

The Focal Point of Activity of the Concept of Global Jihad in Nazareth

General

There are accumulating indications to the fact that Sheikh Nazem Abu Eslim (called Abu Osama Al-Nasseri), the Imam of the Shihab Al-Din Mosque in **Nazareth**, and heading the "Jama'at Ansar Allah – Bayt Al-Maqdis – Al-Nasira" organization ("The Supporters of Allah Group – Jerusalem/Palestine – Nazareth"), **tightens its affinity with the idea of global Jihad.**¹

Following the assassination of the Al-Qaeda leaders in Iraq on April 18th 2010, a prayer for the elevation of their souls took place at the Shihab Al-Din Mosque in Nazareth, with the participation of hundreds of worshipers. The reporting on the prayer was published on Sheikh Nazem Abu Eslim's website, **operating from Nazareth**, which has obvious characteristics of global Jihad, simultaneously with leading Jihadi forums.

An analysis of the materials published by the organization's website and of the information published on Sheikh Abu Eslim, show, amongst other things:

1. The website was apparently founded on April 2009, if not before.
2. The website contains radical Islamic content, including essays by leading Salafis and radical ideologists, such as Sayyid Qutb and Muhammad Qutb.
3. It is apparent that the force behind the website's activity and the organization is Sheikh Abu Eslim, who also serves as the Imam of the Mosque. It should be noted that at the end of June 2009, the Sheikh was taken into questioning,

¹ At the end of January 2010 the MEMRI website published an article on the radical activity carried out by Sheikh Nazem Abu Eslim at the Shihab Al-Din Mosque in Nazareth: http://www.memritv.org/report/en/3932.htm#_edn4

and on February 2003 he was forbidden from leaving for Mecca and upholding the commandment of Hajj, due to his extreme statements.

4. From an analysis of the contents on the website, it seems the organization and the Sheikh deal in "Da'awa activity" whose purpose is, apparently, **to bring people closer to the idea of global Jihad and the radical Islamic organizations**. This, by emphasizing radical ideology and praising Jihadi activity, such as the prayer conducted following the elimination of the Al-Qaeda leadership in Iraq.
5. There still is no indication of any involvement in violent activity by the group members, but it should be stressed that the organization's operational behaviour and that of its leader, may affect in the future the recruitment of activists from amongst the Muslims in Israel to the idea of global Jihad.
6. At this stage it is yet unclear how much the activity at the Shihab Al-Din Mosque and at "The Supporters of Allah Group - Jerusalem/Palestine - Nazareth" does indeed reflect the Islamic radicalization trend amongst radical elements from within the Israeli-Arab population, while connecting with global Jihad ideology, and how much this activity receives support from this public. However, on the surface, the contents of the website as the prayer held at the Mosque for the raising of the souls of the Al-Qaeda in Iraq leaders, warrants an in depth supervision and examination of the subject.

Detail

Background

The Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri Al-Maliki, convened on April 19th 2010 a press conference, announcing that Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi, leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, and Abu Hamza Al-Muhajir, the organization's "War Minister", were eliminated in a joint military operation of the Iraqi and American forces, carried out on April 18th 2010 north of Bagdad.² A week later, on April 25th 2010, Al-Qaeda in Iraq has confirmed that its two leaders were indeed killed.³



An Iraqi journalist watching the press conference of the Iraqi Prime Minister

As expected, the Jihadi forums discussed extensively the elimination of the Al-Qaeda leadership in Iraq. Upon the publication of the official announcement of their death made by the Sharia Minister of the "Islamic State of Iraq (ISI)" (the name of Al-Qaeda in Iraq), Abu Al-Walid Al-Wahhab Al-Mashadani,⁴ the forums published the surfers' condolences, who were joined by global Jihad media institutes and prominent Jihad organizations, such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Somali "Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen" movement, the "Islamic

² <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=11466&article=566043>

³ <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2010/04/25/106790.html>

⁴ <http://www.shamikh1.net/vb/showthread.php?t=60670>

Emirate in the Caucasus", as well as Jihadi-Salafi groups operating in the Gaza Strip – "Jama'at Al-Tawhid" wal-Jihad – Bayt Al-Maqdis (Jerusalem/Palestine)"⁵ and "Jama'at Ansar Al-Sunna – Aknaf (wings) Bayt Al-Maqdis".⁶

The prayer at the Shihab Al-Din Mosque for the raising of the souls of the Al-Qaeda in Iraq leaders

The www.muslim48.com website posted on April 30th 2010 a report, stating that hundreds of worshipers participated in a prayer for the raising of the souls of the shahids in Iraq and in other countries, headed by the "Amir of the Islamic State of Iraq, Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi Al-Husseini and his minister, Abu Hamza Al-Muhajir." According to the report, the prayer took place at the Shihab Al-Din Mosque in Nazareth,⁷ headed and led by the mosque's Imam, Sheikh Nazem Mahmud Abu Eslim⁸ (also called Abu Osama Al-Nasseri). The website also posted photographs from the archives depicting another prayer, apparently held at the same mosque.⁹

⁵ <http://www.shamikh1.net/vb/showthread.php?t=60723>

⁶ <http://shamikh1.net/vb/showthread.php?t=61172>

⁷ The land for the mosque was allocated by the Israel Lands Administration, and the building of the mosque was the center of a dispute between the Christian world and the Islamic Waqf, as the mosque is situated under the Church of Annunciation in Nazareth: <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-1340368,00.html>, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-1522469,00.html>

⁸ Sometimes his name is written as "Abu Salim" and not "Abu Eslim".

⁹ <http://www.muslim48.com/Article.php?id=1016>



The article's headline as it appeared on the website

It should be noted that the report was quoted in one of the most prominent Jihadi forums in English, "Ansar Al-Mujahideen",¹⁰ as well as in other Jihadi forums in Arabic.¹¹ On some of these forums it was said that the photograph of the prayer was taken on April 30th 2010,¹² but other surfers doubt it, claiming the worshipers are seen in winter clothing while it is now spring.¹³

¹⁰ <http://www.ansar1.info/showthread.php?t=21862>

¹¹ <http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=387143>,
<http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?169896&p=1313994&viewfull=1>

¹² <http://alfalajaweb.info/vb/showthread.php?t=114263&page=1>

¹³ <http://alfalajaweb.info/vb/showthread.php?t=114263&page=4>



An archive photograph of a prayer at the Shahab Al-Din Mosque in Nazareth

A surfer at the "Al-Faloja" Jihadi forum adds a response to this report, stating that on April 28th 2010, prayers were also conducted in East Jerusalem schools in memory of Al-Baghdadi and Al-Muhajir.¹⁴

The characteristics of Sheikh Nazem Abu Eslim's activity and his organization

Sheikh Nazem Abu Eslim, Imam of the Shihab Al-Din Mosque in Nazareth, heads the "Jama'at Ansar Allah - Bayt Al-Maqdis - Al-Nasira" organization ("The Supporters of Allah Group - Jerusalem/Palestine - Nazareth"),¹⁵ and was even called "Amir" on at least one occasion - a title reserved in global Jihad terminology to the organization's leader.¹⁶



¹⁴ <http://alfalojaweb.info/vb/showthread.php?t=114263&page=2>

¹⁵ <http://www.paldf.net/forum/showthread.php?t=388370>

¹⁶ <https://aljazeeraatalk.net/forum/showthread.php?t=193860>

From searches made online, it seems that on February 2003, Israel has barred Sheikh Abu Eslim from leaving for Mecca for the Hajj. According to the report, his departure was prevented following his radical statements made against Israel in the sermons he conducted.¹⁷

On June 28th 2009 he was arrested at his home in Nazareth and was taken in for questioning and was interrogated for several hours.¹⁸ The "Panet" news portal, publishing reports regarding Sheikh Abu Eslim's activities, published on October 2009 an article by Abu Eslim, in which he refers to the "Zionist-Crusader" attack on the Islamic religion. He wrote:¹⁹

"... There is no need to talk of the hostile Crusader World's pressure, which is the premier motive in the Zionist-Crusader attack on our religion, nation and our holy sites, headed by the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, Allah guard it from the evil plots of the land and will do as it commands for the hands of the good people of the land, who fulfill the right of Jihad for Allah so that the Al-Sham region will be liberated of its tyrants, who stand between the nation and the arrival to the captive Al-Aqsa Mosque... We say to the enemies of Allah: if these attacks on Al-Aqsa continue, the gates of extinction and devastation shall be opened upon you, and Allah willing they will not close, until the flags of the next Caliphate, with Jerusalem as its capital, are raised..."

It should also be noted that one of the leading global Jihad forums in Gaza, published two video segments titled "A lesson from the Al-Aqsa Mosque – Sheikh Abu Osama Al-Nasseri" (Nazem Abu Eslim's name). It is not clear when these video segments were filmed but they are filled with radical messages and

¹⁷ <http://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/44402>

¹⁸ <https://aljazeeraatalk.net/forum/showthread.php?t=193860>

¹⁹ <http://www.panet.co.il/online/articles/63/68/S-235207,63,68.html>

accompanied by slogans taken from global Jihad terminology. In these sermons, Abu Eslim claims that the Muslim nation is going through difficult times, as a "Zionist-Crusader" war has been declared on it in various places around the world, such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia.²⁰

On August 2009 the Hamas movement's security forces eliminated the radical imam, Abd Al-Latif Musa (also called Abu Al-Nur Al-Maqdisi), leader of the Salafi-Jihadi "Jund Ansar Allah" organization ("the Army of Supporters of Allah"), after he declared the establishment of an Islamic Emirate in the Gaza Strip.²¹ Following that event, Sheikh Nazem Abu Eslim published a strong announcement attacking the Hamas. Here are segments of the announcement which have reached the "Panet" website and the "Panorama" newspaper:²²

"Here flows the blood of the people of Tawhid [monotheism] and their sanctity has been abandoned by the Oslo government in Gaza, by the sons of Hamas who are blinded... We see this as a war on the part of Hamas on the sons of Islam...

How was there room in your heart to receive Jimmy Carter, who coined the sentence 'whoever hates Jews, hates God'... How was there place in your heart to shake the hand of Putin, the Russian criminal, murdered of our people in Chechnya, while you did not express your willingness to shake the hand of Sheikh Abu Al-Nur Al-Maqdisi or that of other honorable sheikhs?

The Islamic nation, sons of the call for Tawhid... rejoice in the blood quenching the nation's plan towards a proper Caliphate, with Jerusalem as its capital..."

²⁰ <http://www.al-amanh.net/vb/showthread.php?t=8933>

²¹ <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3762061,00.html>

²² <http://www.panet.co.il/online/articles/110/111/S-222941,110,111.html>

The connection between the radical preacher and the northern faction of the Islamic movement in Israel is unclear, but on March 9th 2006 the Palestinian news agency published a report titled "the northern faction of the Islamic movement and the preacher of the Shihab Al-Din Mosque stress the sanctity of Nazareth's unity."²³ This report does not prove a connection between the two, but the report's headline can suggest a certain link.

The "Ana Al-Muslim" Jihadi forum ("I am the Muslim") published photographs from Nazareth from the area surrounding the Shihab Al-Din Mosque, depicting children holding black flags identified with Al-Qaeda, as well as posters of the "Jama'at Ansar Allah – Bayt Al-Maqdis – Al-Nasira" organization alongside verses from the Quran.²⁴



²³ <http://fatehforums.com/showthread.php?p=172113>

²⁴ <http://www.muslim.net/vb/showthread.php?t=347570>



The characteristics of the Muslim48.com website

The Muslim48.com website has the logo of the "Jama'at Ansar Allah – Bayt Al-Maqdis – Al-Nasira" organization. The organization's logo contains classic characteristic of global Jihadi organizations. The inscription "Supporters of Allah" appears on a globe, from which a hand comes out pointing to a black flag, on which is written "The Shahada" - "there is no God other than Allah, and Muhammad is Allah's messenger". To the globe's left it says: "Towards a proper Caliphate and a Muslim Shura Council".



The logo of the organization

The website's banner depicts the Al-Aqsa Mosque, when on its left is the organization's logo and the inscription: "The beloved Al-Aqsa Mosque: you are the most dear and prominent and 'for he who hates you, he will be cut of (from posterity and every good thing in this world and in the Hereafter)'" [the last part of the sentence is taken from the Quran: Surah 108, Al-Kauthar²⁵, verse 3].



The Muslim48.com website; clear characteristics of global Jihad

It seems that the Muslim48.com website is a Muslim website with radical characteristics. The website contains columns dealing with news, social issues and Islam, when a significant part of the articles, including on its front page, deal with matters of Jihad from all over the world, for example: "An announcement

²⁵ Al-Kauthar (i.e. abundance) is a river in Paradise.

from Palestine for the Mujahideen in the Caucasus”, or a report on a terrorist attack in Afghanistan, or a report on a threat directed by the leader of the Taliban movement in Pakistan towards the United States. In addition, the website has a column on books, depicting amongst other things, essays by Sayyid Qutb and Muhammad Qutb, known as radical ideologists.²⁶

²⁶ <http://www.muslim48.com/Cat.php?ucat=17>