

## **Sunnis and Shias: Why do they fight?**

**Video transcript for 'A question of leadership', with Samira Ahmed**

**There are 1.6 billion Muslims in the world.**

**And all of them are united in their belief in the teachings of the prophet Mohammed as laid out in the Koran.**

**If you delve deeper, beyond this single unifying point, Islam is a richly diverse religion containing a wealth of different beliefs and practices.**

**Perhaps the two most significant denominations within the faith are the Sunnis and the Shias.**

**When the prophet Mohamed died in 632 AD, there was a dilemma about who his successor should be. Some people believed that his successor should be selected; others believed that his successors should only be those who continued Mohamed's bloodline.**

**So Sunni & Shia developed as two different branches of Islam, both having very different beliefs about who their chosen leaders should be.**

**The vast majority of Muslims in the world are Sunni, forming at least 80% of the total global Muslim population.**

**In reality most Shia and Sunni get along and many of them have prayed together in the same mosques for generations.**

**In the past there have been many fruitful cultural and also political interactions.**

**Sunni rulers employed Shia ministers, and in South Asia Muslims from Shia backgrounds have played an important role in leading Muslim communities consisting mainly of Sunnis.**

**But with some people defining trouble in the Middle East in terms of a Sunni-Shia divide, the Sunni-Shia relationship has never been under more scrutiny.**