

# Sunni and Shiite Islam

## Similarities and Differences

# Opening Question and Focus

- What do you know about Shiite Islam and Shiites? What makes them a distinct group within Islam? (1 minute)

# What does it mean to be Shiite?

- Origins of word: Shi'at Ali – “Followers of Ali; sometimes you will see it or hear it as Shi'a and other times Shi'ite; they are the same
- National Public Radio (NPR): Partisans of Ali



# What does this map show you about the distribution of Sunni and Shia Muslims?





# What countries have the largest Shiite concentrations?



# What does it mean to be Sunni?

- It means you follow the “practices or habits” of the Prophet.
- It means that you do not believe that the rightful leaders of Islam have to be related to the Prophet.
- It means that you believe that any qualified leader, who has a close relationship with God and detailed knowledge of Quran, who is selected by the elders (respected, well-known for piety) is an appropriate leader.

# Key Figures for Shia Muslims

- **Ali** – cousin of the Prophet Muhammad; his son-in-law; father of the Prophets only grand-sons; Fourth Caliph
- **Hasan and Husayn** – Ali's sons; both killed in battles;
- Husayn killed in a battle in which his army numbered only 72 versus the 1,000 man army of Yazid I, the son of Mu'awiya and second Umayyad caliph.
- Husayn was beheaded and his head laid before Yazid back in Damascus, Syria.

# Sunni – Shiite Comparison Chart

- Look over chart
- Questions?
- What are the areas in which there is difference?
- How are the two schools of Islam similar?



- So what does it mean to be a Shiite?
- Who do they believe is the rightful leader of Islam?
- What do Shiite Muslims call their spiritual leaders?
- What are special Shiite figures and holidays?

# News Articles about Bahrain

- Recent revolutionary activities and hostilities in Bahrain have their routes in several problems including tension between Sunnis and Shiites.
- Directions: Read your article independently and answer questions.
- Go to assigned group; take turns delivering short (1 – 2 minute summaries of articles).
- Each group will then report out about what the members found interesting and/or troublesome about current events involving Shiites and Sunnis in Bahrain and the Middle East.

# Sunni, Shiite, and Events in Bahrain



# Article Assignments

- Read the article quietly, take a few notes, and be prepared to explain it to people who have not read it yet. (5 minutes)
- Article #1 – Corinna, Matt, Mike, Mariah, Chris, and Kevin
- Article #2 – Nini, Katie S., Connor, Ben, Lindsay, Nour, and Katie L.
- Article #3 – Emma, Audrey, Bryan, Bridget, Penny, and Hannah
- Article #4 – Yeleen, Kristen, Jen V., Katie P., Cyrus, Tyler, and Rachel

# Groups

- Each article will now be explained by at least one person in each of these groups. Give a 1-2 minute synopsis – What was the main idea? What did you find interesting/concerning?
- Group A – Corinna, Nini, Penny, Cyrus
- Group B – Chris, Katie S., Emma, Kristen
- Group C – Matt, Lindsay, Bryan, Jen
- Group D – Mike, Nour, Katie L., Bridget, Tyler
- Group E – Chris, Connor, Audrey, Katie P.
- Group F – Kevin, Ben, Hannah, Rachel, Yeleen



# Interesting Point: Terrorist Groups and Their Islamic Affiliations

- **Hezbollah** – Terrorist organization headquartered in Lebanon; Shiite; supported by Iran
- **Hamas** – Terrorist organization and ruling party of Palestinian Gaza Strip; Sunni
- **Al-Qaeda** – Terrorist organization with cells throughout the world including Yemen and Afghanistan
- What did Article #4 say about these Shiite and Sunni terrorist groups?

# Thought Question

- Does the world really want to see Shiites and Sunnis working together?

# Exit Paragraph

- What did you learn today about the differences between Shiite and Sunni Muslims? Who are the majority? Are they really so different?
- How does this play out in modern-events in Bahrain and other locations around the world?

# Conclusion

- Imagine that you are an American diplomat. Write a one-paragraph letter to the King of Bahrain advising the course of action he should take toward Shiite revolutionaries.
- Should he give in to their demands? Would you recommend that he resign if he could help pick his successor?
- Do you think he should refuse to cooperate? Have you ever heard “give them an inch and they’ll want a mile?”