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Ali al-Gomaa says possession ok, but use is haram  
**Egypt's Grand Mufti bans Muslim use of WMDs**



Egypt's Grand Mufti said Muslim countries should only use WMDs as deterrents

DUBAI/CAIRO (Courtney C. Radsch and Marwa Awad)

Muslim states can possess weapons of mass destruction but may not use them against non-Muslim nations, according to Egypt's highest religious authority, who issued the opinion online Sunday in hopes of clarifying assertions about their legitimacy.

"It is not permissible for Muslim countries to use weapons of mass destruction...but they can possess them only as a deterrent against possible attacks," Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa wrote in his religious ruling, or fatwa, which came just days before U.S. President Barack Obama is due to address the Muslim world from Cairo.

Gomaa issued the fatwa in response to "reports and opinions from various groups claiming that the use of weapons is legitimate based on some sharia rulings on gathering ammunition," he wrote on the website of Dar al-Iftaa, the state-sanctioned body charged with providing religious rulings.

His ruling did not prohibit the acquisition or possession of such weapons as a deterrent, but said their use was prohibited because it could threaten states beyond the borders of the targeted country and kill non-combatants and Muslims-- something that would not be allowed even in a declared war.

"This fatwa is the first one we issued on this topic and comes in response to the wave of uninformed opinions from various groups," according to spokesman Dr. Ibrahim Negm.

Egypt recently joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and is a leading advocate for a weapons of mass destruction free zone in the region, a position seemed as taking aim at Israel as the only nuclear weapon state in the Middle East. Egypt has U.S. backing for plans to build nuclear power plants but says it has no desire to make atomic bombs.

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Gomaa's fatwa defines weapons of mass destruction as nuclear weapons, biological weapons and incendiary weapons, like white phosphorus. The Mufti also stated that Islam forbids killing of civilians during war.

### **Battle of the fatwas**

Any educated religious leader can issue a fatwa, a religious interpretation of Islamic law, but sheikhs and imams differ widely in their views of WMD and nuclear weapons.

Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khamenei issued a fatwa in 2005 forbidding the production of WMDs as "un-Islamic" and said that "developing, producing or stockpiling nuclear weapons is forbidden under Islam."

But in January a conservative senior Iranian cleric thought to be close to President Mahmoud Ahmedinajad said that it was "only natural" to have nuclear bombs as a "countermeasure" against other nuclear powers, thought to be a reference to America and Israel.

In Pakistan, the only Muslim country that possesses nuclear weapons, religious scholars have prohibited terrorism but made no specific mention of nuclear or other mass destruction weapons.

In 2007 a group of Islamic scholars and clerics in Indonesia issued a fatwa against a proposed nuclear plant in their community saying nuclear power was haraam.

Other Egyptian scholars had previously weighed in on the subject. Dr. Taha Jabir al-Alwani, president of the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences and the Fiqh Council, supported Gumaa's interpretation of Islamic law based on the fact that the mass destruction caused by WMD does not distinguish the innocent from the criminal and therefore is prohibited under Islam.

But Sheikh Faysal Mawlawi, deputy chairman of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, noted that there was a self-defense exception.

"[I]n case these nuclear weapons are used against Muslims, it becomes permissible for Muslims to defend themselves using the same weapon," Mawlawi wrote in an IslamOnline forum.