

Jihadist Website: Al-Zawahiri Interviewed on Afghanistan, Iraq, Other Issues

Al-Sahab Media
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[Please note: Images may have been removed from this document. Page numbers have been added.]

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On 28 November, a Jihadist website posts many links, with different download qualities, to a new videotape of an interview with Al-Qa'ida Organization's second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri entitled "Al-Azhar: The Lion's Den." The approximately 80-minute videotape is produced by Al-Sahab Media Production Organization, the media arm of Al-Qa'ida Organization. The tape is dated "Shawwal1429 Hegira," which corresponds to October 2008. The video is subtitled into English and all quotes are taken from the English subtitles. Al-Zawahiri speaks in Arabic with English subtitles provided by the source. The English subtitles were compared to the Arabic and found identical.

Ayman al-Zawahiri

The video opens with the following on-screen message:

"In the name of God, the Merciful, and the Compassionate:

Warning!

This production contains Koranic verses and Prophetic hadith, and must not be accompanied by music.

Greeting from Al-Sahab Media Production Organization.

Shawwal1429 Hegira"

The video then begins with a song on the (Arab) silence over "the enemy's" attacks against Muslims. The song is carried against the backdrop of footage of Shaykh Umar Abd-al-Rahman held by policeman, a prisoner held in Guantanamo, wounded children in the Palestinian territories, and US soldiers in Iraq.

This is followed immediately by an interview with Ayman al-Zawahiri conducted by unseen and unidentified person, who first asks Al-Zawahiri about US President George Bush's statement that he will withdraw 8,000 soldiers from Iraq and send thousands more to Afghanistan. Al-Zawahiri says: "I tell Bush: The dogs of Afghanistan have yet to eat their fill

of the flesh of the Americans. And I challenge you, if you are really a man, to send the entire American army to Pakistan and the tribal regions, for it to end up, with Allah's help, to Hell -- and what a terrible fate."

Asked about Afghan President Hamed Karzai's statement that he requested Saudi Arabia's mediation between him and Taliban, Al-Zawahiri says that he reads two things in this statement: "The first is the state of collapse being experienced by the American intelligence clique, which Bush and the West call the "democratic government" in Kabul. This entity which American intelligence put together from its old agents and imposed through bombing and the rigging of elections, only elicits the mockery of any intelligent person, but the West insists that it is the legitimate government. "

He adds: "The second thing is the historical role of saboteur played by the House of Saud in ruining the causes of the Muslim Ummah, and how they represent the agents whom the Crusader West uses to disperse the Ummah's energy."

Al-Zawahiri then talks about the "siege" of Gaza, calling on the Palestinian people in Gaza to remain in their houses until the siege is lifted and until the Israeli "schemes" against them are thwarted.

Asked about the "phenomenon of poverty" in the impoverished and low-income Arab states, which has also spread to high-income states, Al-Zawahiri says: "Naturally, because through the treacherous rulers the theft of our treasures takes place and our people are starved to make them submit to the American-Zionist plot to finish us off."

Al-Zawahiri then talks about the role of scholars in the Arab states and how they were marginalized.

At minute 13 of the tape, an audio message of Shaykh Umar Abd-al-Rahman is shown with his picture on the screen. Abd-al-Rahman says: "The Ulama (scholars) must take part in directing the Islamic Ummah's life. And the day the Ulama abandoned their rightful place and the mosque abandoned its role, was the day the states fell, the powers pranced, and the Muslims were tom apart."

Asked if he wants the scholars of Al-Azhar to lead the Ummah against oppression, Al-Zawahiri says: "Not just against oppression, but also against the Zionist Crusade as well. Why do not the Shaykhs of Al-Azhar declare a general strike until the blockade is lifted from Gaza, and invite the Ummah to do the same, and declare that as long as our people remain under siege in Gaza, the Ummah will continue to protest and strike?"

Al-Zawahiri then talks about the Egyptian government's interference in the Al-Azhar, saying that it was turned into a government institution by the Egyptian authorities.

At minute 21, the tape shows a caption, while displaying a picture of Bush, which reads: "George Bush supports the Pakistani Army in its operation against the Red Mosque in Islamabad. Bush says: "Earlier this month, he sent in Pakistani forces to go after radicals

who seized control of a mosque, and then he delivered a speech vowing to rid all of Pakistan of extremism. Pakistani forces are in the fight, and many have given their lives. The United States supports them in these efforts. And we will work with our partners to deny safe haven to the Taliban and Al-Qa'ida in Pakistan or anywhere else in the world."

Al-Zawahiri then continues to discuss the role scholars should play in their society, calling on them to insist that their institutions and panels be "financially and administratively independent of the governments' interference." He adds: "I am asking them to defend their independence and their Al-Azhar, and not to permit it to be turned into an administration which sings the praises of the government."

At minute 29 of the tape, Al-Zawahiri begins discussing the situation in Iraq. Asked to comment on Bush's claims that America achieved victory in Iraq, Al-Zawahiri says: "My comment -- first -- is that Bush, in the same address, admitted to the fragility of the alleged victory."

A video of Bush making a statement is then shown. Bush says: "Violence has decreased over the last few months. Progress in Iraq is still fragile and subject to reversal."

Al-Zawahiri then cites General Petraeus as saying that the situation in Iraq was "hard and hopeless." He adds: "Second, in all of Bush's statements and in official American publicity, there is a fib factor of no less than 50 %. All of us remember the tale of the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and Saddam's connection with Al-Qa'ida and the events of September, and Bush's declaration of the end of major military operations in Iraq following the invasion."

He goes on to say: "The correct picture is that there are two facts in Iraq. The first is that America has been defeated, and the second is that the Americans are leaving Iraq and the Islamic State of Iraq is staying there, by the grace of Allah."

This is followed by footage showing Abd-al-Bari Atwan, chief editor of the London-based Al-Quds Al-Arabi newspaper, speaking about the "defeat" of America in Iraq.

Asked about the decrease of Jihadist operations in Iraq, Al-Zawahiri says: "First, guerrilla warfare goes up and down, and the Mujahidin continue to inflict great harm on the Americans and their agents by the Americans' own admission. And second, this transformation took place through huge American support for the Iraqi army and police, whom the Americans will abandon to face their fate at the hands of (the) Mujahidin after the Americans depart."

This is followed by footage showing a group of what seems to be political analysts, probably Americans, discussing the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Al-Zawahiri then discusses the Awakening Councils in Iraq. He says that the Iraqi Government stated that "the 80 % of the Awakening Councils which it will not assimilate into the security forces must be disarmed. This is why I call on everyone who fell into the

quagmire of Awakening treason to hasten to honest repentance, which is the only behavior which can possibly avert from them the Mujahidin's retaliation and save them from something even harsher, the punishment of the hereafter. And the same thing that happened with the "Awakening Councils" will happen with all of America's agents in Iraq."

At minute 35 of the tape, Al-Zawahiri begins answering questions related to the situations in Pakistan. Al-Zawahiri says that after Musharraf was forced to resign, "rivers of American money flowed into the pockets of the parliamentarians and politicians and so a corrupt and despicable thief was elected to be president of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in exchange for providing greater backing to America in its war against Islam in Pakistan and Afghanistan. "

This is followed by footage showing a Pakistani analyst discussing the political situation in Pakistan.

At minute 39 of the tape, Al-Zawahiri begins to discuss the latest developments in Egypt. He criticizes the "crocodiles of corruption" in Egypt, who plunder the country's wealth under the protection of the "corrupt judiciary" while the poor are suffering.

Asked to comment on the argument "that Al-Qa'ida is accused of terrorism and the killing of innocents, and that those who respond to its call will soil their hands with the blood of innocents," Al-Zawahiri says: "First, the accusations of killing of innocents, terrorism, bloodiness, and barbarism are accusations which the colonists and tyrants have attached to (the) Mujahidin and freedom-fighters -- whether Muslims or non-Muslims-- throughout history." He adds that while the Americans and their allies accuse the Mujahidin of killing the innocents, they "justify for themselves the killing of millions under the pretext of the requirements of combat operations."

This is followed by footage of an interview with an unidentified US official on accusations that the United States kills civilians. This is followed by another footage showing former Undersecretary of State John Bolton talking about the civilian casualties in Iraq.

Al-Zawahiri then talks about the "propaganda campaign" waged against the Mujahidin, which he says is based on lies and misleading information. He says that the US Army's Combating Terrorism Center published a book on him that included 13 mistakes, including the claims that he joined the Muslim Brothers at the age of 14 and that he was responsible for the killing of tourists in Luxor, Egypt, in 1997.

Al-Zawahiri then begins refuting the "many lies" told about him by various media outlets. He says: "In more than one book by the American Army's Combating Terrorism Center, two extremely critical things were emphasized. First, the information war against the Mujahidin must be clandestinely funded from behind a curtain and following the methods used in the Cold War against the Communist bloc. "

This is followed by reading an excerpt of the aforementioned book by unidentified narrator.

He adds: "And the second thing is that Western governments must attack (the) Mujahidin by convincing Muslim leaders and Salafists to condemn the Mujahidin."

This is followed by a reading of an excerpt of a book entitled "Militant Ideology Atlas."

Asked to comment on the claim that "Al-Qa'ida is an American creation," Al-Zawahiri says: "My comment is the American Congress' official recognition of the falseness of this misconception in its report on the events of September 11 th."

On the economic crisis in the United States, Al-Zawahiri says that "this crisis is one installment of the series of American economic hemorrhages after the strikes of September 11 th, by the grace of Allah," adding that this will continue as long as "the foolish American policy of wading in the Muslim blood continues."

He goes on to explain that "the problem has three causes; two of which to be found in the capitalist system – namely usury (interest) and fraud. The third of which is to be found in the aggressive Crusader nature; namely, the unjust policy followed by America and its allies against the Muslims, among the results of which were the events of September 11th and then the hopeless Crusades which America and its allies are waging." He adds that such economic crisis can never happen under Islamic "Shari'ah" law which prohibits usury.

Addressing the "crusader West," Al-Zawahiri says "we tell them: Embrace Islam and you will be safe. Embrace Islam to live a life free of greed, exploitation, forbidden wealth, and the beasts of capitalism who crush the poor."

He adds that most of the dealings of Muslims who have investments in the West are "illegal," advising them to move their investments to Muslim countries.

On the US presidential elections, Al-Zawahiri says that "these elections confirm the extent of the American people's animosity to Islam and Muslims. Both candidates are competing to curry favor with Israel."

At minute 65 of the tape, Al-Zawahiri talks about Iran and discusses how it started to "heap on the Taliban all sorts of lies and then they (the Iranians) colluded with the Americans in the invasion of Afghanistan."

He adds: "My noble brother, history caught Iran and its followers red-handed in the crime of cooperating with the enemy invading the lands of Muslims."

Asked why the Iranians rushed to demonstrate their cooperation with the "enemy invading the lands of Islam, Al-Zawahiri says: "Out of their greed and desire for power and hegemony." He adds that for Iran "Afghanistan and Iraq are legitimate game, and the puppet governments there are friends, whereas Iran is holy and forbidden and must not be touched."

Asked about the media campaign to embellish Hizballah's image and, on the other hand, the attempts to belittle the actions of the Mujahidin, Al-Zawahiri says that "when Hizballah made the exchange for the five prisoners, it held celebrations and ceremonies the length and breadth of Lebanon, under the eyes and ears of the Israeli air force, and the media carried - and repeatedly carried -- the celebrations." He adds that when the Mujahidin of the Islamic Emirate attacked Kandahar prison and freed "more than 1500 male and female prisoners," the news agencies give the story a token glance.

Asked about Jihad in Yemen, Al-Zawahiri says that they wanted Yemen to "be a base for the supplying, stockpiling, and supporting of the Zionist Crusade against the lands of Islam under the so-called Imamate of Ali Abdallah Salih, but the people of Iman (faith), Jihad, and honor to let that agent attach this shame to the honorable and defiant people of the Yemen as he had wanted, and they confronted him and his plans to help the crusaders against the Muslims and his theft of Muslims' oil, with which he supports the infidels' armies and fleets."

Al-Zawahiri then discusses the International Criminal Court's issuance of an arrest warrant against the Sudanese president, he says that he reads in this warrant "the justice of divine predestination." He, however, says that the Sudanese president is pursued "in order to divide the Sudan and erase its Islamic and Arab identity."

Al-Zawahiri then discusses the reports that 180 Fatah members surrendered themselves to Israel. He says that this incident brings to his mind "the extent of the deterioration experienced by Arab nationalist movements, at the heart of which is the Fatah Movement."

Al-Zawahiri ends the interview by calling on "everyone in whose heart is remnant of religion, honor, zeal, or morality" to support the Mujahidin.

The video ends with a song calling for jihad and martyrdom. The song is carried against the backdrop of footage of various attacks on US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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