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# *The Development of a Jihadi's Mind*

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**W**hat occupies the mind of a *jihad*-driven Muslim? How is such fervor planted in young and impressionable believers? Where does it originate? How did I—once an innocent child who grew up in a liberal, moderate and educated household—find myself a member of a radical Islamic group? These questions go to the root of Islamic violence and must be addressed if free societies are to combat radical Islam. To further this aim, I will explore the psychological development of a *jihadi's* mind through my own first-hand experience as a former member of a Muslim terrorist organization.

I was born in Cairo to a secular Muslim family. My father was an orthopedic surgeon and an agnostic at heart; my mother was a French teacher and a liberal. Both considered Islam to be, primarily, an integral part of our culture. With the exception of my father, we would fast on Ramadan. Even though my father was not religious, he understood our need to fit into the community and never forced his secular views on us. He espoused diverse philosophical ideas but encouraged us to follow our own convictions. Most importantly, he taught my brother and me to think critically rather than to learn by rote. I never had any doubt, however, that we were Muslim—that Allah was our creator, Mohammed his messenger and the Quran our book. I believed that if I performed good deeds, I would be admitted to paradise where I could satisfy all my personal desires. I also knew that, alternatively, my transgressions would be punished by eternal torture in hell. I absorbed these beliefs largely from the surrounding environment rather than from my parents; they were shared by most children around me.

I attended the private Al-Rahebat primary school in the area of Dumiat, which is about 125 miles north of Cairo, when I was 6 years old. Though managed by Christian nuns, the school was supervised by the Egyptian government and required its Muslim students to attend classes on Islam. Before each Islamic lesson began, the teacher would dismiss the Christian students, who were then obliged to linger outside the room until the lesson was over. Adding salt to the Christian children's wounds, many Muslim pupils would tease

them for their faith—telling them that they would burn in hell eternally because they ate pork and were “infidels.”

This made a strong impression on me. I felt sorry for the Christians, sensing that they must be hurt by being treated as an inferior minority in an Islamic society. In my short life it was the first time I perceived that my Christian friends were not my equals. My parents had never suggested that we were superior to Christians, and I counted many among my friends. We used to play ‘hide and seek’ and other games together.

Not only Christian children in the school were persecuted, however; non-practicing Muslims were scorned as well. Observant Muslim children would gather around those who did not fast during Ramadan and sing, “You who eat or drink during Ramadan are the losers of our religious ... the black dog will tear apart your guts.” Such treatment of Christians and non-practicing Muslims encouraged us to think that non-believers were inferior creatures and that it was right to hate them—they did not follow Islam and the Prophet Mohammed and, therefore, deserved to be tortured in hell forever. Though my secular upbringing prevented these thoughts from entirely dominating my mind at the time, other children were affected even more.

## The Beginning of a Dream

**W**hen I was nine years old, I learned the following Quranic verse during one of our Arabic lessons:

But do not think of those that have been slain in God’s cause (*shaheed*) as dead. Nay, they are alive! With their Sustainer have they their sustenance. They are very happy with the reward they received from Allah (for dying as a *shaheed*) and they rejoice for the sake of those who have not joined them (i.e., have not yet died for Allah). (Quran 3:169-70)<sup>1</sup>

It was the first time I was exposed to the concept of *shaheed* (martyr), and naturally, I began to dream of becoming one. The thought of entering paradise very much appealed to me. There I could eat all the lollypops and chocolates I wanted, or play all day without anyone telling me to study. What made the concept of *shaheed* even more attractive was its power to quell the fear I experienced as a young boy—for we were taught that if we were not good Muslims (especially if we did not pray five times per day), a “bald snake” would attack us in the grave. The idea of dying as a martyr provided a perfect escape from the frightening anguish of eternal punishment. Dying as a *shaheed*, in fact, was the *only* deed that fully guaranteed paradise after death.

In secondary school I watched films about the early Islamic conquest. These films promoted the notion that “true” Muslims were devoted to aggressive *jihad*. While jihadi seeds

were thereby planted in my mind, they did not yet especially influence my personality or behavior. I was mostly occupied with school work and such hobbies as sports, stamp collecting, chess and music. My father actively encouraged my brother and me to participate in ordinary activities. In fact, we were members of an exclusive private club where we pursued our hobbies and favorite sports. In my early years of high school, I was also—as many teenagers are—preoccupied with sex and hobbies. A variety of religious and cultural constraints made it virtually impossible to experience sexual activity, however.

During my last year of high school, I began to ponder seriously the concept of God while reading about the molecular structure of DNA in a biology book. These thoughts prompted me to learn more about Islam and to devote myself to serving Allah. I remember one particularly defining moment in an Arabic language class when I was sitting beside a Christian friend named Nagi Anton. I was reading a book entitled *Alshaykhan* by Taha Hussein that cited the Prophet Mohammed's words: "I have been ordered by Allah to fight and kill all people (non-Muslims) until they say, 'No God except Allah'" (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*). Following the reading of this Hadith, I decisively turned toward Nagi and said to him, "If we are to apply Islam correctly, we should apply this Hadith to you." At that moment I suddenly started to view Nagi as an enemy rather than as a long-time friend.

What further hardened my attitude on this matter was the advice I received from many dedicated Muslim fellow students, who warned me against befriending Christians. They based their counsel on the following verse:

O ye who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends: They are but friends to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them (for friendship) is of them (an infidel). Verily Allah guideth not a people unjust. (Quran 5:51)

In view of this verse and the previous one, I felt obliged as a Muslim to limit my relationships with my Christian friends. The love and friendship I once felt for them had been transformed into disrespect, merely because I wished to obey the commandments of my religion. The seductive ideas of my religious studies had diluted the influence of my secular upbringing. By restricting my contact with Christians, I felt that I was doing a great deed to satisfy Allah.

### First Encounters with Jamaah Islamiyah

**M**y high test scores enabled me to gain admission to the medical school at Cairo University in the late 1970s. At the time Islamism was proliferating rapidly. This was due in part to the money and textbooks Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi sect donated to promote Salafi Islam, but more importantly, Islamism gained adherents because Egyptians

attributed the growing wealth of Saudi Arabia to its strict practice of Salafism. We enviously lamented, “Look how Allah has blessed the Saudis with money and oil because they apply *sharia* law.” We believed that our economic problems would be solved if we did the same—just as Allah had blessed the Saudis, He would bless us.

At medical school I met members of Jamaah Islamiyah, an Islamic organization then approved by both the Egyptian government and the university, though later classified as a terrorist organization. Jamaah built a small prayer room in our medical school that later developed into a mosque with an associated library. The mosque was behind the physiology and biochemistry departments, and members of Jamaah came there daily before science classes to lecture to us about Islam. They warned us about the punishments awaiting us after death if we did not follow Islam strictly and were effective in advancing Islamism among many of the students, including me. Our fear of being punished after death was exacerbated by our work in the cadaver room, where we dissected dead bodies. Seeing death regularly during anatomy and physiology courses made us feel that the life of this world was meaningless compared to “real” life after death. Jamaah Islamiyah impressed that idea on us by citing the following Quranic verse:

Those who desire the life of the present and its glitter—to them we shall pay (the price of) their deeds therein—without diminution ... (yet) it is they who, in the life to come, shall have nothing but the fire—for in vain shall be all good things that they have done in this (world), and worthless all that they ever did. (Quran 11:15-16)

Indeed, the preachers used a range of verses (see Appendix A) to warn those who did not follow Mohammed and Islam rigorously that they would suffer in hell forever.

Studying the anatomy and physiology of the human body increased my belief in a creator and made me more enthusiastic about my faith. The rising power of Jamaah Islamiyah inside the medical school was another critical factor in fostering my religious zealotry and that of my fellow students. Once Jamaah Islamiyah became influential, it prohibited such social events as listening to music, which it deemed un-Islamic. Female students were separated; they were not allowed to sit with males. Students were afraid to defy the group’s hostile decrees. Its control reached the point where Christian professors were threatened. I will never forget when they attacked an anatomy professor, Dr. Edward, because he asked Jamaah leaders to end their “mandatory” daily sermon so that he could start his anatomy class. Jamaah Islamiyah’s control of our medical school gradually limited our rights. Its members exploited the lack of restrictions on their conduct to deprive everybody else of freedom.

## Inside Jamaah Islamiyah

During my first year of medical school, a Jamaah member named Muchtar Muchtar invited me to join the organization. Muchtar was in his fourth year, and Jamaah had given him the title *amir* (prince or caliph)—a designation taken from early Islamic writings that is associated with the Islamic Caliphate or Amir al-Momenin (Prince of the Believers). I accepted his invitation, and we walked together to Jamaah's mosque for noon prayers. On the way there Muchtar emphasized the central importance in Islam of the concept of *al-fikr kufri*, the idea that the very act of thinking (*fikr*) makes one become an infidel (*kufri*). (In Arabic both words are derived from the same three root letters but have different meanings.) He told me, "Your brain is just like a donkey (a symbol of inferiority in the Arab culture) that can get you only to the palace door of the king (Allah). To enter the palace once you have reached the door, you should leave the donkey (your inferior mind) outside." By this parable, Muchtar meant that a truly dedicated Muslim no longer thinks but automatically obeys the teachings of Islam.

Initially, I thought that I would experience an ordinary prayer session like those in other mosques. But before the prayers began, the participants were required to stand shoulder to shoulder and foot to foot. The leading cleric, Mohammed Omar, personally checked our arrangement for fifteen minutes to make sure that there were no gaps between our shoulders or feet. The reason for this exercise became apparent when Omar recited the following verse: "Truly Allah loves those who fight in His Cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure" (Quran 61:4). This militaristic attitude during prayers was the first step in preparing me for the concept of *jihad* against "the enemies of Allah," the non-Muslims.

Following the prayers, members of Jamaah welcomed me and introduced me to a "brother" named Magdi al-Mahdi, who advised me to start reading Salafi books. I followed his advice and became immersed in those texts. After a few months of listening to Jamaah's belligerent religious sermons and reading the materials they recommended, my personality was utterly transformed. I started to grow my beard. I stopped smiling and telling jokes. I adopted a serious look at all times and became very judgmental toward others. Bitter debates with my family ensued. My behavioral and intellectual transformation greatly alarmed my father. My mother was also concerned; she said that the Quran should be understood in a more moderate manner and advised me to stop reading Salafi materials.

Salafi teachings expressly forbid acting on sexual desire. They prohibit a man from touching any woman or even looking at one. Speaking to a woman on a personal level is not permitted. To be alone with a woman without relatives present, it is believed, would "invite Satan to be the third person." Women became for members of Jamaah, therefore, forbidden creatures. But while relations with women were strictly proscribed, the erotic

passages in Salafi writings (see Appendix B) simultaneously aroused in us a powerful sexual desire. This dilemma led us to conclude that dying for Allah provided our only hope for satisfying our lust, because that lust could be satisfied only in paradise. It is not surprising that Osama bin Laden and other terrorist leaders sent letters to their suicide murderers that described to them the *Hur*, or white ladies awaiting them in paradise.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to its severe prohibitions governing sexual conduct, Salafi Islam also strictly limits most artistic expression, which it considers to be satanic. Music involving string instruments is *haram* (forbidden). Songs, especially romantic ones, are prohibited as well. It is *haram* to listen to a woman's singing voice. Even drawing is restricted. Such harsh prohibitions suppressed my ability to appreciate beauty and prepared my mind to accept the inhuman elements in Salafi doctrine. By way of contrast, it is interesting to note that Sufi Muslims enjoy music, singing and dancing, and they rarely, if ever, engage in terrorism.

Unfortunately, I followed Salafi Islam. My hatred toward non-Muslims increased dramatically, and *jihadi* doctrine became second nature to me. My goal of being a physician and healing the sick grew tainted, infected by my strong wish to subjugate non-Muslims and impose *sharia* law.

## Meeting Zawahiri

At one afternoon prayer session, an imam I had never met before gave a sermon. He was one of the fiercest speakers I had ever heard. His passion for *jihad* was astonishing. He advocated complete Islamic dominance, urging us to pursue *jihad* against non-Muslims and subdue them to *sharia*—the duty of every true Muslim. His rhetoric inspired us to engage in war against the infidels, the enemies of Allah. He particularly condemned the West for the freedom of its women. He hated the fact that Western women were permitted to wear what they pleased, to work and to have the same opportunities as men. He dreamt of forcing the West to conform to a Taliban-style system in which women were obliged to wear the Islamic *hijab*, were legally beaten by men to discipline them, and were stoned to death for extramarital sex. After the imam's speech my friend, Tariq Abdul-Muhsin, asked me if I knew this speaker. When I said I did not, Tariq told me that he was Dr. Ayman Al-Zawahiri and, because I was a new member of Jamaah, offered to introduce us.

Al-Zawahiri was exceptionally bright, one of the top postgraduate students in the medical school. We called him by his title and first name—Dr. Ayman. He came from a well-known, highly educated and wealthy family. As was customary for Jamaah members, he wore a beard and dressed occasionally in the Pakistani style of the Taliban.<sup>3</sup> He disapproved of Egypt's secular government; he wanted Egypt to follow *sharia* law and Coptic Christians to be made *dhimmis*—second-class citizens submissive to Islam. To disparage secular Arab governments, he cited the following verse: "For they who do not

judge in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high are, indeed, Infidels” (Quran 5:44).

When I met him, Zawahiri welcomed me affectionately. He spoke quietly, gazing intently at me through his thick glasses. With a serious expression he placed his hand on my shoulder and said, “Young Muslims like you are the hope for the future return of *Khilafa* (Caliphate or Islamic global dominance).” I felt a great sense of gratitude and honor. I wanted to please him by contributing to his “noble” cause. Throughout my membership in Jamaah, I would meet with Zawahiri on six more occasions. He did not have much time to spare however; Zawahiri was deeply involved in several Islamist organizations.

One of Zawahiri's significant achievements was to personalize *jihad*—that is, to have transformed it from a responsibility of the Umma, the Islamic collective, to a duty of Muslim individuals. His goal is to spread the empire of Islam through the actions of individual radical Muslims, each of whom is incited to wage a personal *jihad*. This allows young Muslims to carry out suicide bombings without the endorsement of the collective body. Zawahiri and his fellow *jihadis* base their philosophy on the verse that states, “Then fight in Allah's cause—you are held responsible only for yourself—and rouse the believers (to fight)” (Quran 4:84).

## The Distortion of My Mind

Within several months I was invited to travel to Afghanistan to join other young Muslims in training for *jihad*. It was fairly common to be recruited after the end of Friday prayers. Volunteering to train in Afghanistan was very simple: I only needed to register my name in certain mosques, and organizers would carry out all the logistical and financial arrangements. I was excited to go because I believed that I would be fulfilling “the command of Allah” to wage *jihad*. It seemed the easiest way to guarantee my salvation in the afterlife and to attain my purpose in life.

We viewed both the Soviets and the Americans as enemies. The Soviets were considered infidels because they did not believe in the existence of God, while the Americans did not follow Islam. Although we planned to fight the Soviets first, our ultimate objective was to destroy the United States—the greatest symbol of the infidel's freedom. My personal dream was to be an Islamic warrior; to kill the enemies of Islam, to smite their necks in accordance with the Quranic verse that read, “When ye meet the Unbelievers smite at their necks” (Quran 47:4). We considered the Prophet Mohammed to be our role model. The Quran commanded us to follow in his footsteps: “Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day, and who engages much in the Praise of Allah” (Quran 33:21).

Salafi Islamic texts demonstrate Mohammed's uncompromising nature (see Appendix C). They encourage devout Muslims to emulate the Prophet's deeds and to accept and

defend his actions in even the harshest passages. When confronted by outsiders, however, these same Muslims insist that such stories are misinterpreted because they are taken out of context—though they rarely, if ever, provide the context. This self-protective denial effectively paralyzes further criticism by the West. Meanwhile, these texts are taught and understood in a very literal way by both the young members of Jamaah and many other Muslims. I was not allowed to question any established teaching of Salafi ideology. The Salafists consider any criticism of Islamic texts as *redda* (apostasy) punishable by death and eternal damnation. Out of simple fear, then, I attempted to idolize Mohammed and to emulate him as he is portrayed in the Sunna.<sup>4</sup> The fear of such harsh punishment deters most other Muslims from criticizing Salafi teaching as well.

I increasingly felt at ease with death because I believed that I would either defeat the infidels on earth or enjoy paradise in the afterlife. *Jihad* against non-Muslims seemed to me to be a win-win situation. The following verse, commonly cited by Jamaah members, validated my duty to die for Allah:

Allah has purchased the believers, their lives and their goods. For them (in return) is the Garden (of paradise). They fight in Allah's Cause, and they slay and are slain; they kill and are killed ... it (paradise) is the promise of Allah to them."  
(Quran 9:111)

I passed through three psychological stages to reach this level of comfort with death: hatred of non-Muslims or dissenting Muslims, suppression of my conscience, and acceptance of violence in the service of Allah. Salafi religious indoctrination played a major role in this process. Salafists promoted our hatred for non-Muslims by emphasizing the Quranic verse that read, "Thou wilt not find any people who believe in Allah and the Last Day loving those who resist (i.e., do not follow) Allah and His Messenger" (Quran 58:22).

Salafi writings also helped me to suppress my conscience by holding that many activities I had considered to be immoral were, instead, *halal*—that is, allowed by Allah and the Prophet. My conscience would normally reject polygamy, for example, because of the severe psychological pain it would cause my future wife. Salafi teaching encourages polygamy, however, permitting up to four wives as *halal*: "Marry women of your choice, two or three or four" (Quran 4:3). I accepted such ideas—ideas that contradicted my moral outlook—because I came to believe that we cannot negotiate with God about his commandments: "He (Allah) cannot be questioned for His acts, but they will be questioned (for theirs)" (Quran 21:23).

Once I was able to suppress my conscience, I was open to accepting violence without guilt—the third psychological stage. One Salafi method of generating this crucial attitude is to encourage violence against women, a first step in developing a brutal mentality. Salafists emphasize the following text:

Men are superior to women because Allah has given them more preference than to women, and because they financially support them. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard. As to those women on whose part you fear that they do not obey you, admonish them, avoid making sex with them (as a form of punishment), and beat them; but if they return to obedience, seek not against them Means (of annoyance): For Allah is Most High, great (above you all). (Quran 4:34)

A mind that accepts violence against women is much more likely to be comfortable murdering hated infidels and responding to the verse that reads: "O Prophet, strive hard (fight) against the unbelievers and the Hypocrites, and be harsh with them. Their abode is Hell, an evil refuge indeed" (Quran 9:73). It is clear that the three psychological stages in Salafism that I have described are deeply interconnected.

## Hesitation and New Understanding

As I considered attending a terrorist training camp, however, my conscience reasserted itself. The habit of critical thinking that my parents had instilled in me when I was growing up began to undermine the violent indoctrination to which I had been subjected. If I had taken the next step toward *jihād*, I might well have become a terrorist killer. Instead, I experienced an intense inner struggle that felt like an earthquake shaking my principles. I realized that harming innocent people is immoral and that a religious ideology pledging war on non-believers must be bankrupt.

It is unfortunate and disastrous that the theological underpinnings of Salafism are both powerful and prevalent in the approved, traditional Islamic books. These texts teach, moreover, that the Quran's later, more violent passages abrogate its earlier, peaceful ones. This concept, called *nasikh wa-l-mansukh*, has effectively diminished the influence of the peaceful verses.

When I discussed the implications of the violent passages with a few Sufi clergy, they suggested that one "should be good and peaceful to all mankind" and that "the understanding of the violent verses will be clarified on the day of judgment." These views were not based on rigorous Islamic eschatology, however, or on an objective analysis of the religious books. They merely embodied a desired perception of Islam. My secular parents offered the same tolerant perspective, insisting that Islam is a religion of peace. But for me both responses were unsatisfactory because they suffered from the same problem—they were not theologically grounded. My difficulty was not resolved, and I continued to live with a complex dilemma.

My crisis of conscience was mostly internal, but I did share some of my doubts with my

mother. On one occasion a fellow medical student named Abdul Latif Haseeb started a conversation with me about religion. We discussed whether it was right to kill apostates or stone women to death, as well as whether Mohammed could be considered a pedophile because he married the seven-year-old Aisha (See Appendix C.) We weighed the merits of declaring war on non-Muslims to spread Islam and agreed that it should be rejected because it is condoned only by supplemental Salafi books rather than by the Quran itself.

Haseeb belonged to a sect known as Quranist, which strictly adhered to the teachings of the Quran but rejected other writings. This opened my eyes. I was impressed that my new friend disagreed with many Salafi teachings. I also realized that Haseeb was not alone in his beliefs; his father and several mutual acquaintances shared the same ideas. They relied on new interpretations of the Quran and spurned the traditional Salafi textbooks. They accepted and tolerated different views within Islam and, in most circumstances, had a peaceful analysis of the verses.

Haseeb invited me to join the sect, and I accepted his invitation in order to examine the Quranists' ideas more thoroughly. Though not without problems, the sect possessed at least some rigor and was more moderate than Salafism. It provided me with a protected sanctuary that allowed me to keep my identity as a Muslim while giving me the flexibility to reinterpret Quranic verses in a nonviolent way. The group counted among its members the liberal peace activist Mahmoud Mohamed Taha,<sup>5</sup> whom I met on one occasion. Mahmoud was later murdered in Sudan by exponents of Salafi doctrine for the crime of "apostasy" because his teaching clashed with theirs. I eventually built on the Quranists' ideas in developing a fresh understanding of the Quran that is compatible with the values of human rights and modernity.

## Combating Salafi Islam

**B**y immersing myself in Salafi ideology, I was better able to judge the impact of its violent tenets on the minds of its followers. Among the more appalling notions it supports are the enslavement and rape of female war prisoners and the beating of women to discipline them. It permits polygamy and pedophilia. It refers to Jews as "pigs and monkeys" and exhorts believers to kill them before the end of days:

Say: "Shall I tell you who, in the sight of God, deserves a yet worse retribution than these? Those (The Jews) whom God has rejected and whom He has condemned, and whom He has turned into monkeys and pigs because they worshipped the powers of evil: these are yet worse in station, and farther astray from the right path (than the mockers)." (Quran 5:60)

Homosexuals are to be killed as well; to cite one of many examples, on July 19, 2000, two gay teenagers were hung in Iran for no other crime than being gay.<sup>6</sup>

These doctrines are not taken out of context, as many apologists for Islamism argue: they are central to the faith and ethics of millions of Muslims, and are currently being taught as part of the standard curriculum in many Islamic educational systems in the Middle East as well in the West. Moreover, there is no single *approved* Islamic textbook that contradicts or provides an alternative to the passages I have cited. It has thus become clear to me that Salafi ideology is what is largely responsible for the so-called “clash of civilizations.” Consequently, I have chosen to combat Salafism by exposing it and by providing an alternative, peaceful, and theologically rigorous interpretation of the Quran.

My reformist approach naturally challenges well-established Salafi tenets, and leads Muslims who follow Salafi Islam to reject me. Why? I have not altered the Quran itself. My system is simply one of inline commentary, in which dangerous passages are flagged and reinterpreted to be non-violent. I have added these inline interpretations to key Quranic passages and examples of the commentary are freely and easily available.<sup>7</sup> For over fifteen years I have tried to preach my views in mosques in the Middle East, as well as to my local community in the West, but have faced the unwavering hostility of most Salafi Muslims in both regions. Muslims who live in the West—who insist to outsiders that Islam is a “religion of peace” and who enjoy freedom of expression, which they demand from their Western hosts—have threatened me with murder and arson. I have had to choose between accepting violent Salafi views and being rejected by the overwhelming majority of my fellow Muslims. I have chosen the latter.

Even though radical Islam began to reassert itself in the 1970s, it did not become widely pervasive until quite recently. In the early 1990s many people were intrigued by my ideas, and only a few militants threatened me with violence. One day, after I gave a peaceful Friday sermon, I walked home with a friend. To my surprise, several men ran up and threw stones at us from behind in order to intimidate me from returning and speaking in their mosques. As time has passed, this violent and threatening behavior has become more common: Dr. Wafa Sultan in the US, Abdul Fatah in Egypt, and many, many others have received and continue to receive death threats. Recently, Dr. Nawal Al-Sadawi, a liberal Muslim thinker and women's rights activist, was forced to flee Egypt because of her public statements. Dr. Rashad Khalifa was murdered in the United States after he published his own re-interpretation of the Quran which was less violent than was traditional. In Egypt, Dr. Faraq Fuddah was shot to death after publishing condemnations of Jihadists. Egyptian Nobel Prize winner Najib Mahfouz was stabbed in the neck for writing his novel, *Awlad Haretna*, perceived by Salafists as blasphemous. The list goes on. Still, the majority of members in many Muslim communities have adopted the violent teachings of the Islamists.

Salafi indoctrination operates through written words and careful coaching. It is

enormously seductive. It rapidly changed me into a *jihadi*. Salafi sacred texts exert a powerful influence on millions of Muslim followers throughout the world, and terrorism is only one symptom of the Salafi disease. Salafi doctrine, which is at the root of the West's confrontation with Islamism, poses an existential threat to us all—including Muslims. Indeed, Salafism robs young Muslims of their soul, it turns Western communities against them, and it can end in civil war as Muslims attempt to implement Sharia law in their host countries. A peaceful interpretation of Islam is possible, but the Salafi establishment is currently blocking moderate theological reform. The civilized world ought to recognize the immense danger that Salafi Islam poses; it must become informed, courageous and united if it is to protect both a generation of young Muslims and the rest of humanity from the disastrous consequences of this militant ideology.

## NOTES

1. Bracketed comments, here and in every Quranic citation, are mine. They reflect standard Salafi interpretations..
2. (Quran 55: 72): "The *Hur* (white ladies with wide eyes) are awaiting for you in the tents (in paradise)."
3. Zawahiri adopted the Taliban style of dress because it was typical of the early Islamic conquest—the long, loose-fitting trousers facilitated fighting on horseback. He and other members preferred this style to typical Saudi dress.
4. Sunna relate the words or conduct of Prophet Mohammed that are not described in the Quran. They are written in many Salafi books such as *Sahih Al-Buchary* and *Sahih Muslim*.
5. 1909 –1985.
6. "Iran Executes Two Gay Teens in Public Hanging," *International Gay and Lesbian Alliance* (on-line); available from <http://www.ukgaynews.org.uk/Archive/2005july/2101.htm>; Internet; accessed 8 March 2007.
7. Visit [www.muslimsforhumanrights.org](http://www.muslimsforhumanrights.org) for many examples.

## APPENDICES

*Editor's note: The following selections from the Quran and secondary Muslim sources have been supplied by the author as examples of the writings that radical Salafis routinely draw from in their discussions about hell, the promises of paradise, and everyday sexual conduct. The translations are supplied by the author. Salafi literalism, of course, is not the only way of interpreting the Quran, and importantly, many Muslims do not accept the secondary literature as authoritative or relevant to their lives. Nonetheless, this literature is an essential part in the toolkit of those radicals who seek to shape impressionable, predominantly male, Muslim minds.*

### Appendix A

- "For those who do not follow Allah garments of fire shall be cut out for them (in the life to come); burning water will be poured over their heads causing all that is within their bodies, as well as the skins, to melt away. And they shall

be held by iron grips; and every time they try in their anguish to come out of it, they shall be returned there to and (be told): "Taste suffering through fire (to the full)!" Quran 22:19-22

- "But those of the left hand (did not obey Allah and Mohammed or follow them)—how unhappy those of the left hand. They will be in the scorching hot wind and boiling water; under the shadow of thick black smoke, neither cool nor agreeable. ...They will be gathered together on a certain day which is predetermined. Then you, the erring and the deniers will eat *Zaqum* (a thorny tree), fill your bellies with it, and drink scalding water; lapping it up like female camels raging of thirst and disease. Such will be their entertainment, their welcome on the Day of Doom ... the welcome of boiling water and the entertainment of roasting in Hell. This is the ultimate truth." Quran 56:41-57
- "For We have truly made it as a trial to torment the disbelievers. *Zaqum* is a horrible thorn tree that grows in Hell. The shoots of its fruit-stalks are like the heads of devils. Truly they (the non-Muslims) will eat it and fill their bellies with it. On top of that they will be given a mixture made of boiling water to drink especially prepared. Then they shall be returned to the Blazing Fire." Quran 37:63-68
- "Soon will I fling them into the burning Hell Fire! And what will explain what Hell Fire is? It permits nothing to endure, and nothing does it spare! It darkens and changes the color of man, burning the skin! It shrivels and scorches men." Quran 74:26-29
- "We have prepared the doom of Hell and the penalty of torment in the most intense Blazing Fire. For those who reject their Lord is the punishment of Hell: Evil, it is such a wretched destination. When they are flung therein, they will hear the terrible drawing in of their breath and loud moaning even as the flame blazes forth, roaring with rage as it boils up, bursting with fury. Every time a fresh crowd is cast in, Hell's wardens will ask, 'Did no Warner come to you?'" Quran 67:6-8
- "'This,' it will be said, 'is the Fire, which you used to deny! Is this magic fake? Burn therein, endure the heat; taste it. It's the same whether you bear it patiently, or not. This is My retaliation for what you did.'" Quran 52:14-16
- "Those who shall dwell forever in the Fire are given to drink boiling water that tears their bowels to pieces, and cutting their intestines to shreds." Quran 47:15

## Appendix B

- Narrated Anas: "The Prophet used to go round (have sexual relations with) all his wives in one night, and he had nine wives." *Sahih al-Bokhari*
- Narrated Anas: "that Prophet Mohammed used to make sex with all of his 11 wives in only one hour of a day or a night ... and he said that Mohammed has been given the power of 30 men in making sex." *Sahih al-Bokhari*
- "In paradise: When the Muslim enters the room to have sex with the first lady of the 72 Hur (beautiful ladies with wide eyes and white skin), he will find her waiting on the bed ... He will not become bored at having sex with her and she will not become bored of having sex with him ... and every time he has sex with her he will find her a virgin again ... and his penis will never relax (i.e. it will be continuously erected) after the coitus ... Some disciples asked the prophet, "Are we going to have sex in the paradise ...?" Mohammed said "Yes, and I swear with the name of the one who controls my soul and body (Allah) that every time the man will finish his turn at sex with her ... she will return back a virgin." *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*

- “A man was sleeping in the house of Aisha (the youngest wife of the prophet) and he ejaculated while sleeping. The concubine of Aisha saw him while he was cleaning it (the semen) with water ... She spoke to Aisha who explained to the man that she used to scrub the semen of the Prophet directly with her nails after it dries up.” *Sahih Muslim, Book of Tahara*
- “The ladies of the paradise awaiting the followers of Mohammed are so beautiful to the degree that light shines from their faces, their bodies are as soft as silk, they are white in colour and they wear green clothes and golden jewelry ... These beautiful ladies say to the believers when they enter the paradise ... “we are eternal for you (to enjoy us) ... We are very soft and will never get unhappy. We are continuously ready (for sex) and we are always satisfied and will never be discontent ... So blessed is this man who will have us and we will have him.” *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*

### Appendix C

- “Allah granted Rayhanah of the (Jewish) Qurayza to His Messenger as booty (but only after she had been forced to watch him decapitate her father and brother, had seen her mother hauled off to be raped, and her sisters sold into slavery).” *Tabari*
- “... after Mohammed attacked the Jews of Bani Khriza he killed all their men and divided the women for sexual pleasure among Muslims and enslaved their kids and took their money and treasures.” *Sahih al-Bokhari, Kitab al-Maghazy*
- “One day a woman came to Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) and said to him “Do you have a desire in my body (for sex)? If so ... I am offering myself to you ... Mohammed’s daughter said, this lady does not have any dignity so she offers herself to man!” ...“The Prophet said to his daughter “This lady is better than you ... as she wanted to be with the Prophet of Allah so she offered herself to him.” *Sunan Ibn Maga, Kitab al-Nikah*
- “The Prophet has a higher claim on the believers than (they have on) their own selves. (seeing that he is as a father to them) and his wives are their mothers (i.e. not allowed to marry any other person).” (Quran 33:6) In Salafi books, the above Quranic verse is understood to mean that Mohammed was allowed certain privileges above all other Muslims. According to the classical theologian al-Qurtubi, these privileges include: “... if (Prophet Mohammed) looked at a woman her husband has to divorce her and Mohammed is allowed to marry her to have sex ... if he divorced a woman it is not allowed for anyone to marry her ... and he was allowed to take for himself the food from the hungry and the water from the thirsty ...” *Tafsir al-Qurtubi, Surat al-Ahzab*
- “The Prophet married her (Aisha) when she was six years old and he consummated his marriage when she was nine years old, and then she remained with him for nine years.” *Sahih al-Bokhari*
- According to Aisha, “The Prophet engaged me when I was a girl of six (years). We went to Medina and stayed at the home of Bani-al-Harith bin Khazraj. Then I got ill and my hair fell down. Later on my hair grew (again) and my mother, Um Ruman, came to me while I was playing in a swing with some of my girl friends. She called me, and I went to her, not knowing what she wanted to do to me. She caught me by the hand and made me stand at the door of the house. I was breathless then, and when my breathing became all right, she took some water and rubbed my face and head with it. Then she took me into the house. There in the house I saw some Ansari women who said, “Best wishes and Allah’s Blessing and good luck.” Then she gave me to them and they prepared me (for the marriage). Unexpectedly Allah’s Apostle came to me in the forenoon and my mother handed me over to him, and at that time I was a girl of nine years of age.” *Sahih al-Bokhari*

- According to Aisha, "I used to play with the dolls in the presence of the Prophet, and my girl friends also used to play with me. When Allah's Apostle used to enter (my dwelling place) they used to hide themselves, but the Prophet would call them to join and play with me." *Sahih al-Bokhari* (Author's note: Playing with the dolls and similar images is forbidden, but it was allowed for Aisha at that time, as she was a little girl and had not yet reached the age of puberty.)
- Narrated Jabir bin Abdullah: "While we were returning from a Ghazwa (holy raid) with the Prophet, I started driving my camel fast as it was a lazy camel. A rider came behind me and pricked my camel with a spear he had with him, and then my camel started running as fast as the best camel you may see. Behold! The rider was the Prophet himself. He said, "What makes you in such a hurry?" I replied, "I am newly married." He said, "Did you marry a virgin or a matron?" I replied, "A matron." He said, "Why didn't you marry a young girl so that you may play with her and she play with you?" *Sahih al-Bokhari*