

## **Terror outfits 'perverting' Islam to justify agenda: White House**

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**Washington:** Terror outfits like the ISIS are "perverting" Islam to justify their "murderous, false agenda" as part of which they claim the mantle of the religion to describe themselves as "holy warriors" fighting with the US, the White House has said.

"What is true that many of those organisations pervert the religion of Islam to justify their murderous, nihilistic agenda. The President has said that on many occasions. He's been very blunt about what those organisations are trying to do," White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest told reporters at his daily news conference on Monday.

"What they're also trying to do is to claim the mantle of Islam to describe themselves as holy warriors, or religious leaders, engaged in a conflict with the US.

"They're wrong about that. That is a false agenda. That is a myth. That is not true. And this administration and the previous administration have gone to great lengths to debunk that myth and make clear that these organisations are seeking to perpetuate a perverted form of Islam," Earnest said in response to a question.

His comments came a day after a self-radicalised Afghan- origin youth killed 49 people in Orlando at a gay nightclub.

He added that America's "partners in the Muslim world are critical to our success in degrading and ultimately destroying ISIL."

"And the fact of the matter is, most of the victims of terror attacks carried out by ISIL are, in fact, innocent Muslim men, women and children," he said, using the alternate acronym for the ISIS.

Earnest said there are American Muslims who serve the country loyally, patriotically in armed forces and in the intelligence community to combat this threat and to protect the nation.

"In fact, the United States of America was founded on the principle of religious freedom, where people of all religions are welcome here, which makes it impossible that the United States could be at war with any one religion," he asserted.

Obama Administration, he argued, has gone to great lengths to debunk that myth, because to perpetuate that myth only gives the terrorists what they want, which is legitimacy.

"It's only going to make it harder for us to mobilise the Muslim world to fight this threat. It's only going to make it harder for us to mobilise Muslim religious leaders to make their voices heard online, as they have a responsibility to do, to counter that messaging," he said.

"And it's only going to make it likely that some members of the Muslim community in the United States feel isolated and feel stigmatised, which only makes it harder to confront the threat that we face from individuals who might be radicalised," Earnest said.

The Obama Administration, he said, is not giving legitimacy to a terrorist organisation that would "love to advance the narrative" that they are somehow holy warriors advancing the cause of Islam by waging war against the US.

"That is an utterly baseless myth. It is false.

- PTI