their deeds. Then to their Lord is their return, and He will inform them about what they used to do» [Al-An'am: 108]

In accordance with Ibn Kathir's interpretation, verse 6:108 of the Quran signifies that Allah has prohibited both Muhammad and his adherents from engaging in disrespectful actions towards other faiths. This prohibition stems from the concern that such derogatory behaviors could potentially elicit similar retaliatory actions from the followers of these other religions.<sup>16</sup> This notion of refraining from "takfir," or the act of labeling someone as a non-believer, is reiterated in additional verses, such as 4:94:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوا وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ ءَلْقَىٰ إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَامَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا تَبْتَغُونَ عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَغَانِمٌ كَثِيرَةٌ كَذَلِكَ كُنْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَمَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَتَبَيَّنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا

“O you who have believed, when you go forth [to fight] in the cause of Allah, investigate; and do not say to one who gives you [a greeting of] peace "You are not a believer," aspiring for the goods of worldly life; for with Allah are many acquisitions.

<sup>15</sup>Agam Royana. "Dangerous Implication Of Takfir." Pp. 81-98.

<sup>16</sup> Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir ibn Kathir*, Vol. 4, 2, (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2003), vol. 3 at 436.

You [yourselves] were like that before; then Allah conferred His favor upon you, so investigate. Indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted” [An-Nisaa: 94]

This particular verse advises the believers, when embarking on a mission in the name of Allah, to exercise caution and refrain from instantly branding anyone who extends a greeting as a disbeliever. The verse emphasizes the impermanent nature of worldly possessions and underscores that Allah possesses abundant rewards and spoils. The believers are urged to investigate the situation thoroughly, as Allah is well-informed about their conduct. Ibn Abbas's perspective adds that verse 4:94 was revealed by Allah in response to the killing of Mirdas Ibn Nuhayk al-Farari by Usamah Ibn Zayd, both of whom were Muslims.<sup>17</sup> Within this verse, the Quran prohibits the execution of a Muslim who has openly professed their faith by reciting the *shahadah*, the declaration of belief in the oneness of Allah and the prophethood of Muhammad. The Quran frequently references those who do not adhere to the Islamic faith, yet it refrains from explicitly defining apostasy; instead, the determination of apostasy within Islamic context is a human-driven concept. Nonetheless, the Quranic verses highlighted above emphasize that humans lack the authority to declare takfir; this prerogative belongs solely to God. The ultimate decision regarding an individual's status as a believer rest with God and will be rendered in the afterlife. Consequently, human pronouncements of takfir are regarded as religious transgressions under the jurisdiction of Sharia law. Consequently, in relation to the Quran, it can be definitively asserted that there exists no Quranic endorsement for the earthly punishment of apostasy by human beings. This stands in contrast to sins or criminal offenses such as theft or adultery, which are addressed through predetermined penalties. The application of capital punishment as a consequence for leaving Islam is thus an initiative originating from human agency, striving to criminalize an offense that is, by definition, reserved for divine judgment in the hereafter.<sup>18</sup>

In relation to the concept of takfir, the Prophet cautioned Muslims against hastily labeling an individual as a disbeliever due to their transgressions. He emphasized that even for a wrongful action, one should refrain from expelling someone from the fold of Islam. Furthermore, the Prophet explicitly regarded the act of insulting a fellow believer as morally wrong, and he underscored that designating a fellow Muslim as a kafir, or an unbeliever, was tantamount to rejecting one's own faith. These teachings of the Prophet

<sup>17</sup> Ibn Abbas, *Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās*, translated by Mokrane Guezzou (Amman: Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2007), 98.

<sup>18</sup> Mohamed Badar, Masaki Nagata, and Tiphania Tueni. "The Radical Application of the Islamist Concept of Takfir." *Arab Law Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (2017): 134-162.

are documented in various authoritative collections of Hadiths, such as Sahih Bukhari<sup>19</sup>, and Sahih Muslim<sup>20</sup>, These records highlight not only the Prophet's prohibition of hastening takfir but also his view that such pronouncements of excommunication carry a sinful nature.

### **Conditions for labeling Someone as Kafir:**

The formulation of religious decrees and the determination of beliefs are derived from the texts of the Quran and the Hadith, as well as the consensus of the early Muslim community, comprising the Companions and their successors. This framework also encompasses issues concerning matters of disbelief (*kufr*) and faith (*iman*). Declaring disbelief is a legal judgment based on the teachings of the *Shari'ah*. Ibn Taymiyyah stated that: scholars of *Ahlisunnah* do not declare those who differ from them as disbelievers, even if those differing consider them disbelievers. Disbelief is a legal judgment, and humans are not authorized to apply the same measure, just as one who accuses you falsely or engages in immorality with your family does not give you the right to falsely accuse them or engage in immorality with their family. Falsehood and immorality are forbidden in the eyes of Allah, and similarly, the act of declaring disbelief is the prerogative of Allah; none should be declared a disbeliever except those whom Allah and His Messenger have declared as such.<sup>21</sup>

The stance of Sunni Islam lies between the extremism of the Khawarij and their extremist Takfiri counterparts, who hastily engage in declaring disbelief, passing judgment on people's faith, sanctioning the killing and confiscation of Muslims' wealth, and engaging in uncontrolled conflict. On the other hand, Sunni Islam differs from the *Murji'ah* and their counterparts, who trivialize the significance of actions and transgressions and their impact on faith. The adherents of Islam follow the Quran and the Hadith in matters related to declaring disbelief. They ascertain as disbelieving those actions that the religious texts clearly define as warranting disbelief. They assert such declarations against individuals based on what the religious texts indicate concerning their status. They refrain from making blanket declarations of disbelief without conditions and limitations. Rather, they insist on fulfilling prerequisites and eliminating

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<sup>19</sup> Al-Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol,5, (Birotte: Dar Ibn Kathir, 1993) Hadith number: 5752, p.2663

<sup>20</sup> Abu al-Husayn Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj ibn Muslim al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, *Sahih Muslim*, Vol, 1 (Turkish: Dar al-Tiba'a al-Amira, 1334 Hijri), Hadith number: 111, p.56.

<sup>21</sup> Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmu' al-Fatawa*, vol, 1, (Al-Madinah: Majma' al-Malik Fahd li-Ṭaba'at al-Mushaf al-Sharif, 2004). P. 381.

obstacles supported by evidence. Should any condition or obstacle be absent, it is not permissible to broadly pronounce disbelief upon an individual who has committed a blasphemous act or statement. It is of utmost importance that these conditions and obstacles are kept in mind to prevent undue haste and leniency in declaring disbelief toward those who do not rightfully deserve it. This is crucial to avoid falling into the reproach as stated by the Prophet (peace be upon him): Whoever says to his brother, 'O disbeliever,' then one of them will apply to the other.<sup>22</sup>

For declaring disbelief, certain conditions must be met before judging an act, statement, or belief as blasphemous. These conditions can be categorized into three types:

Firstly, the act, statement, or belief must be unambiguously blasphemous according to the teachings of the Quran and the Hadith, without any room for doubt. If the act or statement allows for differing interpretations, declaring disbelief is not valid. For example, declaring disbelief in issuing judgments contrary to divine revelations is multifaceted, and thus, judgment should not be hasty. Similarly, categorizing all interactions with non-Muslims as allegiance to them overlooks variations in levels of allegiance, some of which may be permissible, as indicated by the Quran:

لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللَّهِ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا أَنْ تَتَّقُوا مِنْهُمْ تُقَاةً وَيُحَذِّرْكُمْ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ

"Let not believers take disbelievers as allies rather than believers. And whoever [of you] does that has nothing with Allah, except when taking precaution against them in prudence." [Al-'Imran:28]

Secondly, the blasphemous statement must be explicit in its meaning. If a statement can be understood in a blasphemous sense as well as other meanings, caution should be exercised in assigning disbelief to it.

Also, the person committing blasphemy must be morally responsible (*mukallaf*). Thus, children, the insane, and those who temporarily lose consciousness or awareness, such as through fainting, sleep, sedation, or illness, are not subject to blasphemy accusations.

Similarly, the individual should knowingly choose the blasphemous act or statement. Therefore, someone who is forced into blasphemy or utters it unknowingly is not held accountable. This is supported by the Quran:

<sup>22</sup> Al-Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol,5, (Birote: Dar Ibn Kathir, 1993) Hadith number: 6104.

مَنْ كَفَرَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ إِلَّا مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَكِنْ مَنْ شَرَحَ بِالْكُفْرِ صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ  
مِنَ اللَّهِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

"Whoever disbelieves in Allah after his belief, except for one who is forced [to renounce his religion] while his heart is secure in faith." [Al-Nahl:106]

Likewise, the person should not intend the blasphemous implication of their act or statement. Therefore, a person who unintentionally utters blasphemous words due to excitement or surprise is not to be declared a disbeliever.

Also, the individual must be aware of the implications of the words used. A person can be declared a disbeliever only if they are aware that their statement or action is blasphemous or contradictory to religious teachings. Many Muslims may engage in actions or utterances that could be deemed blasphemous, but they might be unaware of their consequences or conflict with the Shari'ah. Therefore, it is incumbent upon those considering accusations of blasphemy to evaluate whether the person genuinely intended the blasphemous meaning.

the practice of Takfir, or declaring disbelief, is a complex issue within Sunni Islam that necessitates careful consideration and adherence to established conditions and criteria. While scholars and followers are empowered to denounce acts that clearly violate religious teachings, it is vital to avoid hasty judgments and preserve the unity of the Muslim community. Misapplying the concept of Takfir can lead to unnecessary divisions and conflicts, undermining the unity that is essential to the strength and progress of the Islamic ummah.

In addition, the individual from whom disbelief emanates should be legally accountable, it is not valid to attribute disbelief to a child or a person of unsound mind, nor to someone whose intellect is impaired due to unconsciousness, sleep, anesthesia, or paralysis. Also, the person should be deliberate in the act from which disbelief is inferred. Attributing disbelief to a person who outwardly displays disbelief under duress but whose heart is tranquil with faith is not permissible. This is supported by the Quranic verse:

مَنْ كَفَرَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ إِلَّا مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَكِنْ مَنْ شَرَحَ بِالْكُفْرِ صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ  
مِنَ اللَّهِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

"Whoever disbelieves in Allah after his belief - except for one who is forced while his heart is secure in faith - but those who [willingly] open their breasts to disbelief, upon them is wrath from Allah, and for them is a great punishment." (Al-Nahl, 106)

The person should intend the action or statement, disbelief is not applicable to one who makes mistakes, forgets, or is in a state of confusion. The Prophet ﷺ stated: Allah

has pardoned my nation for mistakes, forgetfulness, and what they are forced to do.<sup>23</sup> The prophet also said: Allah is more pleased with the repentance of His servant than a person who has his camel in a waterless desert carrying his provision of food and drink and it is lost. He, having lost all hopes (to get that back), lies down in shade and is disappointed about his camel; when all of a sudden, he finds that camel standing before him. He takes hold of its reins and then out of boundless joy blurts out: 'Allah, you are my servant, and I am Your Lord!' He commits this mistake out of extreme joy.<sup>24</sup> In this case, the man inadvertently uttered a word of disbelief due to excessive happiness. However, he was not considered a disbeliever, and the sin was removed from him.

The accountable individual must be aware of the implications of the statement or action that he has done as disbelief or sin. Many Muslims may utter statements or engage in actions that are potentially blasphemous or sinful without being aware that they are. Thus, when such a statement or action is made, it is necessary to evaluate the context and ensure whether the intention is to convey a blasphemous meaning. It should be ascertained whether the person is knowingly committing something prohibited or if he is ignorant of it. Imam Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: As for denying it out of ignorance or misinterpretation, the person making such a denial is excused, and he does not fall into disbelief.<sup>25</sup>

### **Negative Impacts of Takfir:**

In the realm of social interactions and religious beliefs, the act of labeling someone as a "kafir" or unbeliever can give rise to a series of negative impacts that reverberate through both individual lives and the broader societal fabric. The consequences of such labeling are not limited to spiritual ramifications; they extend to psychological and social realms, fostering a climate of alienation and judgment. The stigmatization associated with being deemed an infidel can be profoundly damaging, leading to enduring and even irreversible consequences for those affected.

One significant negative consequence of applying the label of "kafir" is the perception that the person so labeled will be condemned to eternal torment in Hell. This belief takes root within the collective consciousness of the society, creating an

<sup>23</sup> Ibn Majah, Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Yazid al-Qazwini, *Sunan Ibn Majah*, Vol, 1, (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Kutub al-Arabiyya, n.d.), hadith number: 2046, P.439.

<sup>24</sup> Abu al-Husayn Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj ibn Muslim al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, *Sahih Muslim*, Vol, 8 (Turkish: Dar al-Tiba'a al-Amira, 1334 Hijri), Hadith number: 2747, p.93.

<sup>25</sup> Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr ibn Ayyub ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Madarij al-Salikin fi Manazil al-Sa'irin*, vol, 1 (Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm, 2019), p. 338.

atmosphere of hopelessness and despair around the individual's fate. As Imam Subki pointed out, the act of takfir can be likened to foretelling that an individual will endure perpetual suffering in Hell, isolated from any potential assistance. While it's important to acknowledge that ultimate judgment rests with a higher power, this characterization can profoundly impact the person's psychological well-being and their sense of belonging within the community.

In addition to the prospect of eternal damnation, individuals labeled as "kafir" are often faced with the stigma of being labeled as apostates. This dual stigmatization adds another layer of complexity to their social identity, further alienating them from their religious community. According to Islamic law, apostates are subject to severe consequences, including the legality of taking their lives and seizing their possessions. This stance, as articulated in the words of the Messenger of Allah, implies that apostates are deemed a threat to the social order and must be dealt with harshly.<sup>26</sup> It's crucial to recognize that the prescription for the killing of apostates is not a matter of personal interpretation or consensus; rather, it is attributed to divine law and the teachings of the Prophet. The rationale behind this stance lies in the analogy of societal harmony to the harmony of a healthy body, where each individual functions as a cell within the greater whole. Apostasy is likened to a malfunctioning or harmful cell that threatens the overall well-being of the community. This metaphorical understanding informs the belief that apostates must be addressed through isolation, correction, and, if necessary, removal from the community. The process of dealing with apostasy is not immediate or hasty. Islamic tradition emphasizes a measured approach involving discussions, mediation, and appeals for repentance. These steps are designed to give individuals opportunities to re-enter the fold of the community. It's worth noting that individuals who privately harbor beliefs contrary to Islam, but outwardly show no signs of deviation, pose a different ethical dilemma. This concealed departure from faith does not inherently justify violence against them, and their fate is ultimately entrusted to divine judgment.<sup>27</sup>

The declaration of Takfir, or labeling fellow Muslims as unbelievers, constitutes a perilous and significant matter within the Islamic faith. As a result, Islamic jurisprudence has prohibited the act of Takfir in the absence of explicit textual evidence. This prohibition stems from the realization of numerous adverse consequences that arise from

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<sup>26</sup> Bukhari, *Shahih Bukhari*, chapter *Qatl al-Murtadd wa alMurtaddah*, no. 6922

<sup>27</sup> Agam Royana. "Dangerous Implication Of Takfir." *Sophist: Jurnal Sosial Politik Kajian Islam dan Tafsir* 3, no. 2 (2021): 81-98.

engaging in such practices. This One of the most profound harms of Takfir is the creation of discord and fragmentation within the Muslim community. The act of branding fellow Muslims as disbelievers is inherently divisive, leading to the formation of ideological and theological rifts. This fragmentation undermines the sense of brotherhood and unity that is fundamental to the teachings of Islam. Such divisions can exacerbate tensions between different sects, schools of thought, and communities, eroding the collective strength that is necessary for the growth and stability of the Muslim ummah.

Moreover, takfir not only sows the seeds of discord but also provides fertile ground for conflicts and even massacres within the Muslim world. Once individuals or groups are labeled as non-believers, it becomes easier to rationalize violence against them, as they are perceived as enemies of the faith. This phenomenon has historically been exploited by extremist factions to justify armed conflicts and acts of terrorism against fellow Muslims. The erosion of the principle of sanctity of life within the Muslim community is a direct consequence of the divisive practice of Takfir.

Similarly, takfir weakens the Muslim community through the divisive categorization of believers into "believers" and "non-believers." This divisive outlook fosters an "us versus them" mentality, which hinders collaboration, cooperation, and mutual support among Muslims. The resulting segregation weakens the community's ability to address common challenges and pursue shared goals. The strength of the Muslim ummah lies in its unity, but the practice of Takfir undermines this unity by isolating and marginalizing certain segments of the community. The act of labeling fellow Muslims as unbelievers has the potential to create internal strife, incite violence, and weaken the bonds of brotherhood that are integral to Islam. It is imperative for Muslims to heed the prohibition against Takfir in the absence of explicit evidence and to recognize the importance of unity in safeguarding the integrity and strength of the ummah. Embracing a more inclusive and tolerant approach can lead to a more cohesive and resilient Muslim community capable of facing the challenges of the modern world.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In summation, the emergence and persistence of the phenomenon of Al-Takfir, a practice characterized by the labeling of fellow Muslims as apostates, has evoked profound concerns within the Islamic community. Its origins, rooted in the historical context of the Khawarij movement, have perpetuated across time, inflicting a discernible toll on the unity of the global Muslim populace. Through an exhaustive inquiry into the historical antecedents, theological perspectives, and contemporary manifestations of Al-Takfir, this study has illuminated its decisive role in exacerbating divisions within the expansive tapestry of the Islamic ummah.

Central to the understanding of this issue is the notion that the authority to pronounce Takfir is not a prerogative available to all, but rather resides with Allah and the Prophet, necessitating the support of explicit Quranic verses, authenticated Hadiths, or the consensus (Ijma') of esteemed Muslim scholars. Likewise, this study has underscored the far-reaching implications of the Takfir phenomenon, as it has acted as a catalyst for the proliferation of sects and the cultivation of mutual enmity among adherents of the faith. Moreover, the study has shed light on the unfortunate co-optation of Takfir by certain Islamic groups and individuals for personal, political, or economic agendas, further exacerbating its divisive effects.

In conclusion, this research advances pragmatic strategies directed at fostering unity within the Islamic ummah. By enhancing comprehension of the multifaceted facets of Islam, facilitating dialogues between diverse viewpoints, and emphasizing the shared ethical underpinnings transcending sectarian boundaries, the study offers pathways towards reinvigorating the spirit of harmony within the Muslim community. As this investigation endeavors to deliver a nuanced understanding of the intricate quandary posed by Al-Takfir and its ramifications for the unity of the Islamic ummah, it aspires to contribute substantively to the advancement of a more inclusive, cooperative, and harmonious Muslim collective.

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