

**Egyptian Islamic Group Defends Muslim Governments Against Infidel Charges**  
**Unattributed report: "Al-Sharq Al-Awsat Exclusively Publishes Latest Book by Egyptian Islamic Group"***AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT**Saturday, July 30, 2005 T12:51:47Z***Journal Code:** 1431 **Language:** ENGLISH **Record Type:** FULLTEXT**Document Type:** FBIS Translated Text**Word Count:** 2,588

Since the eruption of the conflict between the fundamentalist groups and governments, first in Egypt and after that in the rest of the Arab and Muslim countries, the focus of the conflict has been the concept of "authority." The concept was unleashed and "modernized" by Sayyid Qutb in the beginning of the sixties of the last century. From that moment the groups started believing that the regime was an infidel one as a result of the lack of God's authority, and the regime started to try to refute this accusation. This problem has remained unsolved.

The book, "Authority: Shari'ah View and Realistic Vision (Al-Hakimiyah: Nazrah Shar'iyah wa Ru'yah Waqi'iyah)" is the latest revision step taken by the Egyptian Islamic Group (IG) through its "historical leadership," and is considered a real "revolution" in fundamentalist thinking and its stance toward this governing concept. Here we are facing something similar to a coup d'etat against the nature of the concept, even if it does not reach the stage of a complete coup d'etat.

This book, of which Al-Sharq al-Awsat exclusively publishes parts, will be a huge stone over the heads of the fighting Islamic groups. This is because these groups have criticized the Arab rulers and likened them to Genghis Khan, Hulagu and other Tartar kings; they described the laws governing the Muslim countries today and the constitutions in them as similar to the "Yasa," which was laid down by Genghis Khan for his followers to be a law to be followed rather than governing according to the Koran and the Sunnah of God's Messenger, prayers and peace be upon him; and they have described the reality of Muslims today and the state of their armies and soldiers as similar to the state of the Tartars, their soldiers and their camp, as described by Ibn-Taymiyah.

The book is published within the "Revisions of the Islamic Group" series, which was launched after the 1997 initiative for ending violence; so far, eight books have been published in the series. In this book, the IG leading member, Najih Ibrahim, stresses: With all due respect to the ulema who pronounce such utterances, these fatwas are a human interpretative judgment, which is neither infallible nor sacred; furthermore, these fatwas were issued during an era that preceded our times, and perhaps under different conditions and circumstances. If a fatwa was correct at its time, then this would not mean that it is correct for all times, and all places. Furthermore, no Muslim has the right to make an interpretative judgment of one of the ulema prevail over shari'ah, however knowledgeable and august, or appoint him as a guardian over changing reality.

Ibrahim added: The foundation of religious ulema have listed conditions for deduction including the existence of a combining link, which connects the two situations or realities and which is suitable to be an acceptable reason for deducing one from the other. The existence of a reason is not sufficient for

deduction unless the reason is effective and is the principal cause for this judgment. If there is an effective combining link between the deduced and the original, then the deduction will be proper; otherwise, the deduction will be improper, or will be what the ulema call "distant analogy."

The book says:

We believe that there are many faults and shortcomings in today's reality of Muslims, whether at the level of individuals and groups, or at the level of countries and governments. This is an obvious fact that we do not think that anyone who cares for his nation, religion, or country would contest. We also believe that something has been lost from the laws of Islam; this lost part of the laws of the faith requires patience, care, and also wisdom to make the people with these qualities preserve the present parts of the Islamic laws as much as they try to achieve the lost part. Therefore, anyone would be mistaken to think that when we make this comparison we are satisfied with any shortcomings in implementing God's orders or applying His laws. We declare our innocence before God from any shortcomings committed not only by governments, but also by subjects, as individuals or groups.

It is wrong, unfair, and unjust to compare today's rulers of the Muslim countries to the likes of Genghis Khan and Hulagu, whose equal the world has never known, or to whose tyranny and oppression the world have never seen an equivalent. Furthermore, every one of today's Muslim rulers follows one of the religions; today's Muslim rulers have not legislated laws for the people on their own, and according to their whims with no link to religion.

Is there among today's Muslim rulers anyone who bestows infallibility upon his rulings and surrounds them with hallows of sanctification, claiming that they are inspired by heaven, and that no one of his people has the right to disagree or oppose any of them? Answering these questions would be sufficient to show the fault of such a comparison. From the start, there is no aspect of comparison between today's Muslim rulers and the Tartar rulers, not to mention likening them to Genghis Khan, Hulagu, and other Tartar tyrants.

It is not correct to describe today's constitutions in the Muslim countries as similar to the "Yasa," which was used during the days of the Tartars. Today's laws have never been claimed by their legislators to be sacrosanct or infallible; on the contrary, they are frequently subjected to alteration, amendment, and development, and no one minds these laws being criticized, people appealing against their legality, and even sometimes demanding their amendment. There is no comparison between these laws and the infallible laws of "Yasa," whose followers claim that they descended from heaven.

"Yasa" is a book that consists of a compilation of a mixture of rulings and laws drawn up by Genghis Khan according to his views, whims, and what he thought. It became the law among his followers which they followed rather than the Koran and the Sunnah of God's messenger. The majority of the rulings in the Yasa are simply invented and written by Genghis Khan. Some of these rulings he derived unintentionally from other religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, because he basically did not believe in any religion; this happened only by accident. Genghis Khan used to delude his followers that he was receiving inspiration from heaven, that it was heaven that pronounced the rulings of the Yasa through him, and he used to order his followers to write down what he dictated. There are no controls or connections between the texts of the "Yasa;" they are closer to nonsense than to legal rules and texts. Whoever reads some of these texts without knowing their source realizes that they are words uttered either by some tyrant with no brains or wisdom or by some fools and crazy people.

Anyone with a minimum knowledge of the constitutions of the Muslim countries today and the laws

applied in their countries would very easily realize how different they are from the Tartars' "Yasa," and he would not find it difficult to realize the huge difference between these laws and the nonsense of the "Yasa." This makes comparing them to the "Yasa" and naming them after it incorrect and far removed from objectivity and fairness. If we take an example from the Egyptian Constitution, we will find that Article 2 of it is that Islam is the religion of the state, the Arabic language is its official language, and Islamic shari'ah is the main source of legislation. Perhaps many people do not realize the importance of this text, and the purpose of its meaning, despite the fact that this text is one of the most important and greatest texts of the Egyptian Constitution. This text gives Islam the title of the state, and the Arabic language -- the language of the Koran -- the symbol of its protected and preserved identity; as for Islamic shari'ah being the main source of legislation, it compels the legislator, whenever he draws up any law after this amendment -- i.e. since 1980 -- to stop at the limits of the shari'ah constants, to work within the framework of its general principles, and not to go beyond them, particularly in the issues specified explicitly in the shari'ah.

It is sufficient that this constitutional text provides the right to constitutionally appeal against any law issued after that date which contradicts Islamic shari'ah; the text also specifies the abrogation of this law and the prevention of its implementation. This information might be unknown to many Muslim youths, but it is very important, because it helps in drawing up a true picture of the reality without exaggeration or downplay.

A thorough examination will not fail to show the religious sentiments in our countries. In our countries, people's respect for their religious rites is an unmistakable prevailing characteristic to the extent that it has painted the official protocol of the Muslim countries with its distinguished colors. For instance, in Egypt you will find that protocol compels the head of state to attend the prayers of both Ids and other Islamic occasions, such as the anniversaries of the great Badr Conquest, the Prophet's emigration, the Prophet's birthday, and Prophet Muhammad's journey to the seven heavens, and other occasions that keep the Islamic spirit alive in the soul and conscience of the nation. Some people might belittle these issues as unimportant and consider them as meaningless formalities, and some people because of their superficial view consider whether they are observed or not to be the same; however, even if they were mere formalities, it is better to observe them rather than not to observe them, despite the fact that the content and essence are more important than the appearances; this is because what cannot be achieved in its entirety should not be abandoned in its entirety, and if we lack the essence and the content, then at least we should preserve the form and appearance for the time being. Even if the only benefit of these formalities, which is showing the identity of the state and consolidating the spirit of Islam in it, were not sufficient, then there are grave dangers that would result from the absence of these formalities and appearances.

We call on anyone who belittles these formalities to look at a country such as Turkey, and he will see with his own eyes the effect of the absence of the appearance after the loss of the content. He will see for himself the estrangement of religion in old Muslim people that no longer have anything to remind them of their former glories after the stars of many Islamic formalities have faded and the features of their religion and faith has become alien to their senses and contrary to their feelings.

There is no aspect of comparison between today's Muslims and the Tartars at the level of the people, soldiers, or rulers. The difference between the two is the same as that between heaven and earth. What Muslim army today would allow its soldiers to destroy mosques or other houses of worship or to rape Muslim women in the purest places on earth, which are the houses of God? What Muslim army today adopts in its wars a genocide policy, uses its prisoners as human shields, or deliberately pursues killing civilian elderly, women, and children? No army in the entire world however oppressive -- not

only the Muslim armies -- would today dare to commit such atrocities. Even if some soldiers of an army committed such deeds, this would be done secretly and ashamedly fearing that it would be described as violating human rights and squandering their humanity, or that they would be convicted of violating international conventions and the Geneva Convention regarding prisoners of war. Even if such charges were proved against a country, it would do its utmost to wriggle out of them and distance itself from the culprits. This happened after the scandal of the Abu-Ghuryab prison in which a number of US soldiers committed ridiculous violations of the prisoners' rights; the United States tried as much as possible to reject the charges and distance itself from the culprits, and put some of them on trial so that the world would not consider it guilty of practicing torture. This happened despite the fact that the United States is the strongest country in the world, and no other country would dare to hold it to account or punish it, and despite the fact that these violations would be worthless compared to the atrocities and calamities the Tartars committed.

The spirit of religion in the souls of the sons of the people is an integral part of their constitution and a prominent feature of their character; furthermore, it is a spontaneous characteristic with no fabrication or artificiality. If you talk to anyone, then you will find phrases such as praise be to God, and thanks be to God uttered by him in his speech in a natural way.

To say that the situation of the Muslims today is similar to the situation of the Tartars is as far from the truth as east is from west. Do the Muslims today kneel to the sun when it rises? Does any Muslim eat dead meat or prohibit slaughtering animals according to shari'ah before eating them? Is there any Muslim who likes destruction and sabotage as the Tartars did? The entire world testifies to the purity of Muslim hands and their good treatment of others. History has recorded in the incidents between the Muslims and their enemies how ethical were the swords of Muslims, how their fighting was characterized with mercy, and how their methods were fair. The Muslims are still the same way, and their shari'ah still calls on them to adopt these lofty ethics.

Therefore, to compare the Muslims today to the Tartars is a wrong analogy, and to liken their rulers today with Genghis Khan is an untrue similarity; furthermore, to compare the laws adopted today in the Muslim countries to the "Yasa" is a faulty comparison that is far removed from the truth.

We say this and emphasize it with the utmost strength, despite the possibility that some people might suspect us, could attribute to us something we have not said, and might claim that we are satisfied with the shortcomings of today's laws, or that we say that today's Muslims are in the best state of affairs, are perfect, and that there is nothing better than what is happening. God knows that we neither meant nor wanted any of this. These suspicions would not prevent us from conveying a truth we believe in and we see. For a long time we have become accustomed to do what we consider right without fearing any blame in doing God's work; and we have become accustomed not to hide our convictions in order to please anyone or to be praised by anyone.

We firmly believe that this deduction is wrong and faulty; it inflicts extreme damage upon the Islamic movement; and it distorts the truth in the eyes of the sons of this movement. We have not written these words to flatter any of the rulers, because the rulers change and can be replaced, but God's religion remains and cannot be changed or replaced.

(Description of Source: London Al-Sharq al-Awsat in Arabic -- Influential Saudi-owned London daily providing independent coverage of Arab and international issues; editorials reflect official Saudi views on foreign policy)

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**Egyptian Islamic Group Book Al-Hakimiyah: Judging Rulers To Be Infidels (Part 2)**  
**Unattributed report: "Al-Sharq Al-Awsat Exclusively Publishes the Latest Egyptian Islamic Group Book"**

*AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT*

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This part of ( ) reviews the criticism by the Egyptian Islamic Group of the jihadist movements' pronouncements of takfir (infidelity) judgments on the rulers. Takfir is a newly coined term that was never used in the books of the predecessors. It was first used after the 1967 War, when a group of Muslim Brotherhood members, detained in Egyptian prisons, supported President Jamal Abd-al-Nasir against Israel.

The book points out that these judgments are interpretative judgments by those who pronounce them and could be right or wrong and that some people do not understand anything of the concept of authority, other than such-and-such ruler is an infidel. The book explains that there is a huge difference between believing in God Almighty's authority and judging people to be infidels.

Najih Ibrahim, the author of the book, argues that judging the rulers to be infidels carries grave consequences and has frightening effects. He justifies this by saying that judging an ordinary Muslim to be an infidel means forfeiting his money and his life and excluding him completely from the domain of Muslims. Therefore, how would it be if the ruler was to be considered an infidel? Furthermore, the phrase "the ruling regime is infidel" is ambiguous to a large extent. Is it correct to attribute infidelity to regimes, institutions, and organizations, despite the fact that they are artificial personalities and not real ones entrusted with religious duties? Would the judgment of infidelity be applied to the walls, buildings, and offices of these regimes, or would it be applied to the people responsible for and working in them? The book discusses the issue of "renunciation of idols," which some people amended and restricted to the rulers, and many people started from the principle: "Anyone who does not judge an infidel to be an infidel becomes an infidel," which led to an endless chain of incorrectly considering Muslims as infidels.

This part concludes by saying that there is an idealistic and superficial conviction among the youths of the Islamic movements that the ruler is capable of reforming all crooked situations and implementing all decisions, but they ignore the complications and intricacies of reality and the interference of domestic and foreign powers. The book gives the example of the National Salvation Revolution in Sudan, which acceded to the seats of power, but was forced eventually to sign a peace agreement with the south. Similarly, the call for opening the doors of jihad against Israel chanted by some national and Islamic powers during demonstrations is uttered out of one-upmanship against the rulers, and if these powers were to accede to the seats of government, they would be incapable of declaring war on Israel.

Cairo -- The Egyptian Islamic Group has criticized the jihadist movements' pronouncements of takfir judgments on rulers. The Islamic Group emphasized that considering rulers infidels was more harmful

and dangerous than considering ordinary Muslims as infidels. If the effects of judging an ordinary Muslim to be an infidel were restricted to him and to the narrow circle around him, the effects of judging a ruler to be an infidel would include the entire nation and its results would encompass the entire homeland.

The Islamic Group emphasized that it is not permissible to pronounce a ruling regime as infidel. This loose term is newly coined and did not appear until approximately the middle of the 20th century. Such term has never appeared in the books of the predecessors. Moreover, the saying that a regime is an infidel or a believer has no origins in the well-known and famous monotheism books of the good predecessors. This is despite the fact that the proponents of this saying consider it to have theological significance and base on it the judgment that the regimes and those who work for it are infidels. The only difference between the proponents is that some of them widen the circle of infidelity and others tighten it.

If we follow the concept of authority (al-Hakimiyah) that was used in the writings of Shaykh Sayyid Qutb, and Al-Mawdudi before him, we will find that its meaning centers on recognizing the divinity of God Almighty through the firm belief that He truly has the sole right to legislate for His worshippers, that is to decide for them what is allowed and what is prohibited, and through the belief that it is imperative to resort to Him and to adhere to His shari'ah. Al-Hakimiyah, in this sense, is a part of the creed of Islam that has to be embedded in the heart of every Muslim, and one of the issues of monotheism that is automatically included in the overall belief in God Almighty. As for the practical outcome on the basis of this belief, it is represented by God Almighty's shari'ah being the supreme authority in the human world and the divine fence that defines the path of human beings in life so that they gain the benefits of life and of afterlife. But at the same time, that does not prevent them from flying into the horizons of creativity, renovation, and invention, as long as they do not cross this fence or violate its sanctity.

Al-Hakimiyah simply means that it is imperative to rule according to what God has ordered and legislated, to allow what has been allowed by God, and to ban what He has banned. Al-Hakimiyah means that the supreme authority in judging all issues should belong to God and His Messenger and be specified in these two sources. Moreover, resorting to this authority does not clash with the rulings, interpretative judgments, laws, and constants of Islamic shari'ah and should serve the interests of the country and the worshipers.

Al-Hakimiyah is a creed concept and a practical outcome represented by a categorical commitment to the creed and to never violate it. In this sense, there is no scope for argument or dispute over it. More importantly, Al-Hakimiyah has nothing to do with judging someone to be an infidel, a hypocrite, or anything else, because pronouncing such judgments comes under the interpretative judgment that could be either right or wrong and is subject to argument and acceptance or rejection. It is a human judgment, and the human action and judgments are fallible.

Some people have not understood anything from the meaning of Al-Hakimiyah other than such-and-such ruler is an infidel. This has nothing whatsoever to do with the meaning of Al-Hakimiyah. To judge whether or not someone has adhered to the rulings of Islam or resorted to shari'ah is something else that should not be attached or linked to Al-Hakimiyah. Such a pronouncement is up to those who practice interpretative judgment, provided that it is proved by evidence and is open to disagreement and different opinions. There is a huge difference between believing in the Al-Hakimiyah of God Almighty and judging people to be infidels. The former is the duty of every Muslim, while the latter is the job of those responsible for interpretative judgment alone.

The former is categorical and definite, while the latter is interpretative and probable. The former is not subject to any argument, while the latter is largely open to argument.

Some Muslim youths think that the Islamic shari'ah has been strict on the rulers and guardians and has brought special stricter rulings for them, especially in the issues of conviction, infidelity, and belief. They think that the ruler might be judged as an infidel, if he were to commit a wrongdoing against one of the ruled, merely because he is a ruler. If he accepted responsibility for the ruled, then a wrongdoing against the ruled would become infidelity, and a misdemeanor would become a sin.

In these words, there is some wrong and some truth. It is right to say that the ruler is not like other people, and if he was good, then the nation would benefit and vice versa. However, this does not mean being stricter with him on the issues of belief and infidelity. The issues of belief and infidelity are at most related to the issue of reward and punishment. Therefore, it is wrong to think that the ruler has special rulings for him. It is equally wrong to think that shari'ah has been stricter with the rulers and considered the wrongdoings of ordinary people to be sins if they were committed by the rulers, and that what could be pardoned if committed by the ruled would be unpardonable in the case of the rulers.

To pronounce the rulers infidels is not a mere word that could be uttered randomly without having any echoes on the ground and without any effects on the peoples and countries. Despite the fact that some people think lightly of it, such judgment has grave results and huge effects. An issue of such gravity needs a high degree of caution and precaution, and it needs a great deal of deliberation, scrutiny, and rationalism. If judging an ordinary Muslim to be an infidel means forfeiting his money and life and excluding him completely from the domain of Muslims, then judging a ruler to be an infidel means much more. In addition to the effects we already mentioned, it would mean the annulment of his rule and the invalidation of his guardianship, and hence dissenting from and fighting him. Throughout its history, the Islamic nation has suffered terribly from the dissent from rulers, whose first spark has always been judging them to be infidels. Many a rash or incorrect takfir fatwa had grave consequences and was received by enthusiastic youths who were keen to apply all the rulings of the faith, without consideration for reality, its conditions, and intricacies. These fatwas started the bloody chains of dissenting from the rulers. Such dissents, past and present, have always given the nation nothing other than heavy losses, including bloodshed, wasted efforts, squandering resources, tearing up the unity of the country, lack of security among its sons, destruction of the economy of the country, stopping all development projects, and even a negative rate of development. Add to this the suffering of the country due to the thousands of dead and wounded, tens of thousands of detainees, millions of pounds of losses, not to mention the other economic losses. The end result is all that could be imagined of destruction and ruin, whose only beneficiaries are the enemies of the nation, and its opponents, who are waiting to inflict evil upon the countries of the Muslims.

A quick look at the results of the bloody confrontations that have been and still are taking place in Algeria would be sufficient to draw a very expressive picture of the harm caused by dissenting from the rulers. The fact is that judging the rulers to be infidels is the real first step to dissent from and fight them and hence to the occurrence of all damages. When there is fighting between the sons of the same country and of the same religion, all good things go away. The call for God becomes lost; the role and influence of religion diminishes; the image of those committed to religion becomes distorted, and their status becomes lost. Fear and suspicion spread among the sons of the same country, and the country falls under martial and emergency laws. As proof of this, if the severance of someone's hand as a shari'ah punishment needs extreme scrutiny and strong guarantees and is revoked at the slightest suspicion or doubt, then what about judging rulers as infidel, an issue that could lead to the severance

of thousands of hands and necks, not to mention the severance of the lifelines to the countries of the Muslims and leaving them, after lengthy conflicts, with corpses of ulema and youths. Youths should control their enthusiasm by reason, combine duty and reality wisely, and not occupy themselves with these difficult issues, over whose decision even the ulema are sometimes perplexed.

The phrase "the ruling regime is infidel" or "judging the ruling regime to be infidel" is very ambiguous, and it begs many questions. These questions include: Is it correct to attribute infidelity to regimes, institutions, and organizations, despite the fact that they are artificial personalities, and not real ones entrusted with religious duties? Would the judgment of infidelity be applied to the walls, buildings, and offices of these regimes, or would it be applied to the people responsible for and working in them?

These institutions and regimes are artificial personalities that cannot be described as believers or infidels. These judgments and descriptions only apply to the person entrusted with shari'ah duties and whom God Almighty on Doomsday would hold accountable. Judgments such as Islam or infidelity cannot be applied to regimes or institutions, but we could say that such-and-such action by such-and-such institution is compatible with shari'ah in this aspect and contradicts it on that aspect. To say that the ruling regime is infidel is an ambiguous and incorrect statement. Furthermore, those who manage the regime and those who work for it are not a single individual so that the infidelity description would apply to him, because there could be 6 million or more individuals working for the regime, and they all have different jobs and different duties. The term ruling regime includes everybody from the highest authority in the state to the soldier of the lowest rank in some suburb, and it also includes numerous levels of administrative and organizational work, such as the ministers, the undersecretaries, the directors general, the heads of departments, to the end of the organizational hierarchy, with its many steps.

Some people say that modern societies are in a state of pre-Islamic paganism that is worse than the first one before the mission of the prophet, God's prayers and peace be upon him. This is an abstract and ambiguous utterance that leads to misunderstanding by many youths, because they think that it means that the current Muslim societies are infidels and their populations are outside the domain of Islam. The existence of some injustice and wrongdoings in a Muslim society does not justify judging it as a pre-Islamic pagan one or judging its sons as infidels. None of the Islamic eras has been devoid of injustice, but we have never heard that any of those who were contemporaries of these eras ever pronounced the society or the regime as a pre-Islamic pagan one. The reality of the pre-Islamic pagan era, despite its disobedience to and contradiction of God's orders, has nothing to do with infidelity, and it should not be used to judge Muslim societies as infidels because of the existence of some wrongdoings or injustices. Otherwise, we would have to pronounce all Muslim societies throughout history infidels.

The use by some people of the issue of "renouncing the idols" to judge many Muslims to be infidels or apostates happens under the pretext that these people have not renounced the idols, dissociated themselves from them, and declared war on them. Sometimes a committed young man proposes marriage to a committed girl; the girl sets a test for him to examine the propriety of his faith and the correctness of his beliefs. The most important question in this test is: Do you renounce the idols? If you ask these people about the identity of the idols and what they want all people to renounce so that they would escape being judged as infidels, you will find that they mean the rulers of the Muslim countries in person or every infidel ruler whose Islam is invalid because he has not renounced the idols. They apply this principle to the common man, the illiterate peasant, the simple worker, the peasant woman who does not know how to read or write, and to the mothers, sisters, and



grandmothers, and even to their own mothers, sisters, and relatives, because they have not renounced the idols.

To describe a ruler as an idol because he committed some act of injustice or abstained from some religious requirements involves a confusion of the linguistic and shari'ah meanings of the term idol. The predecessors or ulema of the nation did not use this term. Al-Hajjaj Bin-Yusuf (al-Thaqafi: an Abbasid commander who was well known for his cruelty and was a governor of Iraq) was unjust, but none of his companions or subordinates, and they were well known to be true men, said that Al-Hajjaj was an idol and every Muslim ought to renounce him so that his belief in God Almighty would become correct.

Many people started from the principle that "anyone who does not judge an infidel to be an infidel becomes himself an infidel," which led to an endless chain of incorrectly considering Muslims as infidels, until they ended up with considering all Muslims everywhere who do not agree with them to be infidels. This satanic chain has led them to say that everyone on earth is an infidel, except for a very few people who can be counted on the fingers of one hand. The first link in this chain is represented by considering as an infidel anyone who does not consider as an infidel those who do not consider the rulers to be infidels. Thus, the circle of infidelity widens bit by bit until it swallows every Muslim in the country and the rest of the Muslim people, except for those who adopt the same path as this group and say the same as they say, but these are only a few.

Takfir emerged for the first time after the 1967 War. While the Muslim Brotherhood members were detained in Egyptian prisons, some of them wrote a letter of support to President Jamal Abd-al-Nasir against Israel, and they signed it on behalf of all detainees. A group of youths objected to this letter and pronounced the Egyptian regime to be a pre-Islamic pagan one. This group was isolated in special places for some time, and then they were brought back to be with the rest of the Muslim Brotherhood detainees. However, the group of youths separated themselves from the others during prayers and pronounced those who supported Jamal Abd-al-Nasir to be infidels. Then they raised the slogan, "Anyone does not judge an infidel to be an infidel becomes an infidel himself." Thus, the circle of infidelity started to widen until, in the end, it included the entire Egyptian people.

The principle of "anyone who does not judge an infidel to be an infidel becomes an infidel himself," like any other shari'ah principle, cannot be correctly understood until it is placed in the right context and coupled with the controls and restrictions it was given in order to be applied on the ground. The first of these controls is: There should be unanimity on the infidelity of the one to be judged to be an infidel. There should be categorical proof that he is not a Muslim, and there should be abundant knowledge of his infidelity.

There is a conviction among the youths of the Islamic movements, which is closer to both idealism and superficiality, that because the ruler is capable of doing anything and does not find it difficult to strengthen his rule, because he holds the reins and all the keys and powers are at his disposal as the master of the highest executive authority in the country, then he is capable of reforming all crooked situations and of implementing all aspired-for decisions. Furthermore, it would be unthinkable to consider him incapable of compelling his state and his people to adhere to the Islamic shari'ah.

The truth is that this viewpoint is over simplified. At the same time, it disregards many of the complexities and intricacies of reality and does not at all take into consideration any of the domestic and foreign powers that could constitute a huge obstacle in the face of many decisions and wishes. The ruler does not have a magic wand with which he could reform situations and solve problems.

Reality has its necessary requirements, and domestic and foreign pressures have their dictates. The ruler might see crooked situations with his own eyes, but find himself unable to put them right in one go. He might see deviations that he cannot correct immediately, because otherwise the situation could get out of hand and his people might turn against the reform and good they wanted. The National Salvation Revolution in Sudan is living proof of this. This revolution erupted hoping to apply the shari'ah, and implement the Islamic rulings. The revolution succeeded, and its leaders acceded to the seats of power and held the reins of the country. However, as the proverb says: The wind might blow against the wishes of the sailing ship. Domestic and foreign pressures, ranging from siege to sanctions, cascaded from everywhere, and the mutiny erupted in southern Sudan to the extent that the country was nearly torn apart. Under pressure from these events, Sudan was forced to sign the peace agreement, which toppled many of the previous and old hopes because the government put the territorial integrity of Sudan first, preserving it from fragmentation and from being chewed up piece by piece.

The truth that the youths must understand that being at the top of the government and acceding to the seats of power does not mean the end of all problems or give the ruler a magic wand that can change reality with a single touch. This is not an attempt to defend the behavioral and practical negligence of the rulers of the Islamic countries in applying Islam in their countries. It is very easy to accuse the others of negligence, to engage in one-upmanship against them, and to demand that they do impossible or unrealistic things. What some national and Islamic powers call for -- opening the doors of jihad against Israel, despite their knowledge that this would be unrealistic under the current circumstances because of domestic and foreign reasons -- is done out of one-upmanship against the regime. If these powers were to hold the reins of power, they would not be able to carry out what they call for, and they would not be able to declare war on Israel at the current time and under the current circumstances, which are well known to anyone who knows anything about politics, strategy, and military balance among the countries.

(Description of Source: London Al-Sharq al-Awsat in Arabic -- Influential Saudi-owned London daily providing independent coverage of Arab and international issues; editorials reflect official Saudi views on foreign policy)

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POWERED BY **Dialog****Egyptian Islamic Group Book Al-Hakimiyah: International Relations [Part 3]****Unattributed report: "Al-Sharq Al-Awsat Exclusively Publishes the Latest Egyptian Islamic Group Book"***AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT**Sunday, July 31, 2005 T20:01:36Z***Journal Code:** 1431 **Language:** ENGLISH **Record Type:** FULLTEXT**Document Type:** FBIS Translated Text**Word Count:** 3,586

This part of "Authority: Shariah View and Realistic Vision (Al-Hakimiyah: Nazrah Shar'iyah wa Ru'yah Waqi'iyah)" reviews the call by some Islamic countries for isolation and retreat within themselves. The book recalls the failed experiments of the Soviet Union and the East European countries that installed a barrier of isolation around them, which was the main reason for their backwardness, and led to their collapse and fall. The book also discusses the Taliban experiment in Afghanistan; how the isolation and siege were essential factors in its collapse, and the fact that from its establishment until its demise it was incapable of securing recognition of its regime except from three countries.

The writer discusses the fact that countries can be exposed to coercion, the same as individuals. Moreover, he considers the coercion of countries worse and more damaging than the coercion of individuals, because in the former case, those harmed would be millions. As an example of this he recalls Japan's experience after World War II, and how it pledged to adhere completely to all the contents of the armistice document, despite the fact that it was inequitable to Japan.

The writer also discusses the danger that could befall a nation if the coercive dictates to which the governments and countries might be exposed were kept secret under various pretexts, and when the solutions derived from Islamic shariah, which could be adopted by these countries if they were exposed to such pressure, are not explained.

The book stresses the importance and vitality of international relations, how essential they are, and that the establishment of foreign relations between Muslim countries and other foreign countries, even those that persecute Islam and Muslims, is not banned by shariah, but is allowed and could even be considered a necessary duty.

The book condemns the calls for severing relations with some countries for various reasons. The book emphasizes that for the Muslim countries to establish some kind of international relations is not an optional issue or subject to consideration, but it is inevitable and inescapable if these countries want to establish a foothold in today's world. The reality of modern countries differs radically from the reality of the Islamic countries of the past from the viewpoint of the balance of power and the nature of the international system in the past and in the present. Now, the Islamic countries, whether individually or collectively, cannot achieve what Al-Mu'tasim (an Umayyad Caliphate) achieved when a woman was insulted in Amuriyah.

(The Book says:)

Those who call on the Islamic countries to isolate and retreat into themselves are in fact calling on them to commit suicide. This has been proved by the isolation experiments in our modern world. The iron curtain established by the Soviet Union and the East European countries was the main reason behind their backwardness and was what led to their collapse and fall. Furthermore, the frightening isolation and severe siege were an important factor in widening the gap between the East European countries and their Western counterparts, not only in the scientific, technological, and military fields, but also in the social and humanitarian fields, such as freedom, democracy, and the prosperity of the people.

The same scenario was repeated in Albania in a stronger and deeper way. This took place when its ruler, Enver Hoxha, imposed upon it strict isolation to the extent that Albania became more communist than the communists themselves, and the Muslims in the country were converted to communism under the pressure of oppression and coercion. While the Albanians thought that their country was the greatest, strongest, most advanced, and most prosperous country in the world, Albania was a blatant example of poverty, hunger, backwardness, oppression, and dictatorship, and remained committed to its communist principles even after these principles collapsed in their own homeland.

Isolation and siege were an essential factor in the case of the Islamic Taliban state. From the time it was established until it collapsed only three countries -- Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and UAE -- recognized it. This was a good stance by these countries in which they considered first and foremost the interests of Islam and Muslims. However, the Taliban did not seize this opportunity to consolidate its relations with these countries and did not succeed in widening the domain of its diplomacy to include other countries of the world. The Taliban even lost the sympathy of these three countries one after the other.

When a country is exposed to coercion and suffers under the pressure of its needs, it will change its calculations, and it will be allowed to do things that would not be allowed at other times. It is neither logical nor reasonable to judge the behavior of a country under coercion by the same criteria used to judge a country under normal conditions. Necessity sometimes places two options before the state, the sweetest of them is bitter and neither of them would bring pure benefit; therefore, the state would have to balance between the benefits and harms, assess the advantages and disadvantages, and then try to achieve the greater interest and disregard the lesser one, and repel the greatest of the damage by incurring the lesser one. The motto of the state in doing so would be the utterance of Shaykh Ibn-Taymiyah, "The rational man is not the one who knows the difference between good and evil, but the one who knows the better of two good things and the worse of two evil things." In such cases, the state could be compelled to commit a sin or an explicit crime, but not out of being corrupt; in this instance, a short-sighted or rash person could become confused, and his vision might not be able to penetrate these apparent violations and partial sins to see behind them the attempt to repel greater damage and wider corruption. Islamic shariah neither discriminates between similar things, nor combines contradictions; if the shariah allows the individual to commit some prohibited actions when it is necessary and he is coerced, then it allows this with greater reason to the state if it is coerced. The interests of one person are not more worthy than the interests of millions of people, and the protection of the life of one individual is not more worthy than the protection of a nation or an entire people.

If the shariah has taken into consideration the coercion of the individual, then with more reason, it has taken into consideration the coercion of the state. The individual, however much he is coerced, in the end is responsible only for himself and not for anyone else; however, the state shoulders the responsibility for the fate of millions of people. Sometimes, the individual is allowed to stand firmly and ask God to reward and compensate him for the harm he suffers, but it is not acceptable for the

state to do the same; therefore, the individual is allowed more than the group, and the group more than the state.

Some people cannot imagine that states could be coerced and think that coercion is restricted to individuals. If Islam has allowed the individual when necessary to eat dead animals and drink alcohol -- despite the fact that they are prohibited -- in order to repel the greater damage of death, then what about when a state is threatened by severe aerial bombing using the most devastating large bombs, the destruction of its civilian and military infrastructure, and the killing of thousands of its sons, while it is incapable of doing anything to repel all this? Is this not coercion that is many times worse than the coercion of individuals. A state could be coerced in exactly the same way an individual is coerced, and sometimes a state could be exposed to needs that are much stronger and more severe than those of the individuals.

There are numerous forms of coercion to which a state could be exposed in this era of ours. These forms vary in their severity and violence. There is the political and diplomatic coercion represented by isolating the state from the outside world and severing its diplomatic links with the other countries or reducing these links; this form of coercion is tantamount to cutting the pulsating veins, which pump the blood of life into the body of the state. There is the economic coercion represented by imposing an economic siege, stopping foreign aid, and freezing the import and export movement to and from the targeted state; such coercion threatens famine in the long term and leads to a shortage of necessary food and medicine, and hence to the death of thousands of citizens. Coercion reaches its peak when it threatens military occupation accompanied by aerial bombardment, with all this would entail of destruction of all features of life in that state, and pushing it backward dozens of years. Is this not a live and realistic representation of the meaning of coercion imposed upon states?

In the recent past Japan was exposed to compelling coercion that made it swallow poison and reluctantly accept things that it would never have accepted without this coercion. In World War II, Japanese cities were bombed with atomic bombs, and within a few hours more than 40,000 Japanese were killed, not to mention those who were wounded or became handicapped. This was the worst material coercion in the history of Japan, and it forced the Japanese emperor to sign a document of unconditional surrender. Japan pledged to adhere to all the iniquitous articles included in that document, the most prominent of which were: limiting the duties and numbers of the Japanese army and allowing the United States to keep permanent military bases on Japanese territories. The US bases still exist in Japan more than half a century after the end of World War II. All this was the result of a form of material coercion to which Japan was exposed.

Keeping the dictates of necessity and coercion secret and abstaining from mentioning them so that they do not become a justification for some of weak souls and of weak faith to dissociate themselves from the orders of shariah harms first of all the shariah itself and portrays it as incapable of finding a solution for such problems on the ground. Furthermore, shariah might be accused of being inadequate and unrealistic when it seems as if it neglected the extraordinary circumstances of the individual and the state and only discussed the jurisprudence rulings under normal circumstances. Here, the ideal solution would not be not to discuss the necessity and coercion dictates for fear of misusing them, but to discuss them properly, mention their rulings, and draw up the controls and guarantees that would secure their proper use.

The exposure of a state to necessity and coercion situations is not a rare occurrence, especially if it is located in one of the regions of conflict, such as the Middle East, in whose center our Arab and Islamic world is located. The state ought not to wait until coercion it cannot repel is inflicted upon it;

it ought to read the indications of such a situation on the horizon before it occurs and adopt everything that could protect it from falling into such a necessity before the situation deteriorates, before the lines of retreat are severed, and before the country and population are lost under the boots of foreign occupation. This mission is the duty of the honorable and loyal intellectuals and opinion-making sons of the nation, whether they are rulers, subjects, or educated ulema. There is a lesson for us in the Darfur crisis in fraternal Sudan.

In the shadow of the current international changes, and since the world, wide as it is, has become a small village, no state can afford to live in isolation from the rest of the world's countries, because this simply would mean that it sentences itself to death and digs its own grave with its own hands. This is particularly true if this state is weaker, less significant, and more in need than others, because in this case it would not be able to dispense with such relations. Therefore, international relations have become one of the necessities of life for countries. The strength of a country is no longer measured only by its military armament and economic resources, but also and more importantly by its political influence, the width of its diplomacy, and strength of its foreign relations. Some Muslim youths, because of their lack of experience in political affairs and international relations, might belittle the issue of foreign relations of Islamic countries and believe that it is not allowed to establish international relations with non-Muslim countries, especially those hostile to Islam and Muslims. They even might consider the establishment of good relations with non-Muslim countries as a form of treason, a type of hireling relationship, and a way of supporting the infidels. This is despite the fact that the biography of the Prophet explains to us that the Prophet, God's prayers and peace be upon him, had relations with most of the polytheist tribes in the Arabian Peninsula; he used to receive the delegations and leaders, be hospitable to them, meet them during the pilgrimage season, invite them to Islam, and propose mutual support to them; many of them rejected him, but this did not prevent him from repeating the attempt, until he met the Yathrib (Medians) who at the time were polytheists but then converted to Islam after he talked to them, and God opened their hearts to the truth. After God made Islam victorious and established its state, the Prophet, God's prayers and peace be upon him, established relations with various states and kingdoms and engaged in correspondence with many kings and heads of state, including Byzantine Emperor Heraclius, Persian Emperor Xerxes, and Roman-appointed Governor of Egypt Al-Muqawqas; he also received many delegations, such as the delegation of the Christians of Najran that came to Median, whom the Prophet honored, received in his mosque, and showed good hospitality.

The vitality of the international relations established by an Islamic state sends a clear message saying that any state ought to have relations with other states, especially the superpowers of its era. These superpowers, whether we like it or not, are the ones leading the international system at the strategic, military, economic, and technological levels. It does not vilify the faith of a Muslim country or the patriotism of its rulers to establish relations with non-Muslim states, or with Muslim states that do not apply the full Islamic shariah, as long as the rulers employ these relations to achieve the greatest benefit for, and repel the greatest evil from, their religion, countries, and peoples.

The establishment of foreign relations between Muslim countries and other countries, even if the latter persecute Islam and Muslims, is not banned by shariah; on the contrary, it is allowed and could even be obligatory in the shadow of the complex international circumstances of our times. What is banned by the shariah is to circle in the orbit of these non-Muslim countries and put their interests before the interests of our religion and countries, to concede and relinquish our rights and interests for the benefit of their interests, or to follow submissively and be led blindly by them without any rational controls or religious deterrent. Communicating with these countries and others in order to fulfill the interests of our religion and our countries is exactly the shariah obligation which Islam calls and imposes upon

Muslim rulers. The criterion of the legitimacy of these relations lies in answering this question: Whose interests are the Muslim rulers seeking in conducting these relations? If the rulers are seeking the interests of Islam, its countries, and its peoples, then the relations are legitimate, even obligatory, as they would bring good to Islam and Muslims. However, if they are seeking the benefit of the others and their interests at the expense of the interests of the nation and of the Muslim countries, then this would be definite treason. We do not think that any rational ruler with any trace of religion, or even chivalry and national dignity, would agree to do this, because by such deeds he would destroy himself before he destroys his country, would tarnish his history and personal glory, and would even tarnish his own reputation, the preservation of which any loyal patriot is keen.

For the Muslim countries to establish some kind of international relations is not an optional issue or subject to consideration, but it is inevitable and inescapable if these countries want to establish a foothold in today's world. The calls we hear for severing relations with this-or-that country if it violates the right of some Muslims are strange. These calls are uttered without understanding the volume of grave effects such behavior would have, as if the severance of international relations by Muslim countries is very easy. This is despite the fact that this method is not the ideal solution for such violations, because it most probably would not achieve a benefit or repel harm. This does not mean that the Muslim countries should abandon those persecuted people or not support and defend them; this is not at all what is meant. The Muslim countries ought to choose the most suitable means to support those wronged people, provided that these means are within the abilities and capabilities of these countries, and that they would not lead to harm either to the countries or to the persecuted and oppressed people.

If we were to call on our countries to sever relations with Russia because it is an atheist country that persecutes the Chechen Muslims, with France because it is a crusading country that prevents the Muslim women from wearing the veil, with Britain because of its alliance with the United States and its issue of the Balfour Declaration in the past for the benefit of the Jews, with the United States because of its occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq and its total support for Israel, with India because of its occupation of Muslim Kashmir, with China because of its persecution of East Turkistan...etc, then would these countries stop these violations? Which side would be the loser if the relations were severed? With whom would the Muslim countries deal? The answer is clear: in the end the big loser would be our Arab and Islamic countries, which would be tying the rope of isolation around their own necks, and which would have succeeded neither in fulfilling the interests of their religion, peoples, and countries, nor in removing the injustice imposed upon the Muslims everywhere.

The reality of modern states differs radically from the reality of the past Muslim states, such as the Umayyad or Abbasid states, with regard to the abilities of the state itself, the shape of international relations, the balance of power, or the nature of the international system. Therefore, Muslim youths ought to be realistic in their concepts, judgment, and methods of thinking. It is not at all realistic, rational, or fair to demand that a Muslim country should do today what a Muslim country would have done during the Umayyad or Abbasid eras, or to hold it to account according to the criteria of past eras, and according to an international yardstick that has changed completely and been replaced. We read in Islamic history that when a woman in the era of Caliphate Al-Mu'tasim was insulted in Amuriyah, she shouted, "O Al-Mu'tasim, help me," and then Al-Mu'tasim prepared an army that extended from his place to the woman's place. When we read this and similar incidents, we have the right to feel sorry about, and nostalgic for the past times when the sun of dignity used to shine over the Arab and Muslim countries. However, would we be truthful to ourselves, or fair to others, if we ask of the Muslim rulers today to do what Al-Mu'tasim did if we were to hear news about the persecution of some Muslims in Russia, the killing of some Muslims in India, or the torture of some Muslims in

China? Is it logical or reasonable to demand that our Arab and Islamic countries fight these countries, despite the lack of ability to do so, and even the lack of suitable domestic and foreign conditions? The abilities of the Muslim countries are not sufficient or capable of such fighting; they cannot even declare war against a single one of these countries, not to mention fight it.

Those who make such calls ought to be truthful with themselves and with the people; they ought not practice one-upmanship about Arab and Islamic countries and their abilities and resources, and they ought not squander the possible in search of the impossible. The state of weakness and deterioration which our nation has reached is no longer a secret to anyone. The Islamic callers should beware of oversimplifying these complex issues, because such oversimplification of international relations harms the Islamic movement and the minds of its youths, who admire outstanding heroism and feel attracted to the enthusiastic calls to sever international relations and mobilize huge armies to fight any country that violates any of God's sanctities, touches a hair of a pious Muslim, or violates the honor of a Muslim woman.

(Description of Source: London Al-Sharq al-Awsat in Arabic -- Influential Saudi-owned London daily providing independent coverage of Arab and international issues; editorials reflect official Saudi views on foreign policy)

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**Egyptian Islamic Group Book Al-Hakimiyah: Rejecting Takfiri Ideology (Part 4)**  
**Unattributed report: "Al-Sharq Al-Awsat Exclusively Publishes the Latest Egyptian Islamic Group Book"**

*AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT*

*Tuesday, August 2, 2005 T05:25:36Z*

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This part of ( ) reviews the Islamic movements' confusion over the concept of authority and how this confusion caused the Arab and Islamic nation to be distracted from its priorities and to exhaust its capabilities and the blood, effort, and time of its sons.

The book discusses the Islamic groups' negligence of their real mission, which is the call to God, the guidance to the path to Paradise, and the restoration of the mutinous to Islam, and how these groups turned to driving people away from Islam and to judging them to be infidels, licentious, or hypocrites.

The book shows how those who have fallen into the precipice of takfir (accusing others of being infidels) think that belief in God is an indivisible unit. Therefore, they think that a man is either a believer of complete faith or an infidel in whose heart there is not even an atom of belief. They forget that sins and wrongdoings diminish the perfection of belief, but they do not demolish its foundation, and that the duties of the Muslim do not include searching the hearts of others.

The book stresses that the Islamic groups, in order to show their strict piety, started to accuse the largest possible number of Muslims of infidelity or licentiousness or to judge them to be heretics, without a jurisprudence justification. The book also emphasizes that a Muslim does not become an infidel by abandoning some of the duties, as long as he accepts monotheism in his heart, and pronounces the two attestations (that there is no God but God, and Muhammad is His prophet).

The book explains the difference between the banned support and legitimate disagreement. It also explains that it is wrong for anyone to think that to treat the Christians, Jews, or non-Muslims in general well is some kind of banned and prohibited support and calls on all Muslims to smile at non-Muslims, to visit them during their festivals and sad occasions, and to visit their sick.

This part of the book concludes by explaining that, for the followers of the takfir heresy, the authority of God Almighty concerns only the rulers. This means accusing the followers of the rulers of being infidels on the pretext that any negligence or complacency in implementing and following God's rulings is blatant infidelity that puts the person outside the faith. However, the authority of God is above all that was done in its name.

(The book says:)

The Islamic movements have been confused over the concept of authority. This confusion has preoccupied many of the Muslim youths for a long time and has distracted the Arab and Islamic nation

from its priorities and many of its duties and obligations. The confusion led to this through the exhaustion of the nation's resources, blood, effort, and time of its sons.

The effects of this confusion and mix--up included the crises and calamities that poured on the Islamic movements. Prisons became the permanent place of residence for the majority of Islamists. As soon as any Islamist is released from prison, he soon returns to it. This happens in endless consecutive waves. The main reason for this is that the groups accuse the Muslim rulers and their followers of infidelity and engage in armed rebellion against them or try to do so.

The callers for God are guides, not judges. The real mission of the callers is not to expel people from Islam, and judge them to be infidels, licentious, or hypocrites. Their mission is to guide human beings and take them by their hand to a paradise as wide as heaven and earth. Their job is to heal the wounds of their nation and to restore Muslim delinquents to Islam.

The confusion of some ulema over the concept of authority has been one of the factors that has hindered the march of the call for God in the majority of the Muslim countries for years and years. It also damages the pure and virtuous march, disturbs its serenity, and makes many of the guardians very apprehensive about the callers for God and wary of them. Furthermore, it makes the rulers warn other rulers against allowing the call for freedom of action so that it does not turn against them in the end and so that it does not become fertile ground for breeding new generations of those who try to create dissent and oppose the government by the sword and the tongue.

On close examination of some of the effects that resulted from accusing the rulers of infidelity in the last century and from the armed dissent against these rulers, we can easily see what will make the hearts of those loyal to this nation bleed. We can see that the result was a shrinking of the area of implemented shari'ah and an increase of the area of the lost part of it. If the situation in our countries continues in the same way during this century and if the attempts of armed dissent from the Muslim rulers continue, especially after the 11 September events, then the remainder of Islam will be scattered in the wind, and we will face a strong tide of Westernization that will include the entire map of life.

God Almighty has not ordered us to exclude people from Islam and introduce them to infidelity, but He ordered us to introduce them to Islam. We are callers, not judges; guides, not rulers. Judging people is the job of the judges and rulers. As for the callers for God, they have neither the abilities, nor the talents that qualify them to reach the truth in judging anybody. Also, they are incapable of ascertaining the truth of the accusations and claims against anyone. This is not a criticism of the callers to say that they are not qualified to do this, because judging people is not at the core of their work and mission. Furthermore, if they were to be preoccupied with this, then they would distance themselves a great deal from their aim and intention, which is to guide human beings to God Almighty.

When the callers for God leave aside the pursuit of guiding the people and preoccupy themselves with accusing this person of infidelity, that person of being licentious, and the other person of being a heretic, they lose their cause, deviate from their path, and leave a bad impression in the hearts of the people, which is sufficient to drive the people away from the truth the callers preach, rather than make them more attracted to God's path and religion. Thus the callers end up making the people hate this religion, its followers, and its callers.

The book shows how those who have fallen into the precipice of takfir think that belief in God is an indivisible unit. Therefore, they think that a man is either a believer of complete faith or an infidel in whose heart there is not even an atom of belief. They forget that sins and wrongdoings diminish the

perfection of belief, but do not demolish its foundation or remove it completely. The people with inflated egos do not know the extent of God Almighty's generosity and kindness and do not understand the length and breadth of His forgiveness and mercy. God Almighty has taken it upon Himself that anyone who is not a polytheist will not remain in Hell forever and that He will forgive whomever He wants from the monotheists, even if their sins pile up to the skies.

The Muslim is not ordered to search into the hearts of the people and to examine their secret intentions to find out if they are good and correct or bad and corrupt. This neither is his business, nor is he capable of carrying it out. The secrets in the hearts of people are up to God Almighty, "He knows the treachery of the eyes and what the chests conceal." (Koranic verse describing one of the attributes of God) Judging people by their appearance is a strong fence that protects the nation from disintegration and preserves societies from collapse. We can imagine the state of the nations and societies if the gates of judging people on the basis of their thoughts and the secrets in their hearts were opened. Chaos would prevail, disturbances would spread, the innocent would be accused, the guilty would be exonerated, the accusations without evidence or proof would increase, people would throw false accusations at each other without any proof, and mistrust, accusations of intent, and suspicion would prevail among the people. God only knows the amount of corruption, hindrance of life, and lack of security that would stem from all this. This is why the shari'ah stipulated this rule for straightening the life and religion of the people and stipulated that if a person announced that he was a Muslim and abandoned polytheism, then this would be sufficient to confirm him as a Muslim, whatever his hidden intentions and heart might be, because his hidden intentions are up to God on Doomsday.

Real piety does not mean accusing the largest possible number of Muslims of infidelity, licentiousness, or heresy, without shari'ah justification. True adherence to religion does not mean giving one's tongue a free rein to pronounce these judgments on the dignitaries and individuals of the nation. If this were piety and commitment, then the honorable predecessors and past ulema would have done it before us. Despite the abundance of information we have about our predecessors, we never heard that any of them focused on accusing any Muslim of being an infidel, a licentious person, or a heretic.

The good predecessors of the ulema and clerics of this nation scarcely issued a judgment of infidelity, or anything similar, on any Muslim, because such judgments required the fulfillment of conditions and the absence of obstacles and needed clear evidence, sufficient proof, and other conditions without which no person could be judged to be an infidel, licentious, or a hypocrite. Therefore, no wonder the past ulema were cautious and even exaggerated in warning against issuing such judgments. The great Islamic shaykh, Ibn-Taymiyah, God have mercy on his soul, said about himself: "I, and those who sat with me, know that I am one of the strictest people in forbidding accusing a person of infidelity, licentiousness, or heresy until the establishment of irrefutable evidence that, if one were to ignore it, he would be either infidel, or licentious, or heretic."

A Muslim does not become an infidel by abandoning some of the duties, as long as he accepts monotheism in his heart, pronounces the two attestations, and he does not deny that these duties are mandatory and does not consider it permissible to abandon them. This has been agreed by Sunni ulema past and present, except those who disagreed over the judgment of whoever abandons the four pillars of Islam -- prayers, fasting, alms, and pilgrimage. Some ulema judged such a person to be an infidel, but the majority consider that whoever abandons some of the duties cannot be considered an infidel, as long as he does not consider this to be allowed and does not deny that these duties are mandatory. This is the majority's opinion on this issue. Moreover, to say that if someone abandons

some of the duties he is not an infidel does not mean that this abandoning does not harm his faith or reduce its perfection or that he has complete faith, despite abandoning this duty. The reduction in the faith of the person is proportional to the duties abandoned. Furthermore, the abandonment of some of the duties in itself is a wrongdoing that could be tantamount to a sin, but it is never an infidelity unless the person considers the abandonment of the duty allowed or rejects that the duty is mandatory.

There is a great difference between banned support and legitimate disagreement. Banned support is to like the non-Muslims for the sake of their religion and creed and to support the non-Muslims and help them, whether they are right or wrong, with the hand, the heart, or tongue. This support would destroy the faith of the person committing it and exclude him from the domain of belief and Islam. It could be a cause for reducing his belief and criticizing the completion and perfection of his faith.

As for legitimate disagreement, it means following the example of the prophet, God's prayers and peace be upon him, in dealing with people -- all people, whether they are Muslims or atheists, good or bad -- with good manners, and in dealing with everybody charitably, or at least with justice and fairness.

Some people might think that treating Christians, Jews, or non-Muslims in general well is some kind of banned or prohibited support. If they see a Muslim smile at people in general, Muslims and atheists, or being charitable toward non-Muslims by visiting this one during a festival or on a sad occasion, by visiting that one if he is ill, by giving a Christian a present and accepting a present in return, or by congratulating a non-Muslim neighbor for having a new baby, succeeding in a school examination, wedding, or returning from travel, then in their opinion this Muslim does not understand the true meaning of support and hostility in God. They might even consider him of weak faith and blurred belief. This is an incorrect viewpoint in which the concepts are confused and in which the meaning of banned support is mixed up with the meaning of legitimate and permissible disagreement, despite the huge difference and enormous gap between the two concepts. Islam has brought to us the greatest, loftiest, and most honorable ethics. The orthodox shari'ah has distinguished between what is considered banned support for the infidels and what is not. The support banned by the shari'ah includes many things, including liking the infidels, liking their religion, supporting their creed and law, spying on the Islamic state for their benefit, preferring their religion to Islam, helping them to defeat Muslims, or adopting them as companions, rather than Muslims.

One of the forms of permissible, and good disagreement is to visit non-Muslims when they are ill, which the prophet, God's prayers and peace be upon him, did. These forms also include congratulating non-Muslims -- Christians, Jews, and others -- on the occasions of marriage, having a new baby, returning from travel, recovering from an illness, and similar matters that are allowed by all religions. They also include the idea that a Muslim is obliged to financially support his Christian or Jewish relatives, if they are his responsibility, and he can opt to do so out of charity, if they are not his responsibility. They also include mercy; mercy is obligatory even toward non-Muslims. They also permit Muslims to attend the funerals of non-Muslims and to stand up if a funeral procession of non-Muslim is passing, as the prophet did. The prophet justified this by saying: "Was he not a human being?" in response to someone who said to him: "It is the funeral of a Jew." They include expressing condolences to non-Muslims, provided that this happens in a way that does not contradict shari'ah and not in their place of worship. They also include participating with non-Muslims in allowed procedures, such as buying, selling, pawning, borrowing; commercial operations, such as speculation and partnerships, and other operations; accepting their presents and giving them presents in return; renting from them, as long as this renting does not include a violation of the faith of the Muslim or a negligence of his duties toward his religion or God; and also marrying protected women of the Book,

such as Christian and Jewish women.

Islam is a strong and open-minded religion that does not fear dealing with and being open to others. In addition, the Muslim does not fear opening up to those who believe in other religions, because he is capable of giving them what is good for their life on earth and for their afterlife and of gaining from them what is good for his life on earth. Therefore, the Muslim approaches people of other religions without fear because he is strong by virtue of his creed and shari'ah and treats them well and according to the best manners. Through the Muslim's behavior and actions, non-Muslims will understand the greatness of Islam. They will start to like Islam through his actions, even before he talks to them about its principles, and they will see in it the best and greatest model for refined behavior, noble ethics, sincerity of work, and trustworthiness.

Islam does not favor isolation and does not like introversion and solitude. Therefore, it is different, for instance, from Judaism. The Jews isolate themselves; they do not marry into any other religion. They have imprisoned themselves within the Jewish ghetto. Therefore, you will find the Jews unusually ostracized and hated, and perhaps you have never heard of anyone who converted to Judaism. Isolation means retreat and shrinking, then rigidity and waning, and eventually withering and death. Islam is not like this, because by nature it is vibrant and dynamic; Islam interacts with the others and engages in exchanges with them. The distinguished shari'ah bestows splendor and vitality upon Islam and has made it pure and flexible through the centuries and crises. The Muslim youths would be better off if they were to understand the nature of their religion and set aside the worries and apprehensions about opening up to non-Muslims.

The spread of the takfir disease has always been a source of threat to the unity of the nation, and a destructive tool working toward destabilizing its structure. This is because takfir is a divisive ideology that tears up the strength and divides the closed ranks. Furthermore, it is an intellectual malfunction that disturbs the image of Islam and distorts it.

The core problem of the follower of the takfir heresy is that, for many of them, the authority of God Almighty concerns only the rulers, and it means accusing the followers of the rulers of being infidels on the pretext that any negligence or complacency in implementing and following God's rulings is blatant infidelity that puts the person outside the faith, but this applies not only to the rulers, but also to all their followers. The word followers, as far as the takfir ideology is concerned, does not have a specific domain; it starts from the minister and ends with the sentry at the door; it includes even the conscripts who perform their national service in the army or police force. Even the ulema who occupy official positions in the state are considered infidels. The story of Shaykh Al-Dhahabi in Egypt was not very far; his kidnapping and killing are still remembered today. He was a famous and honorable scholar, and his only fault, in their opinion, was that he exposed the crookedness of their ideology and replied to their heresy.

The authority of God Almighty does not at all mean accusing anyone of infidelity. The authority of God Almighty is innocent of accusing the Muslim rulers, peoples, and ulema of infidelity. The authority of God Almighty is a pure white page that has been tarnished by whims, opinions, and the scarcity of beneficial and correct knowledge of shari'ah. The indisputable truth is that the authority of the Creator is above all that was committed by the takfir callers when they expelled the Muslims to the circle of infidels. Infidelity is a grave judgment that cannot be proved except by satisfying conditions and removing obstacles, and it cannot be pronounced correctly except after being proved by a respectable scholar or obeyed ruler.

If we look into history, we will find that in most cases the main reason for the dissent of Muslims has been accusing the Muslim rulers of infidelity on the basis of a faulty and silly understanding of the concept of authority, an understanding that its subscribers used as a justification for accusing the Muslim rulers and all those who follow them and implement their orders of being infidels.

The Islamic Group played a prominent role in fighting the takfir heresy in Egypt during the 1970s, a role that had a great impact in protecting its sons, and others, from the takfir mania. Therefore, the Islamic Group today fights against accusing the Muslim rulers wrongly of infidelity, just as it fought against wrongly accusing the Muslim subjects of infidelity.

(Description of Source: London Al-Sharq al-Awsat in Arabic -- Influential Saudi-owned London daily providing independent coverage of Arab and international issues; editorials reflect official Saudi views on foreign policy)

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