

## Abu Yahya Al-Libi: Profile of an Al-Qaeda Leader

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The extraordinary Abu Yaha Al-Libi

## Preface

One of the most difficult challenges faced by Al-Qaeda is the ongoing loss of a large part of its first-, second- and even third-generation leadership, some of whom have been assassinated or arrested, and others of whom have dissociated themselves from Al-Qaeda and its terrorist methods.<sup>1</sup> If we add to this the fog with which Al-Qaeda enshrouds the people who comprise its leadership, we encounter difficulty understanding who those people are. Nevertheless, and despite this heavy fog of secrecy, we can identify one unusual and important figure, whom Al-Qaeda has nurtured over the past five years, and who has received widespread attention from the jihadist media. He serves as Al-Qaeda's main spokesman and on its Shari'a Council. He is Abu Yahya Al-Libi, once considered to be the third most important and, since the death of Osama Bin Laden, the second most important of Al-Qaeda's leaders after Ayman Al-Zawahiri, one held in high esteem by many of the mujahideen.

Abu Yahya's biography is incomplete, but details of his early life are known, thanks to his sermons and interviews, particularly with the jihadist media outlet Al Sahab. His real name is Muhammad Hasan Qaid, though he is also known by the name Yunus al-Sahrawi. As his name indicates, he was born in Libya, in 1963, and educated there. He studied sciences, majoring in chemistry at Sebha

<sup>1</sup> An outstanding example of this is Sayyid Imam al Sharif, also known as Dr. Fadl. A former colleague of Ayman Al-Zawahiri and leader of the Egyptian jihad, he actively participated in the de-radicalization of his organization during 2007, and published a book condemning Al-Qaeda and accusing it of leading the Muslim nation to annihilation.

University in the south of Libya. At the beginning of the 1990s, he went to Afghanistan and lived in Logar Province.<sup>2</sup> During this period, he joined the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG),<sup>3</sup> which was working to overthrow Qaddafi's regime and replace it with an Islamic one based on shari'a. Like other mujahideen, Abu Yahya underwent military training in Afghanistan, although he never attained a position of leadership. His older brother, Abd al-Wahab Qayid Idris, was a senior member of LIFG, and was incarcerated in a Libyan prison for 15 years. In 1992, Abu Yahya was sent to Mauritania by the LIFG for five years, to study Islamic theology with the shari'a scholars there. Since that time, he has been considered a theological scholar, and has served on the LIFG's Shari'a Council. Noman Benotman, a former senior member of the LIFG's Shura Council and one of Abu Yahya's personal friends during their stay in Afghanistan, acknowledged Abu Yahya's expert knowledge of shari'a : "I would just like to say here that many people are unaware of who Hasan Qaid Abu Yahya really is, when it comes to his knowledge of shari'a, they're all talk. This brother has exceptional, unimaginable knowledge..."<sup>4</sup> When he completed his studies, apparently in 1996, Al-Libi returned to Afghanistan, which was then under the rule of the Taliban, who provided asylum to LIFG members.

In 2001-2002 Al-Libi lived in Karachi, Pakistan, where he served as the Webmaster of the Al-Imarah al-Islamiyah Internet site, a Taliban communications outlet.<sup>5</sup> On May 28, 2002, the Pakistani authorities arrested Al-Libi in Karachi as part of a spate of arrests of foreign students attending religious schools [madrasas] by the Pakistani government. A year after his arrest, he was extradited to the Americans, who sent him to the US-run Bagram Prison in Afghanistan.

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<sup>2</sup> *Majlat Tora Bora*, volume 2, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> The LIFG is currently inactive, due to the de-radicalization process it underwent on the initiative of the Libyan regime or, more precisely, of Saif Al-Islam, Qaddafi's second son. For more information about this process in Libya see: "The De-Radicalization Process of Terrorist Organizations: The Libyan Case (The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group – LIFG/Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiyyah Al-Muqatilah fi-Libya)", *ICT's Jihadi Websites Monitoring Group*, August 2010. [http://www.ict.org.il/Portals/0/Internet%20Monitoring%20Group/JWVG\\_De\\_Radicalization\\_LIFG.pdf](http://www.ict.org.il/Portals/0/Internet%20Monitoring%20Group/JWVG_De_Radicalization_LIFG.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> "The Death Industry: Al Libi's Role in Al-Qaeda", *Al-Jazeera*, July 24, 2009, <http://www.alarabiya.net/programs/2009/07/26/79922.html>.

<sup>5</sup> *Majlat Tora Bora*, volume 2, 2005.

On July 10, 2005, Al-Libi managed to escape with three other Islamists from the heavily guarded Bagram Prison.<sup>6</sup> Al-Libi then sought to reach the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, so as to join up with Abu Laith Al-Libi (1967-2008), a senior leader of the LIFG, who had remained in the region with a group of his loyalists. Although Abu Laith and his group fought alongside Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, they did not join the organization. This was in part because the group's leadership was scattered all over the world, in countries such as China, and this made it difficult for them to meet to decide how they wished to continue and what their position was regarding a possible union with Al-Qaeda, or whether they should carry on as they were. A former member of the LIFG Shura Council named Noman Benotman<sup>7</sup> stated that Abu Laith wanted to take over the leadership of the LIFG by drawing more members into his group and thereby also strengthening his position in the eyes of Al-Qaeda. However, when he realized that a large number of the LIFG members in Libya had consented to the de-radicalization process sponsored by the Libyan government, he decided to join Al-Qaeda only with the members of his own group. During the second half of 2007, he and Ayman al-Zawahiri announced the merger of LIFG and Al-Qaeda, mainly to sabotage, without much success, the attempts at negotiation between the incarcerated LIFG leadership and the Libyan regime, which sought to encourage them to abandon terrorism and return to the straight path. Abu Laith Al-Libi, is currently thought to be the third most important (and, since the death of Bin Laden, the second most important) person in Al-Qaeda.<sup>8</sup> Abu Yahya was persuaded by Abu Laith to also join Al-Qaeda. In January 2008, only a few months after they had joined Al-Qaeda, Abu Laith Al-Libi was killed in an American bombing raid.<sup>9</sup> It was at this point that Abu Yahya began to show signs of becoming a "rising star" in Al-Qaeda.

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, April 4, 2008, <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=465630&issueno=10721>.

<sup>7</sup> He played a central role in the de-radicalization process which was initiated and led by Saif Al Islam, Qaddafi's son, towards the LIFG members who were in the Libyan prison. See more: "The De-Radicalization Process of Terrorist Organizations: The Libyan Case", *ICT's Jihadi Websites Monitoring Group*, 2010 August. [http://www.ict.org.il/Portals/0/Internet%20Monitoring%20Group/JWMG\\_De\\_Radicalization\\_LIFG.pdf](http://www.ict.org.il/Portals/0/Internet%20Monitoring%20Group/JWMG_De_Radicalization_LIFG.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> "Al-Qaeda's Other Face: Part 5," *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, September 29, 2010, <http://www.daralhayat.com/portalarticlendah/185877>.

<sup>9</sup> Following his death, Al-Zawahiri published a video clip in which he threatened to avenge Abu Laith Al-Libi's death, <http://www.7anein.info/vbx/showthread.php?t=56251>. Abu Yahya Al-Libi also issued a video clip titled, "My Comrade", in which he eulogized him.



From "My Comrade", the video clip in which Abu Yaha Al-Libi eulogized Abu Laith Al-Libi



Abu Laith Al-Libi

In a relatively short time, Al-Libi succeeded in climbing to the top of Al-Qaeda's leadership, to appear in tens of video clips, and to publish a long list of essays. Some researchers believe he is "Osama Bin Laden's next successor".<sup>10</sup>

Hassan Abu Haniyye, a researcher of Islamic groups in Jordan, cites two reasons for Abu Yahya's meteoric rise to the top of Al-Qaeda's leadership:

1. The loss of many of Al-Qaeda's strategic planners and operatives in the international arena, such as Abu Qatada al-Filastini, who is currently incarcerated in a British prison. To this must be added the de-radicalization of a number of Salafi-jihadist organizations, a process during which they re-examine their ideological platform in light of Islamic religious sources, and ultimately come to abandon the use of violence. For Al-Qaeda, this means a loss of manpower and the undermining of its ideological basis. According to Benotman, such processes have diminished Al-Qaeda by 70%-75% over the past 30 years.
2. As noted, Abu Yahya Al-Libi is an expert in shari'a, even more so than Bin Laden and Al-Zawahiri. Due to his knowledge and qualifications, he was incorporated into Al-Qaeda's Shari'a Council.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See for example Jarret Brachman, "The Next Bin Laden?", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, January 11, 2010. [http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/0111\\_transcript\\_binladen.pdf](http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/0111_transcript_binladen.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> "The Death Industry: Abu Yahya Al-Libi's Role in Al-Qaeda", *Al-Jazeera*, July 24, 2009, <http://www.alarabiya.net/programs/2009/07/26/79922.html>.

It would seem that Abu Yahya's quick rise to a senior position in Al-Qaeda could have been expected to lead to rivalry between him and Al-Zawahiri over leadership of Al-Qaeda. This issue was even discussed on a program dedicated to Al Libi on Al-Arabiya TV, following rumors of tension and rivalry between the two.<sup>12</sup> However, the program's guests could not confirm or offer unequivocal evidence of such a rivalry.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, the researcher Jarret Brachman believes that there is no such rivalry, and that al-Libi continues to serve as a consultant to senior Al-Qaeda leadership, whilst Al Zawahiri has a more central role in the organization and is still considered to be more influential.<sup>14</sup> This opinion is reinforced by Al-Zawahiri's grateful acknowledgement, in one of his books, of Al-Libi's "valuable comments" gratitude on an earlier version of the book.<sup>15</sup> In another instance, Al-Zawahiri praised and endorsed an essay by Abu Yahya Al-Libi on Al-Tatrus [an enemy's use of human shields]:

"And I recommend in this regard referring to the book *Nadharaat fee al-Ijmaa' al-Qati'* [Examining the Definite Consensus] by Shaykh Abu Yahya al-Libi (may Allah preserve him)." <sup>16</sup>

It is thus possible to understand the efforts of jihadist forums to provide a broad platform for the re-issue of Abu Yahya Al-Libi's video clips, sermons, essays and the like. An example of one such effort is the formal announcement by the jihadist propaganda outlet Al-Tawhid, which functions under the auspices of the jihadist Web forum Al-Tawhid,<sup>17</sup> of the imminent publication of an anthology containing video clips, audio tapes, photographs and leaflets about Sheikh Abu Yahya Al-Libi, which will be available for downloading to an web surfer's personal

<sup>12</sup> According to the researcher Brian Fishman, the source of the rumor was an article published by *Newsweek* four years ago. See Jarret Brachman and Brian Fishman, "The Next Bin Laden? (A Lecture)", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, January 11, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> "The Death Industry: Abu Yahya Al-Libi's Role in Al-Qaeda", *Al-Jazeera*, July 24, 2009, <http://www.alarabiya.net/programs/2009/07/26/79922.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Brachman, "The Next Bin Laden? (A Lecture)", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.

<sup>15</sup> The reference is to a book by Al-Zawahiri that is critical of the Pakistani regime. See: Ayman Al-Zawahiri, *A Letter Regarding Islamic Claims on Pakistan's Constitution*, November 2008, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> "The Open Meeting with: Shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri", *As-Sahab Media*, 2008, p.2, p.24.

<sup>17</sup> For the home page of the jihadist Web forum Al-Tawhid, see <http://www.twhed.net/vb/index.php>.

computer.<sup>18</sup> A closer look reveals that the anthology does not include the Sheikh's books, but rather refers the reader to the Web site Minbar Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, which is administered by a Jordanian Salafi sheikh known as Abu Mahmoud Al-Maqdasi, where they can read the other books and essays written by Al-Libi.<sup>19</sup>

To the extent possible, this document aims to present a clearer and fuller picture of Al-Libi's worldview based on this anthology and on other essays not included in it, and of his relative weight among Al-Qaeda's leadership.<sup>20</sup>



A flyer published by the jihadist propaganda institute Al-Tawhid announcing the availability of Al-Libi's anthology for downloading



Logo of the jihadist propaganda institution Al-Tawhid, which published Al-Libi's anthology

<sup>18</sup> The anthology also includes a 353-page book containing the transcripts of all of Al-Libi's video clips and audio tapes, <http://www.shamikh.net/vb/showthread.php?t=59031>.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.tawhed.ws/a?a=hv5zrv47>.

<sup>20</sup> All page references cited in the footnotes are from this anthology, unless otherwise noted.

## The Experience of Prison

One of the first interviews Al-Libi gave after his escape from prison concerned his feelings and memories of his experiences in prison. The interview was held in 2005 by the jihadist propaganda institute Al-Sahab. Al-Libi said he had been imprisoned in four different prisons, the largest of which was in Bagram, Afghanistan: "Not many people have heard of it. It is considered the harshest prison used by the Americans against the Taliban."<sup>21</sup> He was also held in solitary confinement for varying periods of time. For example, he related that he and several of his companions had once been sent to solitary confinement for a month, as punishment for daring to go on a hunger strike in protest against the poor treatment of a woman prisoner being kept in a cell on her own. The methods of torture used in the prison to extract intelligence information from the mujahideen were also still etched in his memory, among them pouring ice water on the prisoners' naked bodies, using dogs to scare them, and beatings.<sup>22</sup> Al-Libi also recalled that the prisoners had been kept in total isolation from the outside world, and only learned news of the outside world when new prisoners were brought to the prison. Although the prison authorities did distribute a newspaper to the prisoners in Farsi, Pashto and English, Al-Libi related that the prisoners perceived the newspaper as being biased, distorted, and with an agenda intended to erode the mujahideen's morale. At the same time, Al-Libi remembered that relations between the prisoners, the Arab mujahideen and the Afghan mujahideen, were close and very good. Al-Libi met and became friendly with a number of mujahideen leaders in prison, among them Ibn Al-Sheikh Al-Libi,<sup>23</sup> with whom he was imprisoned for four months, and Moulavi Noor Jalal, a Taliban leader, who was the deputy head of intelligence. Al-Libi also remembered that he

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<sup>21</sup> Anthology, p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Libi also discussed his prison experiences and prison conditions at great length in an interview with the Afghan jihadist periodical *Majlat Tora Bora*, volume 2, 2005. This interview is not included in the anthology.

<sup>23</sup> "Ibn al-Sheikh al-Libi, the former emir of the Khaldan training camp, was a highly experienced Jihadi who operated in Afghanistan from the late 1980s until his arrest in November 2001. Evidence gathered during his interrogations played a major role in justifying the US case for invading Iraq. Al-Libi, a hardened Jihadi with experience in counter-intelligence, subsequently retracted his assertions regarding Iraq. In May 2009, it was reported that the committed suicide in a Libyan prison." See [http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/Nefa\\_IbnalSheikhAlLibi.pdf](http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/Nefa_IbnalSheikhAlLibi.pdf). Al-Libi dedicated one of his sermons to Al-Sheikh. In it, he presented Al-Sheikh as a paragon, who heroically bore the torture of the Crusaders and their Muslim collaborators, thanks to his staunch faith; see Anthology, p. 196.

had been warmly welcomed by the Afghan population upon his escape from prison, which he claimed proved the fallacy of the West's claim that the Afghan people were happy about the removal of the Taliban government from Afghanistan. The Afghan people hated the US forces and their allies, including the new Afghan government headed by Hamid Karzai.

It is obvious that Al-Libi finds it extremely disturbing that US prisons, some of them secret, like Bagram Prison where he was incarcerated, can operate freely on Muslim soil. He claimed that "The whole world is considered part of the US, with Washington as its center. There is no country in the world, whether it pretends to oppose the US or not, which does not have a prison being used by the US against the mujahideen."<sup>24</sup> Al-Libi considered the prison in Kabul to be the first and the largest used by the Americans against the mujahideen.<sup>25</sup> He also noted that a number of American prisons function in Karachi, in the heart of a Muslim population of 20 million. In general, the daily degradation and the gross continuous violation of human rights in the American prisons scattered throughout Muslim countries, prove time and again the hypocrisy of the US, which boasts of being the primary defender of human rights in the world and of spreading democracy to the nations.<sup>26</sup>

The prisons in Islamic and Arab states, which are operated by local regimes, have also not escaped Al-Libi's notice. He perceived the waves of widespread arrest and imprisonment of mujahideen by Muslim regimes in Pakistan, Jordan, Egypt and Afghanistan as treason and refutation of Islam and the Muslims. This completely outrages him. According to him, the conditions in Muslim and Arab state prisons, under the supervision of local authorities, are even harsher than those under American supervision, and the treatment of the guards, interrogators, and torturers, most of whom are Arabs, primarily from Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, are much worse than the Americans: "If we compare prisons operated by Arab collaborator regimes with what our brother prisoners and mujahideen experience in prisons supervised by the Americans, there is an enormous difference."<sup>27</sup> It is interesting to note that in one of his interviews, Al-Libi deemed the Jordanian regime a more brutal enemy, owing to the more

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<sup>24</sup> Anthology, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Al-Libi reported that the mujahideen call it the 'prison of torture' or the 'prison of darkness', "because it has no light, to the extent that if you held your finger in front of your face, you would not be able to see it", *Majlat Tora Bora*, volume 2, 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Anthology, pp. 3-18.

<sup>27</sup> Anthology, p. 45.

severe torture meted out against the mujahideen. His judgment can be divined from his choice of the expression "Crusaders" and not "*muratadin*", i.e. Muslims who have abandoned their faith, perhaps so as to emphasize his criticism, and hint that the Jordanians had never had an affinity for Islam – especially as Al-Libi stressed that he had purposely chosen to call the Jordanian regime a Crusader regime.<sup>28</sup> This is also an indication of Al-Libi's particular sensitivity to the experience of imprisonment, given the torture and humiliation. This is why Al-Libi calls on the Muslims to free all prisoners.

In actual fact, Al-Libi identified Muslim territory as having been "breached", as being like America's "backyard", where it can operate freely, demonstrating such a high level of involvement that it can operate prisons on Muslim soil, thanks to the acquiescence of Muslim regimes such as Pakistan. In light of this reality, Al-Libi stressed many times the imperative to wage jihad against the American conqueror of Islamic lands and against the Muslim regimes that are collaborating with it. In 2002, he even issued a religious ruling [fatwa] obligating every Muslim to go on jihad.<sup>29</sup>



Video clip of an interview conducted by the Jihadi propaganda institution Al-Sahab in 2005, in which Al-Libi discussed his prison experiences

<sup>28</sup> Anthology, p. 44.

<sup>29</sup> Abu Yahya Al-Libi "Religious ruling regarding the American crusader attack on Afghanistan", 2002, <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=8yk5w3jr>.

### **Jihad against the near enemy, or the one who is far away?**

Al-Libi's sermons show that he considers it of the highest importance to liberate Muslim lands that are under Christian or Jewish occupation, such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine, or whose "Muslim" regimes collaborate with the Christians and Jews, such as Saudi Arabia. In his view, only by liberating the occupied Muslim lands through jihad and imposing shari'a [Islamic religious law], will it be possible to expand jihad to other infidel territories populated by Christians, Jews, Hindus and so forth. In actual fact, Al-Libi sees no difference between the far enemy, the West – particularly the US – and the near enemy, that is, local Muslim regimes. Al-Libi contends that the line between the far enemy and the near enemy has been blurred, due to the presence of the far enemy on Islamic soil. The West's military attacks, through missiles and aircraft, against the mujahideen and the Muslim civilian population, as well as the cultivation of "Muslim" regimes who together with it are conducting a terrible war against the mujahideen, justify considering both a "near" enemy.<sup>30</sup> He once referred to the campaign being waged against the mujahideen as a comprehensive one waged by a coalition comprising the Crusader forces headed by the US; the Jews; and Muslim regimes such as those in Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Libya, and Mauritania.<sup>31</sup> Elsewhere he fingered the US and the Jews as enemies who had joined together to fight the Muslims and Islam. He claimed that the US gives Israel limitless support, considering any act of aggression against Israel to be an attack against the US itself, as if one of its limbs has been injured.<sup>32</sup>

Al-Libi has stated that he believes jihad is the appropriate response to this threat. However, based on shari'a and common sense, one should not attack all infidels at once on multiple fronts, but rather should weigh the exigencies of the moment and existing capabilities. Indeed, Al-Libi has asserted his belief that shari'a should be imposed in all territories: "We believe that all lands must be under Islamic rule, and not one grain of sand must escape". At the same time, "This does not mean we will fight all the nations at once to subjugate them to shari'a. Islam has not commanded us to do so, but rather only to fight the enemy nearest at hand. The near enemy is the one who refuses to surrender to Islamic law. We will impose shari'a on the nearest enemy, and then the next nearest, and so on, until

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<sup>30</sup> Anthology, p. 37.

<sup>31</sup> Anthology, pp. 42-45.

<sup>32</sup> <http://as-ansar.net/vb/showthread.php?p=77581> April 26, 2010.

the circle has been widened and all have surrendered to Allah's rule".<sup>33</sup> However, Al-Libi has never refuted the idea that it is possible to conduct jihad in the territory of the far enemy, yet he has stressed that this is very dangerous to the Muslims and Islam, and therefore he has suggested that the leaders of jihad weigh their steps carefully and consult among themselves.<sup>34</sup> It is worth noting, at the same time, that Al-Libi has called for increasing hostility against Western targets, whether in the Middle East or in the West, in retaliation for their contempt of the Prophet, as illustrated by the caricatures published in Denmark and Norway which, he has stated, exemplify the doctrine of *al-walaa w'al-baraa* [loyalty and renunciation],<sup>35</sup> and the need to act to prevent such acts of heresy.<sup>36</sup> It is obvious that Al-Libi takes care to describe jihad against the enemies of Islam as a war between the sons of light – that is, the mujahideen – and the sons of darkness – that is, the West and its Muslim partners, such as the Bush and Obama Administrations, the Pakistani regime headed by former President Pervez Musharraf, the Egyptian regime formerly headed by Mubarak, the Saudi Arabian regime headed by the House of Saud, and the Algerian regime headed by Bouteflika. He has called all of them "soldiers of Satan" who strive to corrupt the souls of the believers, and therefore fulfill the role of Satan. Therefore, Al-Libi has claimed, these Satanic forces must be contained and a holy war declared against them. According to him, many define themselves as Muslims but actually follow Satan's orders, each time cloaking themselves in a different satanic raiment, whether that of member of parliament or that of philosopher. In his own words:

"We know that Satan does not converse with us face to face, he does not speak to us openly. But he has agents who speak for him. He may be a heretic or he may be an evil cleric who has gone astray and leads others astray, or he may be one who has strayed yet arrays himself in the mantle of wisdom, experience, intelligence, etc..<sup>37</sup>

Elsewhere, Al-Libi has compared the war between Islam and its enemies to a war between people of faith and people of falsehood, a war for devotion to God and against the infidel regimes of the enemies of Islam, whose identity has changed

<sup>33</sup> Anthology, p. 37.

<sup>34</sup> Anthology, pp. 18-42.

<sup>35</sup> The intention is to showing loyalty to Allah and shari'a and all who uphold it, and denouncing all who do not uphold it or, worse, oppose it, such as Christians, Jews, Hindus, and Muslims who have strayed from Islam.

<sup>36</sup> Anthology, p. 59.

<sup>37</sup> Anthology, p. 73; see also p. 112.

throughout history. At present, the enemy is portrayed by Bush, Obama, the UN Security Council and so on. According to Al-Libi, just as Abraham renounced the idolatry of his generation and adhered to the truth of the Lord, so must the mujahideen not give in to dictates or various limitations such as money and women.<sup>38</sup> Thus, according to Al-Libi, the believer is obligated to disdain those who denigrate the commandment of jihad, as is the case in Iraq, for they must be considered the messengers of Satan.<sup>39</sup>

Al-Libi has often stressed the moral value of the commandment of jihad, and the necessity of helping the mujahideen in all arenas of jihad. Towards the end of July 2010, and in light of the death of senior Al-Qaeda leader in Afghanistan Abu Mustafa al-Yazid, Al-Libi called upon all the mujahideen to continue on the path of jihad, Al-Yazid's path, in all arenas of jihad, whether in Chechnya, Somalia, or Iraq.<sup>40</sup> The importance Al-Libi ascribes to jihad is made manifest in a book he published around June 2010, titled "Jihad and the War of Doubts!". In it, he claimed for example that a Muslim who does not keep the commandment of jihad, preferring instead to concentrate on this world's foolish delights, is not necessarily a heretic, but he does open the way for the infidel enemy to grow stronger, gain control of Islamic lands, impose his rules, push aside shari'a and spread corruption and sacrilege. He maintained that the Prophet's companions, who fought jihad against the infidel enemies of their day should be emulated.<sup>41</sup> On other occasions, Al-Libi has praised fulfilling the commandment of jihad, quoting multiple traditions to this effect. In an Eid Al-Adha sermon delivered in 2008, Al-Libi remarked that although jihad brings many hardships, such as hunger, poverty, emigration, warfare, and capture, these hardships should not deter the mujahideen, since jihad is the true path, and its martyrs will receive their reward in Paradise. Moreover, this is the path trodden by the forefathers of Islam, the Prophet Mohammad and his companions.<sup>42</sup> On another occasion, Al-Libi stated that "every Muslim must be a mujaheed fighting for Allah and against the enemies of Allah, all praise be to Him, that is, against the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims who have abandoned their religion..."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Anthology, pp. 100-102; see also p. 122.

<sup>39</sup> Anthology, pp. 66-67.

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.atahadi.com/vb/showthread.php?t=23268>, July 30, 2010.

<sup>41</sup> Abu Yahya Al-Libi, *Jihad and the War of Doubts!*, June 2010.

<sup>42</sup> Anthology, p. 103; see also pp.182-192, p. 255, and pp.258-261.

<sup>43</sup> Anthology, p. 188.

By virtue of this perception and by virtue of the globalization of the Jihad, Al-Libi scrupulously refers to every Jihad arena, be it the most distant such as East Turkestan . He thereby familiarizes himself with all the Jihadi arenas, he tries to show that the Jihadi organizations are united and he also sometimes usurps the various Jihadi arenas' successes for the benefit of Al-Qaeda.

### The United States

Needless to say, and like other Salafi-jihadists, Al-Libi perceives the US to be the primary enemy of the mujahideen, the Muslim, and Islam. According to Al-Libi, all of the world's nations collaborate with the US on some level, either overtly or covertly, *inter alia* as part of the campaign it calls "the war on terror". The US-run prisons scattered throughout the Middle East are absolute proof of this, in Al-Libi's eyes. The Pakistani regime, for example, headed by Musharraf, has chosen to side with the US in its war against the Muslims in Afghanistan, and to expel the mujahideen.<sup>44</sup> This is also the case in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain, which have opened their military bases to the US, and their seas to US aircraft carriers.<sup>45</sup>

In his many sermons, Al-Libi has more than once remarked that the policies of the US are hypocritical, disguised attempts to advance its interests in the Middle East, which are meant to weaken Islam. For example, Al-Libi cited that the Bush regime never did find the chemical or nuclear weapons it claimed to be seeking to justify the US invasion of Iraq. According to Al-Libi, the entire West is hypocritical, and masks its intention to weaken Islam and break the resolve of mujahideen, first in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and now in Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine. On one hand, Al-Libi claimed, the West boasts of promoting coexistence and tolerance, but on the other it opposes Islam, as evidenced by the French-led campaign against the veil.<sup>46</sup>

From his perspective, Al-Libi sees no difference between the Bush administration and that of Obama; in both, he identifies a similar agenda of warring against Islam. As proof, he cites the mass killings of Muslims in Afghanistan. He has therefore expressed reservations about Obama's promise to change the US approach to Muslims, and to end US occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. He also criticized the wave of admiration that swept the Muslim and Arab world following

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<sup>44</sup>Anthology, p. 297.

<sup>45</sup>Anthology, p. 299.

<sup>46</sup>Anthology, pp. 58-63.

Obama's symbolic visit to Egypt in June 2009.<sup>47</sup> According to Al-Libi, America's continued occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq is leading it to destruction in every sphere. Just as Pharaoh – whom the Qur'an presents as a paragon of evil – led his armies to destruction, so, too, has Bush:

"What has Bush gained in his war of seven years? What has he gained in this war? Has he eliminated the mujahideen? The mujahideen were a small group, which fled to the mountains of Afghanistan. Bush claimed that he would flush them out of their holes, and indeed they came out of their holes towards you, but not to flee".<sup>48</sup>

Al-Libi has contended that Obama inherited a questionable legacy, including a shattered economy and a demoralized army, many of whose fighters were killed in Afghanistan and Iraq, or fill the psychiatric hospitals to bursting. Moreover, the arenas of jihad continue to expand, absorbing a steady stream of mujahideen.<sup>49</sup> On another occasion, Al-Libi claimed that American propaganda errs by insisting that victory in a certain arena of jihad is conditional on the assassination or incarceration of a prominent jihadi leader, such as Al-Zarqawi in Iraq, since jihad continues to prove itself in the field, even after the loss of this or that jihadi leader. The mujahideen have had many military achievements in Afghanistan, which are either not covered by the media or which receive distorted exposure.<sup>50</sup> In his 2009 Eid al-Adha sermon, Al-Libi claimed that the new US strategy in Afghanistan – that is, to withdraw US forces – proves that the efforts of the mujahideen have borne fruit and that, as empires have been defeated in the past, so, too, will the American empire be defeated.<sup>51</sup> The mujahideen have also had significant success in Iraq, where defeat and collapse are imminent. For example, Great Britain has already withdrawn some of its forces from Iraq.<sup>52</sup> Al-Libi's criticism of Muslim regimes is much more virulent, as he believes they have failed to adequately defend shari'a and their Muslim citizens. Instead, they have collaborated with the enemies of Islam against the Muslim nation. According to Al-Libi, Muslim rulers should take an example from the response of caliphs Abu Bakr and Omar to all those who refused to accept Allah's rule and shari'a. Their

<sup>47</sup> Anthology, p. 124.

<sup>48</sup> Anthology, p. 108.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Anthology, pp. 3-18.

<sup>51</sup> Anthology, pp. 129-133; see also pp. 262-263.

<sup>52</sup> Anthology, p. 54.

solution was the sword. Caliph Omar beheaded a man who refused to accept shari'a, and Abu Bakr led the *sahaba* [the Prophet's companions] into war against those who refused to give charity as required by shari'a.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, according to Al-Libi, the heresy of a Muslim who has abandoned his faith for various reasons [*muratad*] exceeds that of the born infidel, i.e. a non-Muslim.<sup>54</sup>

### The Arenas of Jihad: An Overview

From the beginning of Al-Libi's association with Al-Qaeda, he ascribed special importance to jihad in Afghanistan, contending: "It is the mother arena from the precedence aspect. Its citizens have already experienced conflict against the infidel and they have considerable knowledge of how to grind empires to pieces, one after the other. We beseech Allah that America should be next."<sup>55</sup> He stated that although the first year after the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan was marked by sadness and despair, the mujahideen later were able to surpass themselves and raise a new generation of fighters, thanks to their deep faith in jihad and their strength.<sup>56</sup> At the same time, Al-Libi stressed the importance of other jihadi arenas, such as Iraq. According to him, the very establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq was a significant achievement for the mujahideen, one that drove a wedge into the plans of the West and of neighboring countries such as Saudi Arabia, to establish a weak government that would do their bidding. By creating a relatively protected territory, Al-Libi claimed, the mujahideen would be able to carry out successful attacks against their enemies, and spread Islam.<sup>57</sup>

### Saudi Arabia

Al-Libi perceives the Saudi Arabian regime as another enemy of the mujahideen, and as an obstacle to the institution of shari'a. According to him, the Saudi regime not only fails to protect the Sunnis from various dangers, such as the

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<sup>53</sup> Anthology, pp. 129-133.

<sup>54</sup> Anthology, pp. 3-18. In this context, Al-Libi-published a book in June 2009 titled "Guidance on the Ruling of the Muslim Spy". In the book, to which Ayman Al-Zawahiri wrote a congratulatory foreword, Al-Libi exhaustively discussed the civil and religious legal rulings governing a Muslim who had collaborated with the enemies of Islam and spied on the mujahideen. His one, unequivocal conclusion was that such spies are to be considered heretics, and therefore must be executed. See Abu Yaha Al-Libi, "Guidance on the Ruling of the Muslim Spy", *Al-Fajr Media Center*, 2010.

<sup>55</sup> Anthology, p. 21.

<sup>56</sup> Anthology, pp. 18-42.

<sup>57</sup> Anthology, p. 39.

Shi'ite threat, but even assists the enemy in attacking its brethren. For example, Al-Libi points to the willingness of the Saudi regime to permit the US to station army bases on Saudi soil, knowing full well that US aircraft take off from these bases to bomb Muslim homes in Iraq and Afghanistan, and to station naval bases in its waters, knowing full well that American battleships and aircraft carriers "carry thousands of soldiers, scores of aircraft and hundreds of missiles...".<sup>58</sup> Moreover, the Saudi regime sends millions of barrels of oil, free of charge or for a small fee, to Islam's enemies, where the oil is used to maintain their aircraft, ships and vehicles. In addition, the regime provides US soldiers with the best in food and drink, whilst these are withheld from prisoners. Al-Libi judges this harshly, contending that this amounts to aiding the infidel in his war against the Muslims and Islam.<sup>59</sup> He thus believes that the Saudi regime is treacherous, and serves only the narrow interests of the House of Saud.

Al-Libi therefore doubts Saudi Arabia's willingness to protect the Sunnis and accuses the regime of pretense. On one occasion Al-Libi claimed that the Saudi regime was not lifting a finger against the increasing power of the Shi'ites in its territory (i.e. the Saudi Arabian Peninsula), even as Saudi prisons were full of Sunni Muslims and mujahideen.<sup>60</sup> Al-Libi also doubted the authenticity of the protests lodged by the Saudi Arabian and other Muslim regimes against the denigration of the Prophet Muhammad by the caricatures published in Denmark in 2005, which had considerable repercussions in 2006. According to Al-Libi, the protests were meant to strengthen the Saudi Arabian government's image as the protector of Islam but, though in actual fact its actions prove otherwise, as indicated by its extensive aid to the West against the mujahideen.<sup>61</sup> Al-Libi pointed out the Saudi regime's hypocrisy also against the background of its war against the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen. According to Al-Libi, the Wahhabi establishment and the Saudi regime from which it takes its orders is quick to issue rulings to wage jihad against the Houthis in Yemen, whilst in other arenas in the Muslim world, such as Iraq, it creates obstacles by issuing religious rulings against jihad. According to Al-Libi, this inconsistent policy is due to the royal family's various interests, such as its alliance with the US.<sup>62</sup> Al-Libi therefore

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<sup>58</sup> Anthology, p. 313.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Anthology, pp. 54-55.

<sup>61</sup> Anthology, p. 65.

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.atahadi.com/vb/showthread.php?t=12198>.

contended that the mujahideen had the absolute right to consider themselves the true protectors of Sunni Islam.

### **Pakistan**

As noted, it was the Pakistani regime that arrested Al-Libi and handed him over to US forces. Al-Libi has not forgotten this and often mentions the part played by the Pakistani authorities in the war against the mujahideen and their alleged crimes against Pakistan's Muslim citizens. He contends that the Pakistani army vilifies the Muslim population, slaughters their women and children and destroys their homes. The massacre in the Red "Lala" Mosque in Islamabad, in July 2007, is proof that the Pakistani regime has betrayed its nation and Islam, and behaves like something out of the *jahiliyya* [the pre-Islamic period], ignorant of and opposed to Islam. Al-Libi sees the Red Mosque as a symbol of a religious institution that educated students and ulama [religious authorities], chief among them Abd Al-Rashid Ghazi, who truly and diligently adhered to shari'a, but who had been forced to confront the repression of a tyrannical secular regime. For this reason, Al-Libi appealed to the Pakistani people to rise up against the regime of "cow worshippers", to stand staunchly against Pakistan's continued support of the US and harsh treatment of the mujahideen, destruction of mosques, and murder of people in the streets. In Al-Libi's words: "Stand before them and tell them that Pakistan is a Muslim state and its people are Muslims, and so there is no choice but to impose the rule of Islam, and to bask in the just shade of shari'a, to benefit from the fluttering banner of the Oneness of God, and to enjoy the dragging of secular banners through the muck and mire".<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Anthology, pp. 139-141.



From a video clip on the massacre in the Red Mosque perpetrated by the Pakistani regime

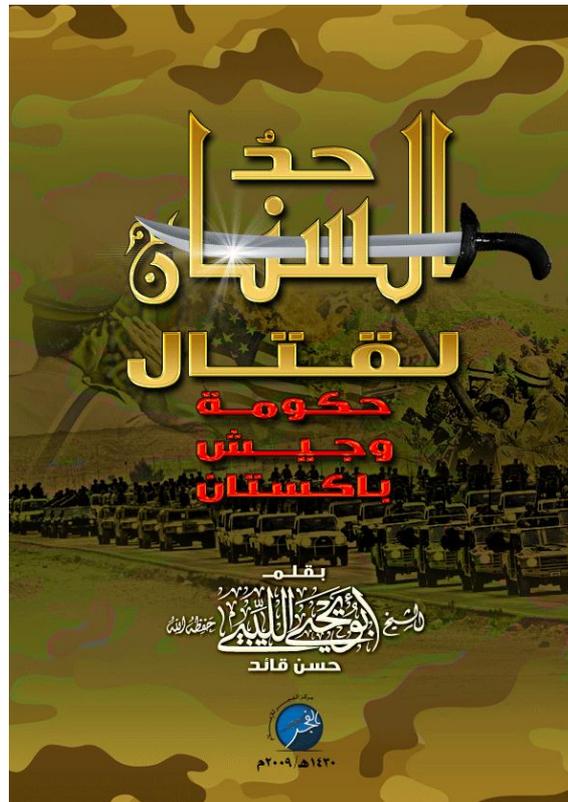
Al-Libi strongly criticized the Pakistani army because of its bloody battles against the Taliban in the Swat Valley and Waziristan, on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, which began in 2007 and escalated in 2009. In one of his speeches, Al-Libi appealed to the ulama in Pakistan and their students to expose the Pakistani army's hypocrisy, as exemplified by its siding with the US in its war against Islam.<sup>64</sup> Al-Libi claimed that the Pakistani army was trying to toady to the Americans by preventing shari'a from taking root in these areas.<sup>65</sup> This idea again appeared in a booklet written by Al-Libi in 2009 titled, "Sharp Is the Spear that Fights the Government and Army of Pakistan". According to him, this trend was apparent from the establishment of Pakistan in August 1948. Pakistan's corrupt regimes have always chosen to westernize, removing every sign and symbol of Islam. Moreover, they fought against "the people of faith, and sacrificed them as martyrs to please the errant Christians. Pakistan became the backbone of the infidel coalition, which calls to fight Islam. Its army, intelligence establishment and police spearhead the slashing of the body of the Muslim nation...".<sup>66</sup> Al-Libi claimed that the Pakistani regime was an infidel one that must be routed;

<sup>64</sup> Anthology, p. 265.

<sup>65</sup> Anthology, p. 268.

<sup>66</sup> See Abu Yahya Al-Libi, "Sharp Is the Spear that Fights the Government and Army of Pakistan", *Al-Fajr Media Center*, 2009, p. 5.

therefore, he grounded in religious law the commandment to wage jihad against infidel regimes such as Pakistan's.<sup>67</sup>



The flyleaf of Abu Yaha Al-Libi's booklet, "Sharp Is the Spear that Fights the Government and Army of Pakistan"

## Libya

As noted, at the beginning of his career, Al Libi was a member of the LIFG's Shari'a Council, which devoted most of its efforts to toppling Qaddafi's regime. When he realized that the members of the LIFG intended to undergo the de-radicalization process initiated by the Libyan regime, he joined Al-Qaeda and became even more militant towards the Libyan regime. In effect, Al-Libi can be seen as the continuer of the militant line taken by the LIFG against Qaddafi, before it entered the de-radicalization process.

Al-Libi takes pains to fix Qaddafi in Muslim consciousness as a cruel tyrant, who worked against his own people and spilled the blood of innocents. As proof, Al-Libi cites Qaddafi's brutal massacre of Islamic prisoners in Abu Salim Prison in

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

1996, which he deems one of the worst crimes of this generation. For example, he mentions a mujahed from Libya, Ali Abd al-Aziz al-Fakhiri, also known as Ibn Al-Sheikh Al-Libi, whom he first met in June 2003 during his incarceration,<sup>68</sup> and last saw in October 2003. According to Al-Libi, Ibn Al-Sheikh Al-Libi operated in Afghanistan and hid in the caves of Tora Bora, but was caught and extradited by collaborators to the Crusaders. After being tortured and interrogated, he was sent to one of the Libyan prisons and was finally killed in a terrible way. Al-Libi does not only stress the Libyan regime's repressive policies against the Islamists, but claims that the Libyan regime plays a significant part in the present crusade against Islam led by the US.<sup>69</sup> On one occasion, Al-Libi accused the Libyan regime of collaborating in the crime allegedly committed by five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor in 1998, who ostensibly injected the AIDS virus into more than 400 Libyan children in a Libyan hospital. He added that the Libyan regime did not adequately punish the perpetrators, and chose to turn a blind eye to their deeds by releasing them from prison in 2007.<sup>70</sup>

### Algeria

One of Al-Libi's rhetorical talents lies in how he describes the Muslim regimes as being corrupt and completely cut off from Islam, whilst their Muslim citizens must deal with policies of Westernization and secularism meant to efface their Muslim identity. The manner in which he presents the secular regime in Algeria is an example of this ability.

In a sermon to the Algerian people in June 2009, Al-Libi described the era of French colonialism as a painful and unforgettable chapter in the history of Algeria, which left a deep wound in the hearts of the nation. He claimed that the French had tried to uproot belief in Islam from the hearts of the Algerian people and re-constitute their identity, all while spilling a great deal of blood, including that of women, children and the elderly. Many of Algeria's citizens had indeed sacrificed themselves for their faith in Islam and to establish an Islamic state. However, their sacrifice was to no avail, because of the secular Algerian regime's efforts to separate Islam and state. Al-Libi therefore asked that the Muslim blood that had been spilled not be in vain, and that Algerians wage jihad against the Algerian regime and its patron, France. According to Al-Libi, jihad in Algeria is the

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<sup>68</sup> See footnote 16.

<sup>69</sup> Anthology, pp. 193-197.

<sup>70</sup> Anthology, pp. 305-308.

nation's only hope of ridding itself of the existing regimes. In general, the Algerian regime is only one link in the chain of tyrannical regimes in the Maghreb, which must be overthrown. For this reason, Al-Libi declared that it is incumbent upon the Algerians, as well as the people of Libya, Tunisia, Mauritania, Mali, Nigeria and Morocco, to join Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and work with it to change the existing reality.<sup>71</sup> One can perceive, in this sermon, Al-Libi's attempt to legitimate AQIM's struggle against the regimes in the region, and to lay the groundwork for recruiting of additional potential supporters. In actual fact, Al-Libi expressed this trend in a booklet he issued during the second half of 2008, titled "Refuting the Accusations against the Mujahideen of the Islamic Maghreb".<sup>72</sup>

### Somalia

Al-Libi perceives Somalia as an additional arena of jihad, one in which the West and its allies, like Ethiopia, are waging an intensive war of nerves. He therefore praised the Somali mujahideen for their staying power against these enemies.<sup>73</sup> In one of his sermons, Al-Libi claimed these enemies were seeking to do the following:

1. Establish a secular state and install one of their collaborators as its head, so that the state would be run according to their wishes and policies.
2. Drag Somalia into tribal warfare and piracy, which had characterized it in the past, in an effort to weaken Somalia and wear it down.
3. Use a systematic plan to take over the Islamic lands, for example by sending in "peace-keeping forces", whether of the United Nations, the African Union or regional or international organizations.<sup>74</sup> For this reason, Al-Libi justified waging jihad against any foreign power in Somali territory, whether they be Ethiopian, Ugandan, etc., without taking into consideration the cover they use to justify their presence there.<sup>75</sup>

Al-Libi also justified jihad against the near enemy, i.e. the regime in Mogadishu, and refuted the claims of critics such as the Ethiopian regime, that Somali mujahideen were dragging Somalia into a bloody civil war. He contended that the Mogadishu regime was heretical, as it had joined the Crusade against Islam and

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<sup>71</sup> Anthology, pp. 202-208.

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.muslim.net/vb/showthread.php?t=313106>.

<sup>73</sup> Anthology, pp. 209-214 and pp. 234-243.

<sup>74</sup> Anthology, pp. 232-233.

<sup>75</sup> Anthology, pp. 232-233 and p. 241.

the mujahideen in Somalia led by the West. Actually, Al-Libi claimed that Islam does not see fighting against the near enemy as *fitna*, or civil war. As proof, he cited the Prophet Mohammad's war against the heretics of the Quraysh tribe who was considered, at the time, to be a near enemy.<sup>76</sup>

### **Palestine**

Al-Libi also addresses the Palestinian issue and, on several occasions, has expressed solidarity with the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip who are subject to Israel's ongoing blockade, and to the Hamas government's cruel, repressive policies towards the Salafi-jihadists in its territory. In a video clip published after Operation Cast Lead in early 2009, Al-Libi claimed that the world's outcry against the attack on Gaza, and the demand for a commission of inquiry, was a sham,<sup>77</sup> especially given the involvement in this conspiracy of the Jews; the West, led by the US; and Arab rulers such as those of Jordan and Egypt. Thus, for example, he claimed that the Egyptian regime headed by Mubarak, whom he called Pharaoh, had played a significant role in converting Gaza into one big prison, and in oppressing the Palestinian people in Gaza, *inter alia* by erecting a fence around Gaza, closing border crossings, preventing the transfer of merchandise and food, destroying tunnels, and collaborating with the Jewish enemy.<sup>78</sup>

Al-Libi identifies Israel and the US as one entity, whose components function in close coordination and harmony. He therefore claims that an attack against the US is like an attack against Israel and vice versa. He asks the ulama to explain this point to their adherents or, in his words: "The Americans are full partners in any crime committed by the Jews in Palestine. Any armed struggle we sanction against the Jews, we must also sanction against the Americans, wherever they are, and in the same manner."<sup>79</sup> Al-Libi believes that American aid to Israel is a mistake.<sup>80</sup> He therefore calls upon the mujahideen in Palestine and elsewhere to attack the economic interests, government institutions and military installations of the Jews and their allies.<sup>81</sup>

On several occasions, Al-Libi more severely criticized the Hamas government for its erratic policies regarding the application of shari'a and, later, for its repressive

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<sup>76</sup> Anthology, pp. 244-248.

<sup>77</sup> Anthology, pp. 279-287.

<sup>78</sup> Anthology, pp. 288-305.

<sup>79</sup> Anthology, pp. 303-304.

<sup>80</sup> Anthology, p. 165.

<sup>81</sup> Anthology, p. 281.

policies against the Salafis in the Gaza Strip, particularly in light of its statements that Al-Qaeda's way was not the Hamas way. On one occasion, Al-Libi offered proof that Hamas had no intention of enforcing shari'a: Hamas is a slave to the "infidel democracy, which is based on the rule and sovereignty of the people...,"<sup>82</sup> under whose aegis it approved a parliament administered according to civil law. In addition, Hamas ignores *al-walaa w'al-baraa* [loyalty and renunciation], a concept Al-Libi considers to be at the very heart and soul of Islam. Al-Libi also criticized Hamas' ties with Iran's Shi'ite leadership, not only because that regime is considered heretical, but because these ties open the door to the "Shi'ite-ification" of Sunni Palestinian society. He accused Hamas of ties to the Russian leadership in Moscow – also considered an infidel regime – even as the latter wages war against the Muslims in Chechnya. According to Al-Libi, Hamas' crimes are equal to, if not greater than, those of the State of Israel. Given these accusations, Al-Libi appealed to Hamas' military arm, i.e. the Qassamiyun, to reflect on their leadership's path and act accordingly.<sup>83</sup> Following the massacre by Hamas of Salafis at the Ibn Taymiyya mosque in Gaza in July 2009, Al-Libi intensified his criticism of the Movement's leadership, often likening its actions to the despicable acts of the Pakistani army in Swat and Waziristan. Nevertheless, he expressed his belief that hostilities were worse against the Muslims in Pakistan than in Gaza.<sup>84</sup> He also warned Hamas against shedding Muslim blood.<sup>85</sup>

### China and the East Turkestan problem

Al-Libi also addresses another arena of jihad, one less well-known and considered less important than other jihadi arenas: Eastern Turkestan, which is under Chinese sovereignty. In effect, Al-Libi took advantage of the extensive media coverage of the events of July 2009 in East Turkestan, during which many Uighur Muslims were killed when the Chinese authorities dispersed mass demonstrations.<sup>86</sup> Al-Libi was thus able to present himself as a savvy leader

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<sup>82</sup> Anthology, p. 275.

<sup>83</sup> Anthology, pp. 271-278.

<sup>84</sup> Anthology, p. 270.

<sup>85</sup> Anthology, p. 35.

<sup>86</sup> These demonstrations followed on the heels of the bloody conflict between Chinese and Uighur laborers at an electronic games production plant in Guangdong, which erupted in June 2009 after a false rumor was spread that six Uighurs had raped two Chinese girls. Two Uighurs were killed in that conflict. When the Chinese government ignored Uighur Muslim demands for an inquiry into the event, the latter demonstrated *en masse*. However, the demonstrations quickly turned into a bloodbath in which nearly 200 people

immersed in events in all jihadi arenas and in the affairs of the Muslim nation, and as the representative of the mujahideen.

In a video clip titled "East Turkestan...the Forgotten Wound" which was published at the beginning of October 2009, Al-Libi emphasized that East Turkestan was an integral and inseparable part of the Muslim nation; as proof, he highlighted the area's Muslim past, beginning when it was conquered by the Muslims in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. He also depicted China as a harsh enemy from the East of the Muslim nation and of Islam. He admitted that the Eastern front against Islam – that is, China – was not sufficiently familiar, and should therefore be brought to the attention of the Muslim nation. Al-Libi even concurred with the claims of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (a Uighur Salafi-jihadist movement that is trying to liberate East Turkestan and establish Islamic rule), that China is allegedly trying to empty the region of its Muslim citizens and efface its Muslim identity through various means, among them changing the name of the region from East Turkestan to the Chinese Xinjiang; encouraging ethnic Chinese citizens to settle there to change the demographic balance in favor of the Chinese; limiting Muslim births to two children per family, through intimidation; closing Muslim schools and preventing the teaching of Qur'an in homes and mosques; and testing missiles and nuclear bombs in the region.

According to Al-Libi, the events of July 2009 signified the increasing dissatisfaction of East Turkestan's Muslims with China's repressive policies, and signaled a turning point in their reaction. Moreover, these events were considered the "intifada" of Turkestanis, who had now raised their heads for the first time against the Chinese authorities. Al-Libi sees the Uighur Muslims as an integral part of the Muslim nation, and identifies with their pain and distress. He therefore appealed to Muslims worldwide to assist the East Turkestan Muslims in every way possible, and first and foremost by conducting a widespread public relations campaign describing events in the region. According to Al-Libi, adherence to belief in Allah, and waging jihad against the Chinese authorities, are an important component in the Muslims' response to these repressive policies. Moreover, he contends that the fate of Communist China will be identical to that of Communist Russia – that is, total collapse.<sup>87</sup>

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were killed and 1,700 were wounded; more than 1,400 people were arrested by the Chinese police.

<sup>87</sup> Anthology, pp. 249-255.



From the video clip "East Turkestan...the Forgotten Wound"

### The Ideological Campaign

Al-Libi is well aware of the intensive propaganda campaign being waged by the West and many of the Muslim regimes against the jihadist efforts of the mujahideen, and to keep new recruits from joining them, in part by spreading doubt as to the legality of jihad. This is why Al-Libi takes pains to emphasize the exalted merit of the commandment of jihad, its basis in religious law, and its deep roots in Islam, as stated in the Qur'an and the Hadith. In Al-Libi's eyes, jihad is not an end in itself but a means of spreading the word of Allah.<sup>88</sup> According to Al-Libi, jihad is composed of three things:

- a. Complete faith that jihad is a commandment given by Allah, equal to the commandments to pray, fast, make pilgrimage (Hajj), tithe, etc.
- b. Imposing Islam and shari'a, and subjugating people to them.
- c. The doctrine of *al-walaa w'al-baraa* [loyalty and renunciation], which is considered integral to jihad, that is absolute loyalty to Islam and renunciation of those who do not follow the true path of Islam.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Anthology, p. 33.

<sup>89</sup> Anthology, p. 34.

Al-Libi identifies two campaigns against jihad: actual, physical war; and an ideological war or campaign over the future of jihad. The ideological campaign is characterized by the following:

- a. The declaration by a number of imprisoned jihadi leaders that they are re-evaluating their ideological platform, recognizing their past obsessions, and recommending that their comrades renounce the path they are on. The media is in step with these efforts, and is willing to print books, articles etc., that re-examine the militant ideological platform. This phenomenon is known as the de-radicalization process.
- b. The spreading of lies and rumors about the mujahideen and presenting their path as an errant one. For example, Al-Libi points out the libelous claim that the mujahideen declare the Muslim nation and the ulamaa to be infidels, ostensibly so that they can take their lives and property, or to justify attacks attributed to Al-Qaeda.
- c. The issuing of religious rulings denouncing the mujahideen and jihad, using concepts taken from shari'a, such as *khawarij* [outsiders] and *ghula* [exaggerators]. Al-Libi claims that ulamaa who issue such rulings do so because they fear for their lives: "Tell me, how do you expect a man to behave when he sees a sword above him and reckless behavior before him...".<sup>90</sup> In this way, regimes strive, along with ulamaa-collaborators, to delegitimize and uproot the commandment of jihad. Al-Libi believes that this is the most prevalent measure.
- d. Support for Islamic movements that are dissociated from jihad, particularly those that have adopted democracy, and presenting them as a moderate alternative to the militant Al-Qaeda – in part to encourage the former to philosophically debate those who favor jihad: "This is one of the steps taken to isolate the mujahideen within society, and to confront them with a stream of ideas and methods that enjoy the support, backing and dissemination of many entities...".<sup>91</sup>
- e. The assassination, incarceration, and demonization of jihadi leaders who are perceived as symbols, in an effort to isolate them and prevent their voices from being heard. In so doing, the West seeks to create a leadership vacuum and eliminate figures of authority and guidance for the mujahideen.

<sup>90</sup> Anthology, p. 29.

<sup>91</sup> Anthology, p. 30.

f. Attempts to deepen and exaggerate differences among the mujahideen.<sup>92</sup>

Elsewhere, Al-Libi states that the confrontation between Islam and the Crusader forces of evil is being waged along three axes:

1. A military campaign against mujahideen fueled by traitors and collaborators, as is happening in Iraq through so-called "re-awakening groups".
2. The fostering of religious rulings that condemn participation in jihad, like those issued by Saudi Arabian Muftis, which aim to sow doubt about it.
3. Attempts to "pull the [religious] rug out from under" jihad, and to present jihad in a false light.<sup>93</sup>

According to Al-Libi, the success of jihad depends on the ability of the mujahideen to wisely wage two campaigns simultaneously. The first of these is the physical war against the enemy, which will not only inflict damage on life and property, but will also psychologically undermine his sense of superiority, such as that of the US, which perceives itself as an unvanquished super-power. The second campaign, which is no less important than the first, is the ideological campaign, where a stubborn struggle is being waged over ideas and concepts. This is why Al-Libi feels that the mujahideen must also defend and justify the idea of jihad.<sup>94</sup> According to him, the value of jihad is so great and so deeply entrenched in Islam, that the many attempts of Islam's enemies to undercut its religious foundations and void it of meaning are doomed to failure.<sup>95</sup> One of the means he identifies as intended to harm Al-Qaeda and foment a revolution in concepts and ideas within terrorist organizations, is the de-radicalization process cited above.

### **Components of the ideological campaign: De-radicalization**

In 2007, Dr. Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, also known as Dr. Fadl, formerly a friend of Ayman al-Zawahiri and the leader of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, known to be one of the most militant jihadist groups, initiated a process of de-radicalization among the members of his group – that is, a re-examination of the group's militant ideology, a renunciation of militancy in favor of a more moderate and tolerant

<sup>92</sup> Anthology, pp. 28-30. Some scholars of terrorism see Al-Libi's list as a blueprint for the West's struggle against terrorism, in general, and against Al-Qaeda, in particular. See, for example, Jarret M. Brachman, *Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Routledge), 2009, pp. 89-92.

<sup>93</sup> Anthology, pp. 154-155.

<sup>94</sup> Anthology, pp. 18-42.

<sup>95</sup> Anthology, p. 32.

approach to "the other". That year, he published a book entitled *A Document for Guiding Jihad in Egypt and the World*, in which he tried to prove that violence and terrorism were not appropriate to shari'a and were fundamentally unacceptable, and that the group's past militant ideology had been mistaken. In the book, he severely criticized the world-view of Al-Qaeda, which leads to destruction and, worst of all, creates a rift within the Muslim nation. His harsh criticism aroused serious concern among Al-Qaeda's leadership, lest Dr. Fadl exert undue influence on the Muslim nation, leading to a "domino effect" whereby other militant Islamic groups would be led to re-examine their methods, undergo de-radicalization, and also become critical of Al-Qaeda's methods. In response to this worrying development, Ayman al-Zawahiri spoke out against Dr. Fadl's criticism in a number of video clips and a book of over 200 pages titled, *Al-Tabri'a – The Vindication*, in which he explained the rationale behind, and justified fulfilling, the commandment of jihad against the enemies of Islam, and also bitterly disparaged Dr. Fadl, whom he accused of aiding the Jewish Crusader enemy.

Abu Yahya Al-Libi also emerged as a strong opponent of de-radicalization, in effect reinforcing Al-Zawahiri's criticism of Dr. Fadl's efforts. Like Al-Zawahiri, Al-Libi also wrote a book, titled *Al-Tabdid li-Abatil Wathiqat al-Tarshid* (85 pp.), and issued a number of video clips on the matter. He claimed that Dr. Fadl's essay was no more than the product of the Egyptian security establishment. He asserted that Dr. Fadl's efforts were a deception generated by the Egyptian security establishment and a few heretic imams, whom he compared to Pharaoh – who is mentioned in the Qur'an as one of the greatest villains ever to oppose the commandments of Allah – by way of emphasizing their detachment from Islam. Thus, for example, Al-Libi wrote: "It is the blood of Pharaoh that leads them on the path of Satan, which their accursed forefathers once trod...".<sup>96</sup> Al-Libi cited four main goals behind the publication of Dr. Fadl's essay:

1. "Harassing the mujahideen from time to time by raising issues intended to create confusion within their ranks, open a new front against them, drag them into abstract ideological debate, and busy them responding [to their detractors] instead of fighting in the war zones...."
2. Presenting the mujahideen as a band of thieves and licentious and immoral ignoramuses.

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<sup>96</sup> Anthology, pp. 150-151.

3. "Improving the image of the infidel West, especially the US, in the eyes of the people...", by presenting them as the guardians of justice, endowed with good virtues. However, in fact, the West continues its crimes against humanity, expressed in mass killings, theft, etc.
4. Ostensibly warning the Muslim nation against continuing on the path of the mujahideen, and forcing it to accept reality, that is, to co-exist with the West.<sup>97</sup>

According to Al-Libi, this trend is invalid and unacceptable, and it is not possible to believe that the "repentance" of the mujahideen was carried out in good faith, given the circumstances in which they were forced to act, i.e. their incarceration in shocking conditions and oppression by the authorities. Nevertheless, Al-Libi expressed his realization that their participation in de-radicalization derives from their desire to be released from prison. He stated that if some Muslims are engaged in de-radicalization, they may express sacrilegious words, but only on condition that their hearts say otherwise, and that their hearts hold the true faith. Al-Libi warned the Muslims not to hold to an ideological platform re-written by mujahideen who had undergone de-radicalization, and which should not be perceived as proof based on shari'a. Moreover, Al-Libi intended to prevent a situation

"...in which someone would say: 'you persist on your path and in your thoughts, while so-and-so, who once followed a militant ideology before de-radicalization, has re-examined them'. To this we respond: 'they indeed once followed the previous [militant] ideology, but this does not mean their words are sacred'..."<sup>98</sup>

Al-Libi further contended that every statement made by a mujaheed who has gone through de-radicalization, should be re-examined in the mirror of the shari'a. While he expressed agreement that the ideological campaign against the mujahideen conducted by the West might have some success with some of people or even groups, he asserted that it could not completely uproot the justification for adherence to jihad.

According to Al-Libi, de-radicalization is one component of the West's two-pronged battle against the mujahideen:

<sup>97</sup> Anthology, pp. 155-156.

<sup>98</sup> Anthology, p. 26.

1. Dismantling jihadist groups from within and disassembling their ideology, in part by sowing doubts about jihad.
2. Isolating the mujahideen from the rest of the Muslim nation, so that they are perceived as a foreign body within Islamic society, which must be uprooted.<sup>99</sup>

In his opinion, this is an unacceptable trend advanced by Arab nations such as Egypt, Libya and Jordan to pressure armed Islamic groups to re-examine their ideology and renounce the use of terrorism [*muraja'at*]. He believes this to be an additional ideological front "invented by the infidel leaders in the corridors of the Egyptian security establishment, and advanced as the new medicine to cure the severe crisis in which they and their masters find themselves....".<sup>100</sup>

### Components of the ideological campaign: Inter-faith dialogue

In 2008, Al-Libi addressed preparations for an international conference on inter-faith dialogue, including Islam, in which Saudi Arabia took an active part. To him, this seemed to be one more component of the ideological campaign against Islam led by the West. Was it not enough that the Saudi Arabian regime had agreed to the presence of Crusader forces in the Arabian Peninsula, thereby defiling it, but that it was also eager to join in the ruin of Islam, by participating in this conference, to which it had given its blessing? Moreover, Al-Libi claimed, as a result of this conference, a new religion would emerge in the Arabian Peninsula, to be called "inter-faith dialogue", "the unity of religions", "a fellowship of religions", or "inter-cultural dialogue". In his opinion, the participation of the Saudi Arabian regime in this process represented the severing of ties over 1,000 years old between the Arabian Peninsula and Islam and the belief in the Oneness of God that had long held sway there. He therefore accused the Saudi Arabian regime of having betrayed Islam and its believers. Now, "the Arabian Peninsula has become a fertile source of heresy and corruption, after having been a lighthouse of faith, monotheism, and the right path".<sup>101</sup>

Al-Libi, stunned by the idea of inter-faith dialogue, highlighted the general consensus [*ijmaa*] within the Muslim nation, that Islam cannot co-exist with other religions such as Judaism or Christianity, because these distort the true faith, do not acknowledge the truth of the Qur'an, and they warp the idea of the Oneness of God. Therefore, he contended, inter-faith dialogue is forbidden between Islam

<sup>99</sup> Anthology, p. 27.

<sup>100</sup> Anthology, p. 24.

<sup>101</sup> Anthology, p. 81.

and other religions. Any Muslim who participates in it is unquestionably considered to have abandoned Islam. Al-Libi wondered why the ulama had not made their voice heard on this matter. According to Al-Libi, it is possible to discern that some ulama have spoken against dialogue between Sunna and Shi'a; yet their objections have not been heard regarding inter-faith dialogue.<sup>102</sup> In his 2009 Eid Al-Fitr sermon, Al-Libi denounced the idea of co-existence and tolerance towards the other, advanced by some: "There is no possibility of co-existence, which is preached by some of those defeated ones of our generation, who have abandoned [Islam]. What co-existence are you preaching?"<sup>103</sup> Al-Libi expressed his fear that a Muslim could not have perfect faith if he could not enjoy freedom of worship, or if he resided in an environment of *jahiliyya* [ignorance], that is, which does not adhere to shari'a and Islam. Therefore, to Al-Libi, emigrating from an environment of *jahiliyya* to one where it is possible to practice Islam is a guarantee of the Muslim's perfect faith. The Prophet Mohammed himself emigrated from his home of Mecca, which was originally a place of *jahiliyya*, to a safe haven, and thus his emigration should serve as a sublime example to those Muslims living under the rule of infidels.<sup>104</sup>



Al-Libi in the video clip "Inter-faith Dialogue: A New Phase of the Crusader War".

<sup>102</sup> Anthology, pp. 84-85.

<sup>103</sup> Anthology, p. 123.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

### Components of the ideological campaign: *Wusti* [Moderate] Islam

Al-Libi aims his arrows of criticism against a trend of promoting a moderate model of Islam known as *Wusti* [Moderate] Islam, that is, an Islam that follows a middle path [*wusta*] or, in other words, that shuns radicalism and extremism and upholds the a proportional understanding of the principles of Islam. It is worth noting that one of the ideologues of *wusta*, even though Al-Libi does not mention him by name, is Sheikh Al-Qaradawi, who resides in Qatar. According to Al-Libi, any attempt to amend Islam and, ostensibly, to highlight its moderate elements, are inaccurate and miss the mark. To be true to Islam, its adherents must accept all of its elements. In his opinion, the use of *wusta*, and mouthing slogans of a moderate Islam, are meant to promote receptiveness to "the other", to see the infidel euphemistically, and to create harmony between Muslims and their infidel neighbors, all of which require ignoring many of Islam's principles, among them *al-walaa w'al-baraa* [loyalty and renunciation] and *tawhid* [belief in the uniqueness and oneness of God]. Neither is the commandment of jihad implemented properly, owing to the attempts of supporters of *wusta* to twist its significance. For example, Al-Libi claims that the Islamic nature of jihad has been uprooted, and a nationalistic one set in its place:

"Even the Islamic character of jihad has been effaced, and replaced by symbols of nationalism and liberation. The exalted meaning of jihad has been melted down into a defeatist politics...Some say that our struggle against the occupying Jews and the criminal Christians is not one of faith, but merely a struggle over occupied, raped land...".<sup>105</sup>

As noted, Al-Libi rejects the idea of inter-faith dialogue between Islam and other religions, out of a desire to preserve the nature and purity of Islam. He claims that Islam cannot co-exist with other religions, and acknowledges that Islam is inherently militant:

"Let all those who cover themselves fraudulently with the cloak of *wustiyya* and others know that Islam is the religion of the sword...The sword and monotheism will never be parted, it is not possible to have monotheism without power and the sword, and the sword is meaningless if it is not for monotheism."<sup>106</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Anthology, pp. 174-175.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

According to Al-Libi, *Wusti* Islam uses gentler terminology towards non-Muslims; for example, it calls the infidel "the other" or "the non-Muslim", and deems Judaism and Christianity "heavenly religions". The result of this warped outlook is the establishment of a new religion with a new terminology, new meanings, and new beliefs.

### **Components of the ideological campaign: Democracy**

The promotion of democracy in the Middle East, led by the US, is yet one more component of the ideological campaign against Islam, in Al-Libi's eyes. In his opinion, democracy is foreign to the principles of Islam. For example, democracy means the rule of the people, that is, that the people are responsible for making the laws and charting their path. Clearly, this is incompatible with Islam, which sanctions the rule of Allah only, or of the *khakhamiyya* [wise men, scholars], as the sole source for legislation. Moreover, the pluralism that is an integral organic part of democracy consecrates multiple opinions, thereby legitimating and perpetuating the rift in the Muslim nation. Al-Libi believes that democracy is a modern-day idol, a new religion, which many worship. He thinks that democracy's adherents preach a way of life that is forbidden by Islam, including drinking wine, charging interest and the like, all in the name of a man's freedom to act as he sees fit. Parliament is also an illegitimate institution, according to Al-Libi, because its members legislate man-made laws. Therefore, Al-Libi criticizes those Muslims who call for the adoption of democracy, whom he believes are acting according to a double standard: on one hand they promote Islam and monotheism, but on the other they destroy it by advancing democratic principles that contravene Islam.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Anthology, pp. 218-225.



From the video clip "Democracy...The Modern-day Idol"

### Ulamaa Who Fail in Their Role

Al-Libi identifies another obstacle to jihadi and the mujahideen in the form of ulamaa who denounce the commandment of jihad and the mujahideen. He rejects the contentions of those ulamaa who speak out against participating in jihad, and scorns their contention that the mujahideen are submerged in an endless jihad that is taking a heavy toll on Muslim society in money and lives, leaving widows and orphans. According to Al-Libi, the present jihad was forced on the Muslim nation by the invasion of Islamic lands such as Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan by Crusader forces, which has resulted in pillage and plunder, and denigration of Muslim honor. Also according to Al-Libi, there is complete consensus amongst the ulamaa, without exception, that if an enemy invades Islamic territory, every Muslim has a personal obligation to wage jihad, and any who cannot themselves wage jihad must support the war effort in every way possible. However, in reality, this commandment is not being fulfilled, and is even criticized.<sup>108</sup>

Al-Libi believes that the ulamaa must take responsibility for their words and deeds because of their notable influence on the Muslim community, and should

<sup>108</sup> Anthology, pp. 92-95.

learn from those ulamaa who promote jihad and the mujahideen. He appeals to all of the ulamaa:

"You must free yourselves from this painful reality. You must shake off these collaborating governments, which frighten you. On the life of Allah, you will not find the taste of the faith or the strength of the believer or the strength of the faith...if you do not enter the arena of jihad or substantively live jihad...We ask the ulamaa to stand by their brothers and not against them, and not be a hindrance to them...".<sup>109</sup>

Al-Libi beseeches the ulamaa to fulfill their role and morally support the mujahideen through appropriate religious rulings and education. He stresses to the ulamaa that "Your task today is greater than ever before. The nation needs you now, to support it. The mujahideen are calling you to stand by them and enter the arenas of jihad with them. The mujahid seeks an honest ulam who will stand beside him through the campaign, this is what he expects." Al-Libi claims that, with the help of the ulamaa, the mujahideen will be able to avoid potential excesses and impulses.<sup>110</sup> In another sermon, Al-Libi addressed the ulamaa personally, asking them to assist the mujahideen, who must confront a broad coalition with a large army and modern equipment: "We are not hiding that the mujahideen suffer most from being a minority...from the lack of honest and energetic ulamaa, who should be standing alongside their sons...".<sup>111</sup>

At the beginning of 2009, after Operation Cast Lead, Al-Libi praised the joint ruling of several prominent ulamaa that jihad in Palestine is a legitimate one to which every Muslim is obligated because there is an infidel regime on Muslim land, and which must be supported in every way, with money, lives and arms, because of the ongoing Israeli blockade and Israel's prevention of [the passage of] humanitarian aid, which endangers the residents' lives. Al-Libi takes advantage of this ruling to claim that it also applies to jihadi arenas such as Iraq and Afghanistan, where there is also an infidel presence and heretical regimes. Al-Libi therefore appeals to the ulamaa to issue similar, clear rulings regarding the legitimacy of jihad in other occupied territories: Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Chechnya, Andalusia, and East Turkestan. He recalls that in 2002, the ulamaa

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<sup>109</sup> Anthology, p. 14.

<sup>110</sup> Anthology, p. 15.

<sup>111</sup> Anthology, p. 135.

wisely issued religious rulings commanding jihad against the American occupiers.<sup>112</sup> In his words:

"The American occupiers, the Spanish, the Russians and other occupying countries are warmongers who must be killed and their property confiscated. The Muslims are permitted to kill their men, take their money and destroy their institutions from within".<sup>113</sup>

At the same time, Al-Libi considers it very important to debate those ulama who condemn jihad and censure the mujahideen. According to him, the doubts that ulama ascribe to the commandment of jihad serve tyrannical regimes, and do nothing to strengthen the religion, particularly as the proofs they bring have no basis in shari'a. As evidence, Al-Libi cites the multiple jihad campaigns waged by the first four Muslim Caliphs, which were supported by Muslims from all points on the spectrum. Al-Libi therefore sees the mujahideen as being obligated to an additional arena of jihad: that of a polemic against these ulama.<sup>114</sup>

## Summary

Abu Yahya Al-Libi is unusual in many ways. His considerable knowledge of theology, his command of religious terminology, his rhetorical capability, his ability to use the internet to spread jihad, and his learned acquaintance with all arenas of jihad have all contributed to consolidating his position as a senior leader of Al-Qaeda. Moreover, his being one of the first generation of "Afghan-Arabs" has further enhanced his image. He also appears to be an opportunist, who knows how to identify explosive political and social situations, such as the caricature affair in Denmark and Norway at the beginning of 2006, or the July 2009 riots in East Turkestan, and to fill them with religious-jihadi content so as to increase support for Al-Qaeda and amplify anger towards the West and its allies. All of these qualifications have no doubt succeeded in bringing new blood into Al-Qaeda and in marketing the impression that the mujahideen and the various jihadist organizations have a patron who is representing their interests, defending them, and opposing the enemy, whether on battlefield or the propaganda front.

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<sup>112</sup> Anthology, pp. 288-305.

<sup>113</sup> Anthology, p. 295.

<sup>114</sup> Abu Yahya Al-Libi, *Jihad and the War of Doubts!*, June 2010.

In 2008, for example, given widespread condemnation of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) following its multiple terrorist attacks in Algeria, Al-Libi defended the organization and justified its attacks against the Algerian regime, even appealing to Muslims to assist AQIM in every way possible. Al-Libi also spoke out many times against various detractors and criticized initiatives intended to weaken the mujahideen, such as the de-radicalization of the Salafi-jihadist organizations, inter-faith conferences, religious rulings of ulamaa against the mujahideen and the like. At many a low point he appeared as a father-like figure come to comfort his sons and raise their spirits, such as following the assassination of prominent jihadist leaders such as Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi and Abu Mustafa Al-Yazid.

According to Al-Libi, the near enemy and the far enemy are the same, and all-out war must be waged against them given their presence on Muslim land and the close collaboration among them, meant to harm the mujahideen and even the Muslim civilian population. For example, to Al-Libi, Afghanistan and Iraq represent just such arenas of jihad, because their Muslim governments collaborate with Western occupying forces. It is apparent that Al-Libi would first concentrate on expelling the enemy from occupied Islamic lands, and only then broaden the jihad effort beyond them, although he does not rule out terrorist attacks on Western territory, but asks that the high level of risk these would incur be taken into account.

In actual fact, Al-Libi's worldview is dichotomous: a global war is being waged between the mujahideen, who represent the forces of light, and the axis of evil Western powers and the "Muslim" regimes that collaborate with them, who represent the forces of darkness. The former are presented as those who disseminate the word of Allah, and the latter as those struggle to thwart the efforts of the former. According to Al-Libi, an Islamic caliphate, in which the word of Allah will be heeded, will only come into being by "bearing arms against these criminals who rebel against Allah and his religion...".<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Anthology, pp. 267-269.