

Dialog

Serialization of Latest Book by Egyptian Islamic Movement-Part 5

Al-Sharq Al-Awsat Exclusively Publishes in Series the Latest Book by Egyptian Islamic Movement Entitled "Governorship, A Shari'a Based View and a Realistic Vision" by Najih Ibrahim "Armed Struggle against Governments Has Weakened and Beseiged Religion and Left it Heavily Wounded" "One of the Most Important Causes of Intervention by the Major Powers in the Muslims' Affairs is the Engagment of Islamic Groups in Fighting Governments" The serialization of part 5 was published on July 31, 2005

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(Introduction)

Al-Sharq Al-Awsat will exclusively publish in parts the latest book of the Egyptian

Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyah entitled "Governorship, A Shari'a-Based View and a Realistic Vision".

This part reviews how all those who revolted against the governments under the pretext of restoring rights and alleviating injustice failed in their endeavor. Moreover, they did not return to continue their campaigns. They were either executed, exiled or imprisoned.

The book, which is written by Najih Ibrahim, a leading figure in the Egyptian Al-jama'a al-Islamiyah, argues that none of the present governments are comparable to the rule of al-Hajjaj Bin Yousif al-Thaqafi in its injustice, tyranny and ruthlessness. Yet Anas Bin Malik did not approve that people should revolt against him.

Moreover, when al-Husayn Bin Ali (may Allah be pleased with them) decided to revolt against Yazid Bin Mu'awiah, he based his decision on a wrong religious judgment he made.

Instead, he should have implemented the rule, which says gathering around the one who is preferred is better than creating dissent and disarray because of the one who is virtuous.

The book points out that the problem of the Islamic movement is that whenever one of its members is killed or one of its leaders is imprisoned, they revoke al-Husayn's call 'life after them is not worth living'.

They try to take revenge, but they themselves end up being killed like their colleague. The preachers are expected not to be allured by the thousands who call on them, attend their meetings, and instigate them to take up arms and revolt against their rulers.

In this way, they are forced to do what they do not like. They are pushed to a point where they cannot see beyond it.

The book stresses that not every pious person is good enough to become a king or a ruler. Similarly, not every virtuous person can delve into politics, nor can he wade its tumultuous paths.

When kings and rulers feel Muslim scholars are vying with them over power and authority, the scholars will lose both, the religion and authority. In such cases, kings will not accept any intercession, even if it came from a person of morality, piety and righteousness. No advice will be heeded, even if it came from al-Husayn and the family of al-Husayn.

This part of the book concludes by stressing that those who call for adherence to principles and respecting laws, those who demand that rights should be respected, those who endeavor to seek support for their just causes and logical demands, should first of all refrain from engaging into an armed conflict with their governments. They should not start a war and should avoid being allured into these armed conflicts.

(The Serialization - Part Five of the Book as Serialized by the Paper)

All those who revolted against governments whether in the past or at present, did so to restore some rights and eliminate injustice. However, injustice was not eliminated and rights were not restored.

Moreover, these people did not return to their causes and mosques. In fact, they did not return to their homes and families. They were either executed, or forced to go into exile or imprisoned.

There are many examples of what Islamic movements gained from resorting to armed struggle against governments. The revolt against the Syrian government is one such example.

The end of Juhaiman al-Utaibi when he and his followers stormed the Holy Mosque of Mecca using weapons and ammunitions is another.

One can mention also the fate of victims of the fighting in Algeria. The number of those killed so far exceeds one hundred thousand.

These armed revolts did not make Islamic groups stronger or more powerful. In fact, these groups came out heavily wounded and humiliated. They were left to mourn their dead sons.

As a result, they became unable even to defend themselves, let alone fight their enemies.

Fighting has put Islam under siege and tightened the circle around it to the extent that it became unable even to catch its breath to maintain its own existence.

Armed struggle against governments has been one of the most important causes, which allowed the super powers to interfere in the Muslims' affairs and play havoc with their destiny.

Have we forgotten the Darfour tragedy, and the super powers' stand toward it? Have we forgotten the American law, which calls for the protection of religious and ethnic minorities in the Muslim countries? Have we forgotten the flagrant attempts to interfere in our morality, culture and the role of science and worship at our homes? Have we forgotten the American decision to launch preemptive strikes against any country or group that breaks the rules of obedience or confronts its interests? All of these happen under the banner of war on terrorism.

None of our governments nowadays is a match to al-Hajjaj in his tyranny, injustice and ruthlessness. In fact, in his tyranny, al-Hajjaj surpassed every description and boundary. He violated every sacred

thing.

Despite that, when people asked Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) about al-Hajjaj's tyranny, he answered: "Be patient. Not an era passes, until it is followed by another that is worse. That is what I heard from your Prophet, (Allah's peace be upon him)".

Aren't we supposed to resort to patience with our governments now, considering that what they do is not even comparable to what al-Hajjaj did?

Another example to cite is the story of al-Husayn Bin Ali (may Allah be pleased with them).

During the lifetime of Mu'awiyah (may Allah be pleased with him), allegiance was taken for his son Yazid. Al-Husayn, Ibn al-Zubayr, Abd al-Rahman Bin Abi Bakr, Ibn Umar, and Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them all) refrained from giving their allegiance to Yazid. Later, Abd al-Rahman Bin Abi Bakr died without giving his allegiance.

When Mu'awiyah died in 60 A.H., allegiance was taken for Yazid. Ibn Umar and Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them) paid their allegiance, whereas al-Husayn and Ibn al-Zubayr (may Allah be Pleased with them) refused to do so. They left Medina, went to Mecca, and settled there to avoid giving their allegiance to Yazid.

Delegations from Kufa and Iraq started to visit al-Husayn urging him and calling upon him to go to Iraq so that they would give their allegiance to him instead of Yazid. They told him they have not yet given their allegiance to any one and that they were waiting for him to go with them.

As soon as people became aware of al-Husayn's desire (may Allah be pleased with him) to come out, senior companions (of the Prophet) began visiting him and asking him not to do so. If he went out and revolted, they advised him, he and his family would be killed for no cause or interest.

Some Muslims even tried to prevent him by force from going out. There was a fight between them in which sticks and whips were used. Nevertheless, he had it his way and left (Mecca) consequently.

Al-Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him) went and set up his camp and dug trenches around the tents.

Ubaidullah Bin Ziad sent a thousand-strong army soldiers to face him. Yazid gave his approval to go to war and instructed the army to fight al-Husayn.

Later Umar Bin Sa'd arrived on top of a large and seasoned army to besiege and fight al-Husayn.

There was a debate between the two parties. Al-Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him) put forward three demands and offered (not to fight) if any of his three demands was met.

He offered that he would be allowed either to go back in the same way as he came, or to be taken to Yazid to put his hand in Yazid's hand, or to be sent to fight the Turks.

Umar Bin Sa'd sent a message to this effect to Ubaidullah Bin Ayad (so written). Ubaidullah rejected these demands. He demanded that al-Husayn should surrender and accept whatever he would decide.

Al-Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him) refused to extend his hand to them in humiliation and to obey them like slaves, as he put it. He entered his tent, put some perfume, and set out to fight,

knowing he was going to be killed. The women in his company began to cry for him.

Umar Bin Sa'd's army closed in and denied al-Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him) access to water.

Al-Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him) asked them: 'Weren't it you who wrote to me saying the fruits are ripe and the time is right. Come to us and you will find a tough and strong army at your command?'

They replied they did not. One of the fighters shot an arrow at him and it hit him between his shoulders.

Al-Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him) spent a long day alone. Many fighters came close to him, but they preferred to return rather than being involved in killing him.

The situation continued like this until that wretched man came and hit al-Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him) on the head with his sword. Blood gushed out. Then the fighters began to strike members of the family of Prophet with their swords.

Al-Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him) felt very thirsty. He tried to get some water from the Euphrates River. They prevented him. He went to the river trying to quench his thirst by drinking some water.

One of the fighters threw an arrow at him, which struck his chin. He was bleeding and his blood was mixed with the Euphrates water.

Al-Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him) stood there alone. There was nobody to defend him. Ibn Ziyad's army surrounded him.

One of the fighters hit him on his left shoulder, then on his neck. They left him wounded and moaning.

Another fighter hit him with his lance, then came down off his horse and cut off his head and took it with him. Thus al-Husayn and his family were killed (may Allah be pleased with them).

Nobody can question al-Husayn's true belief and his piety. Nobody can raise a question about his righteousness and that he was the best among the Muslims at that time.

However, his judgment, which consequently led him to revolt, was incorrect. This was not a judgment based on Shari'a. It was rather a personal judgment in which he made a mistake.

This was an incorrect judgment, but in Islam, a person who makes an incorrect judgment will be rewarded one reward.

Al-Husayn made a mistake in his judgment. However, his mistake was not due to a whim or stubbornness. His brother al-Hasan did not agree with him in his judgment. Before his death, he warned him not to go out to Kufa.

Nobody can deny al-Husayn's status and wisdom (may Allah be pleased with him). He was of a noble breed. He was the Prophet's (May Allah's peace be upon him) grandson.

However, Islam is a realistic religion. It has never been set up on idealistic issues only neglecting

materialist issues. It is not built on wishes and desires at the expense of reality. It does not concentrate on determination only pushing aside the acceptable and the issues that can be permitted.

In fact, Islam is a combination of these all. It is a religion that combines between idealism and realism. It put together the spiritual and the realistic. It mixes between this earthly life and the after life. It is a combination of duty and reality. All these issues give Islam its strength and the ability to reform people and societies.

One of the clearest manifestations of Islam's realistic approach is that it approves following the one who has been preferred by the people instead of insisting on following the one the one who is virtuous, more prudent and more pious.

Islam advocates that uniting and gathering around the one who has been preferred and accepted by the public is better than creating dissent because of the one that is more virtuous.

Muslim clerics agree that it is allowed to pray behind the one who is preferred and accepted. The Sunni clerics approve praying behind any person whether he is upright and good or dissolute and bawdy, as long as he is a Muslim and turns his face toward Mecca.

Imams and reformers are required to consult the authorities in religion, Ulama, the righteous people, and those with experience should listen to them. This especially applies to those authorities in Islam about whom there is disagreement, such as Ibn Abbas, Ibn Sa'id, Abi Waqid, Ibn Umar, and Muhammad Bin al-Hanafiya.

In this way, they would avoid risks and pitfalls, taking into consideration that these authorities have been loyal to them and have answered their call. No doubt, these good companions loved al-Husayn and his family more than Yazid.

Al-Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him) should have listened to their advice. Instead, he insisted on his own opinion. Eventually, Ibn Abbas said farewell to him as if he was sure al-Husayn was going to be killed. He kissed him and said: 'I leave you as a dead man in the custody of Allah'.

If al-Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him) had listened to their advice, the killings, beheadings, and the crushing of bodies under the feet of horses would not have happened.

The task of the preachers and righteous people is to bring about and develop interests and good things and to reduce and eliminate bad and harmful things.

They should not waste a major interest for the sake of a smaller one. They should not bring about a major harm to avoid a smaller one. Similarly, they may not add new harms to the harms that their people are already facing.

Otherwise, what good do the Muslim people reap from this situation? Whenever one of its good men is killed, the one who takes his place says: 'Life is not worth living after him'. Thus continues the cycle of bloodshed and killing until all the good and righteous people are terminated.

This is because none of them is ready to accept the reality of his brother's death and to continue his life in a normal way.

Yes, no doubt, it is part of our religion and worship to love our predecessors and the men of virtue. However, this worship cannot be conducted in an atmosphere of tense emotions and away from

reasoning.

The love of the predecessors cannot be translated in the murder of the men of virtue who come after them.

It can rather be best manifested in carrying on their mission. It can be maintained by purging the mistakes and negative aspects that have been stuck to the mission. We can love our virtuous men and at the same time try to catch up with the good things of religion and the world that they have missed.

The Islamic movement faces a problem that goes back deep in history. Whenever a leader is killed or arrested, the others repeat al-Husayn's call: 'Life is not worth living after him'. They try to take revenge, but they also are killed as their companion was killed.

If that leader is arrested, they might declare war to free their colleague. Consequently, however, thousands of them are arrested and are put in prisons to get a taste of what their colleague, whom they tried to free, has been through.

Had the movement restrained itself after the death of one member, it would have saved scores of lives. Had it accepted the imprisonment of one of its members for the sake of maintaining the freedom of other members outside prisons, it would have secured their freedom and integrity.

Soon, this prisoner would have been released and the problem would have been solved. However, the slogans tell the enthusiasts: 'Life is not worth living after him'.

The preachers should be aware of the peoples' nature and characteristics to avoid misunderstanding them and making mistakes. They should benefit from the predecessors and the experienced people.

They should not insist on going through the experience themselves. It is not wise to start from the point where the others started. One has to start from where the others have ended up. Did al-Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him) look into the experiences of his father and his brother with the people of Kufa?

Preachers are expected to be knowledgeable about the nature and the psyche of the people. They should not be deceived by the voices of the thousands that shout in support for them, attend their meetings and conferences, and instigate them to resort to arms and revolt against the rulers.

In this way, the preachers are pressurized into doing what they usually would not like to do. Thus, they are pushed to follow a path with no end in sight. They think the whole Ummah is behind them, and thus they throw themselves into calamity.

When things reach this point, people disperse and leave their preachers on their own and helpless. They become confused and do not know what to do.

Some eighteen thousand people dispersed from around al-Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him) and disappeared. They left him to face his destiny and was killed in front of their eyes.

Not every righteous and pious person is qualified to become a king or ruler. We should make a distinction between piety and righteousness and governing and politics.

Not every preacher is qualified to become a ruler. Not every righteous person can delve into politics. Nor can he wade its treacherous paths.

The people of knowledge in religion should know they are the inheritors of the prophets in knowledge, in conveying the message and guidance.

Usually when they vie the rulers for authority and power, they will be deprived of both. They will not gain power and will not become kings. On the other hand, they will not be able to continue their mission to spread the faith and guide the people.

The power struggle with rulers might lead to imposing a ban on their mission. The preachers might get killed.

Therefore, the preachers should become a tool for reform and a source of advice for the kings and rulers. They should help them in doing the right and good thing only.

In this case, rulers might accept their advice, and kings might respond to the guidance and instructions of the preachers and religious scholars.

In such cases, kings and rulers might even accept the blame and the revision that come from the preachers when they see that the scholars have no ambitions or designs on their kingdom or emirate, and that the scholar does not intend to compete with them in their authority and power.

Once kings feel there is no danger posed against them from the religious scholars and that they have no worldly plan or ambition, they would bring the scholars closer to them and would listen to them. When the scholars try to mediate, kings would accept their mediation and intercession and adopt their opinions.

On the other hand, when scholars choose to take up arms against kings, there will be no room for mediation and intercession even if the attempt came from a person of piety and righteousness. No advice will be heeded to; even it came from al-Husayn and his family.

When fighting erupts between the Muslims, the preachers and religious scholars should stay out and not engage in it. They should channel their efforts to spread faith. They should concentrate their efforts on teaching and educating people about the facts and reality of Islam. They should introduce the right aspects of religion.

Taking up arms against rulers would bring about much more harm than it may bring about good results.

This is what made Ibn Umar and Ibn Abbas opt for spreading the faith and teaching without getting involved in competing with kings and rulers over authority.

They saw fighting and revolting would weaken the Ummah, waste all the gains that the preachers have made and wither the glow of Islam.

In many eras, preachers and imams have not been able to combine between religion and state. They have failed to be a religious imam and a political imam at the same time. This happens especially when they try to achieve that through armed struggles with governments.

When they do take up arms, they lose both, political authority and religious leadership. They can neither establish their own state, nor spread the faith.

They might even be jailed, exiled or killed. Consequently, the rule and the state will remain as they

have been, but the call for Islam would die, and the preachers would be killed or imprisoned.

Here the advocates of corruption and sin step in as they find their golden opportunity. The commodity they try to sell will be much in demand, after the voice of guidance has weakened and the glow of justice has wilted.

The country has been deprived of the preachers; therefore, the advocates of sins and whims become active. The youth go astray and the worshippers of the devil and their followers appear. Life in society will be tinted with vindication, revenge and hardship.

Members of the Islamic movement should not put themselves in a position that exposes them to insult, degradation, and makes them a target for smear in every gathering and through all means available.

War and fighting bring about defamation and degradation. Merits and credits are ignored or forgotten.

Had Ibn Abbas entered the vicious circle of war, nothing of his knowledge and jurisprudence would have been remembered. He would not have been considered an Imam and authority in the interpretation of Quran.

His merits would have been ignored or concealed. His character would have been degraded. People would have been deprived of his knowledge and call for Islam. His character would have been lost in the dust of battles and fighting.

The people of merit should not waste their merits; they should not compromise their dignity and integrity.

Dignity will be lost. Those who are bent on defamation, denying merits, and spreading rumors will find an excellent opportunity.

Inevitably, these are all the outcome and byproduct of armed conflicts. Intensified fighting between any two parties would certainly lead to this kind of consequences.

One should expect the worse, if the fighting takes place between the followers of the same religion, the citizens of the same country, and those who are bound by joint interests,

When war breaks out, the law of war prevails and replaces the ordinary laws of life. Consequently, nobody would listen to fair demands. Nobody would think of logical solutions. Only the law of force prevails, and the power of logic disappears.

Dialogue and understanding disappear. Only one thing remains and it determines the outcome and imposes itself on the situation; that is the sound of guns and the law of the jungle.

When war breaks out, do not put forward any demands; do not ask about rights; do not call for justice; do not refer to any laws, and do not ask for adherence to humanitarian principles.

When war breaks out, do not boast about your historical or ethnic origins. Do not stick to world principles. Do not wait for human rights commissions. Do not cry for the children who have become orphans. Do not cry over the ruins that were destroyed by the fighting.

Do not think of any of these things. Do not expect your enemy to respect any principles; and do not

ask him to do so. Do not remind him of any laws.

He is in the middle of a war. He will not respect any of these. He will not remember; and most probably, he will not even listen to you.

The only language that is understood in any war is the language of destruction. The warring parties will attempt to achieve one single goal. Their only concern is to achieve victory and to bring the enemy to his knees.

In so doing, they even do not think about the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the means.

Those who call for upholding principles and respecting laws and rights; those who endeavor to realize their just causes and logical demands should avoid, in the first place, being engaged in armed struggle with their governments.

They should not rekindle the fire of war. They should not allow themselves to be allured into armed struggle. Thus should behave the advocates and supporters of rights.

Should an armed struggle erupt, they must do whatever possible to stop it. If others try to allure them to become part of a confrontation, which they have no chance of winning, they should sacrifice everything to put an end to it.

Those who try to forward their just causes and realize their rights, those who say they advocate fair demands, should abandon and disappear rather than resorting to armed struggle.

The only thing that would come out of armed struggle is spilling innocent bloods and taking lives for no just reason or definite interest based on Shari'a.

Those who try to achieve this through their religious missions, those who try to realize the objectives of their religion, should first stop fighting.

Then they should ask: 'Where are the principles? Why are the laws not respected? Why are the rights wasted?' Only then, they should submit their fair demands.

Tanks do not have conscience. Bombs of airplanes do not distinguish between the young and the old. Realizing victory does not have to follow a straight line.

Whoever chooses to fight should know the nature of war. He should accept it with all its consequences and implications, though he is not supposed to engage in it in the first place.

However, if he chooses to fight and becomes engaged in a war, he should not put forward demands. He should not ask for a dialogue. He should not call for respecting rights. He should not cry over children and women. He should not try to find shelter in international law or human rights. He should not cry over past glories and pride.

If he does, we should tell him: 'You do not understand what war means. You have not experienced real fighting yet. Why then did you engage yourself in what you do not understand, and have no experience of, and cannot afford to stand its consequences?'

(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

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"Kidnapping these people is absolutely non-Islamic. It neither works in the interest of fair Islamic issues nor realizes the demands of the kidnappers, no matter how logical they may be. The calamity is greater when a Muslim kidnaps another Muslim. What crime did that human being commit? The calamity gets even greater when the hostage is slaughtered in front of cameras and his picture is aired to the entire world on satellite screens. This conveys the worst image of Islam and Muslims. Major countries do everything. They kill, destroy, torture, and even occupy whole countries as they talk of democracy and human rights. They do what they want in the dark and contribute nothing to defending our countries and homelands but kidnapping civilians and airing their image as they are slaughtered like sheep so that the whole world rises against us and against our rights and interests.

"When war is on, armies usually respect no covenant, have no mercy on the young or respect for the elderly, and show no veneration for sanctities. The basic goal of war is to achieve victory against the enemy. If that is attainable through mercy and justice then be it. But if it is not, then all other things go. This has been characteristic of war over the ages. Hence, whoever chooses to go to war has to bear all the consequences, otherwise he will give governments the excuse to have the audacity to assail creed, violate sanctities, insult dignity, and break laws and covenants.

"As Islam raised its followers on the great rule 'good deeds are only payable by goodness' and made it the only approach to winning hearts, it also established the second rule-- 'the rule of justice'--and determined the disciplines to govern it. One of these disciplines is that there can be no punishment without crime and that no man may be punished for the sins of others. These are two great rules which law jurists in modern history recognized in the principle 'the defendant is innocent until proven guilty' and in their personalization of punishment. The rule is represented in the Almighty's words 'no sinner may bear the blame for another'

"God Almighty guides fair governments to victory and safeguards their kingdoms and land just as He eliminates and removes unfair governments, even if they are Muslim. This is in the event man is a dominant ruler who masters all means of power. Moreover, generalizing punishment is the biggest catastrophe, the most serious bug, and the utmost act of injustice ever committed by two warring parties whenever arms are taken against the rulers. No specific age or country is exempted from that. It is a general thing that applies to every age and every place in which fighting takes place. Many of those who go against their rulers may have a fair cause and legitimate demands recognized by reason, religion, and tradition. But these rights are wasted, these demands are forgotten, and justice is denied by everybody because of misconduct and unsound acts.

"Whenever injustice is done, rights are usurped, or duties are neglected, many people reflect extensively on how to lift that injustice. They spend sleepless nights in their eagerness to restore that usurped right or see that neglected duty done. It definitely is a great feeling and a noble ethical characteristic to show such eagerness to set things right or to wait anxiously to see justice served, rights restored, and injustice lifted. By the will of God, the people who demonstrate that eagerness will be rewarded. However, as much as hoping to triumph for the object of injustice and bring the unjust to account in order to reform him and put him back on the right path is a great act of worship, there is an equally essential act of worship represented in reflecting thoroughly on and searching meticulously for the sound method to lift that injustice, as well as in examining alternative approaches to fixing defects. The second act of worship is that of looking for a sound approach to establishing rights that is based on certainty rather than assumption, and which has more than less in its favor. Exerting effort and spending time and energy on attaining the right goal and analyzing and rectifying situations must be coupled with, rather inseparable from extensive and deep reflection on how to do that duty, lift injustice, and restore rights to those entitled to them.

"Principles were made to provide a realistic approach to life and to be vividly personalized in people's lives. This is not attainable by the death of leaders and scholars, or the death of their followers after them, since this effaces blessings and wipes out good off the face of the earth. Standing up for the righteous comes by living according to their thoughts, abiding by their teachings, and giving prominence to their objectives. This is the greatest triumph the righteous can ever attain in their lives and after their death. A preacher or scholar lives on in his followers and his life becomes as wide as his teachings spread among his devotees. One righteous may be as old as an entire nation and his life becomes as wide as life itself and as old as time.

"The best of all preachers and scholars are those whose preaching lives on after them and becomes a real element of the life of later generations. They are those whose principles spread to all countries. A preacher is reborn whenever his cause wins a new supporter. The best of all preachers and scholars are those with whose preaching people live and not those who die or whose followers die after them or kill themselves out of grief over their death. Preachers and educators should teach the people how to take on the message of Islam after them. Their followers must inherit and hand down their principles, instead of dying after them.

"Any man can spark a combat or light the fuse of war, even with a small number of people and with poor preparations. But not everyone that goes to war can attain victory or defend his soldiers, and not everyone who sparks the fire of battle can extinguish that fire. Anyone can light the fuse of battle. But only the unequaled among men, the wisest among people, and the most reasonable in both sides can extinguish the fire of that battle. That fire can destroy everything and drag the country into a chaotic climate that does away with the people and the land before anyone can extinguish it. War starts on a small scale then grows bigger and wider. Whoever goes to war has to be able to attain victory, or else get killed or surrender in defeat and humiliation. As they say, woe to the vanquished from the victor.

"One may be pious and righteous. He may be a fasting worshiper who spends his night in prayer, or a virtuous man with noble characteristics. However, he may not be fit to lead the people in spite of his piety and ethics. He may not be fit for monarchy or leadership, for managing the affairs of his subjects, or for setting their life straight. It is said that God's messenger, may God's prayers and peace be upon him, said to Abu-Dharr (al-Ghafari) when he requested appointment as amir: "You are weak, and leadership is a trust. It can be cause of shame and remorse on Doomsday." Weakness here did not mean that Abu-Dharr was weak in terms of faith, piety, or righteousness. Abu-Dharr, may Allah gratify his soul, was known for his piety, asceticism, and devoutness. Weakness here was in terms of leadership, ruling the people, and managing their affairs. God's messenger meant that Abu-Dharr was weak in terms of leadership. A king or leader needs to have special talents in addition to his piety, righteousness, and knowledge. These talents may not be available to many people.

"Mosques and houses of worship where people perform their rituals and worship Allah are greatly hallowed by Allah and the people. God surrounded these places with veneration and grandeur in the hearts of all the people, both the righteous and the immoral, the licentious and the pious. Man has a barrier in his heart that prevents him from assaulting these places and deters him from doing them any harm, even if they are not guarded by men or tight security fences. God assigned the protection of these places to moral soldiers which He implanted deeply in the heart of every man. These moral soldiers prompt man to glorify mosques and prevent any assault on them, even if he was an insurgent, and although he might not be a regular worshiper. God endowed part of His grandeur on these places of worship and dressed them in His greatness. If God had surrounded His mosques with that grandeur, then those who dedicated their lives to hallowing God's sanctities should spare no effort to work to enhance the greatness and holiness of these places, both in their hearts and the hearts of others. The

followers of Islamic Da'wah should guard God's mosques against anything that jeopardizes them or undermines their holiness. They have to eliminate all chances and excuses that may be used to undermine the dignity of mosques, terrorize worshipers, or encourage insurgents to break into them or violate their sanctity.

"Some Muslims stage anti-government demonstrations in the holy places during pilgrimage season. They turn the circumambulation (tawaf) ritual, which is meant to show submission to Allah, into a scene of noisy shouts in which they raise rebellious slogans that slander the governments. The authorities concerned with pilgrimage and pilgrim's safety are compelled to intervene to disperse demonstrators. Hence, fighting and clashes erupt in the Inviolable Country (al-balad al-Haram; Mecca) which is "a safe haven for anyone that enters."

"Pain wrings our hearts whenever we hear of a bunch of Muslims driving cars rigged with explosives and weapons into Mecca or surprising the whole world by blowing up cars in that good country, which Allah made a safe meeting place for His creatures. We are stricken with astonishment when we hear of a bunch of young men who turn God's mosques into weapon caches, storage places for assault knives and chains, or hiding places for anti-government leaflets that incite violence and combat. These acts compel governments to storm these mosques in search of weapons and leaflets or to arrest a runaway person taking shelter inside. The holiness of mosques is shaken in the hearts of the people when they hear about or see these acts being done. They wonder: Is that what mosques are for? Where they built to store weapons, shelter runaway persons, or train people on violence?

"These acts prompt the authorities to launch campaigns against mosques, describe the houses of God as dens of violence and sources of terrorism, and demand these hangouts closed to dry up the sources of terrorism or place them under surveillance. The governments start to exercise their role and enforce their custodianship. Hence, clashes erupt, Allah's houses of worship are stormed, weapons are seized, worshipers are terrorized, harassed, searched, or arrested, and runaway persons are seized.

"We have seen young men getting killed on mosque doorsteps or in prayer niches. That never happened until some zealot youth turned mosques into anti-government armed operation theaters. By so doing, they took mosques away from their main role of holding rituals and preaching the words of Allah. Mosques were built to praise Allah, count His graces, and pray humbly before Him day and night. They were built to promote authentic knowledge and Da'wah and not to become theaters of war and combat, shelters for runaway people, hiding places for arms and leaflets, or operation rooms to plot violence and warfare.

"The sons of the Islamic call are demanded to rise with Allah's mosques above these acts in order to maintain their holiness, guard them against drives by ignorant people and persons with ulterior motives to close them or place them under control, and to avoid complaining later on that mosques are being stormed and that governments are placing tight restrictions on them and saying that mosques may not be turned into places for planning or training on arts of warfare. It is unacceptable to dedicate God's houses to sheltering runaway persons. It is neither reasonable nor religious to turn mosques into weapon caches or storage places for leaflets that incite violence. Reality makes it our duty to make God's houses restrictive to the authentic role for which they were built in the first place. These houses were built for praying, praising Allah, spreading knowledge, reciting the Koran, and preaching the words of God wisely and through good counseling. Taking mosques away from the role for which they were built subjects them to storming, search, closure, or demolition. This deprives the people of frequenting mosques and deprives the community of all the blessings and enlightenment they generate. Moreover, taking mosques away from their basic role undermines people's veneration for

them and makes them constant objects of suspicion and doubt. Hence it becomes easier to assault them and those who frequent them. All that and more happens once we use mosques for roles other than those for which they were built, and once we turn them into war shelters or combat plotting centers.

"The claim that God's Messenger, may Allah's prayers and peace be upon him, and his successors used mosques to prepare armies and organize brigades is an undisputable fact which we do not contest. What we do not accept is when people today act by analogy in their effort to measure up to Allah's prophet and his successors and use mosques in the same way the prophet used his mosque to train people, store weapons, and draw up military plans inside mosques. We do not accept that for several reasons. One of them is that the person who used the prophet's mosque to prepare armies was the head of the state, as represented in the prophet and his successors. A ruler has the right to draw up whatever policy he deems compatible with the age and surrounding conditions. He has powers which no other individual has. How can individuals place themselves on equal footing with the head of the state and assign his powers to themselves when they are not rulers and have no empowerment. During the time of Allah's Messenger, may God's peace and prayers be upon him, and his successors, governments used mosques to prepare for war. This was their entitlement. But today's governments prohibit the use of mosques for that purpose. This is also their entitlement. Nowadays governments in all Islamic countries do not use their mosques in wars with other countries to avoid subjecting them to bombardment on the excuse that they are being used for military activity. In modern times, it was established that war planning and preparations are to be done in military command centers which are built in invincible places on the mountains or underground. But running wars from mosques is not condoned by governments in this age.

"The state of Islam existed during the time of Allah's prophet and his successors. It powerfully defended its lands and mosques and guarded their holiness. Nobody dared to come near mosques, let alone storm or burn them. If the youth of the Islamic movement nowadays are not even capable of defending themselves, how can they defend these mosques? When the government comes to arrest them, they run away leaving mosques to the governments to storm. These young people undoubtedly miss the truth when they think that they are capable of defending mosques. If they believe that they can use these mosques and then run away whenever they are stormed, then we tell them that they are both wrong.

"These youth do wrong when they give governments the excuse to storm mosques. And governments do wrong when they storm the houses of God. This is a major crime and a deadly sin which nobody should commit."

(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: Evils of Dissent From Rulers [Part7]
Unattributed report: "Al-Sharq Al-Awsat Exclusively Publishes Latest Egyptian Islamic Group Book"

*AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT**Sunday, August 7, 2005 T12:31:13Z***Journal Code:** 1431 **Language:** ENGLISH **Record Type:** FULLTEXT**Document Type:** FBIS Translated Text**Word Count:** 3,734

This part of "Authority: Shari'ah View and Realistic Vision (Al-Hakimiyah: Nazrah Shar'iyyah wa Ru'yah Waqi'iyah)," which Al-Sharq al-Awsat publishes exclusively, reviews the situation whereby some Islamists seek asylum abroad and they become exposed to bargaining between countries, and when the need for them lapses, they are dispensed with by being handed over to their original countries.

The book shows that the Islamic groups were wrong to deal according to the principle of trial and error, and that their daily preoccupation with the armed confrontations did not render their steps free of mistakes, a fact that led to bloodshed, hatred, and the fragmentation and weakening of the Islamic nation in the face of its real enemies. The book explains that dissent from the government is not a leisurely outing during which the rebels prance around, and then go back to their homes; it is a military, economic, political, and social suicide.

The book stresses that one of the greatest mistakes that could happen in a nation is that its swords turn against it, and its arrows become directed at the chests of its own sons, and when bloody conflicts erupt among the sons of the same religion and of the same homeland, and hence the resources get squandered, the money is exhausted and lives are wasted.

The book says that those who have rights to demand are required to accept the available compromises until the day comes in which they can get their full rights. Politics is the art of the possible and not that of seeking the impossible. The decision to dismiss or appoint someone is in the hands of the ruler; therefore if they succeed in convincing the ruler of their sincerity, and if they manage to present their demands and proposals well, then they will succeed to a great extent in solving their problems without any need for armed dissent or fighting.

The book stresses that one of the biggest mistakes has been the idea of armed dissent, which prevails in the minds of some people, prevents them from seeing any alternative for it in dealing with the crisis, and makes them consider that dialogue and understanding do not restore rights or repel injustice, but they are on the first step on the road of conceding the right and distorting it. The book stresses that dissenting from the rulers and disobeying them is not an easy or minor issue, but one of the greatest calamities and dangers that could befall the nation, because they could end up with breaking the unity and making the brothers fight each other, and similar to wars they could destroy everything.

When some Islamists seek asylum abroad, this makes them subject to bargaining between states.

When one country has a disagreement with another, it will host some of the dissidents of that other country, it will give them political asylum and use them to exert pressure on their countries to fulfill its own interests or ensure that that country will not transgress against it.

Such asylum does not continue for long, because the host state quickly denounces its guests and hands them over to their countries of origin, puts them on trial, and issues sentences against them.

The states always look out for their own interests and the interests of their peoples. Therefore, anyone who attempts to introduce reform and to achieve what is good for his country and people ought to keep in harmony with his people, coexist with his government, and overlook the existing lapses. This is in order to preserve their call and lives, rather than emigrating to some other country that might use them for its own benefit, trade them in the international markets, and bargain with other governments over their lives. We have seen many countries, after the 11 September events, hasten to hand over the refugees they have and do their utmost in giving information and even in mobilize armies for war on so-called terrorism. This is only in order to serve their own interests, appease the United States, and avoid its evil for their own countries. Political refugees are goods to be bought and sold in the markets of international politics; every refugee ought to understand this fact well.

As Muslims, we ought to learn from the experiences and lessons of the lives of others. Whoever studies history will live long and will increase his expertise. If one does not utilize the experience of history, then he will not benefit, will be forced to work according to the principle of trial and error, and will have to take every day as it comes; this is a fatal way for individuals, groups and countries. Once bitten, twice shy; if one is bitten twice, then he has wasted the expertise, wisdom, and experience of the first bite. A person like this will be deceived many more times in the same way and will be bitten many more times by the same thing. The wise man learns from the experience of others, and the believer is courteous and astute. History is full of lessons and the human race has thousands of years of history; therefore, anyone who does not benefit from the lessons of all these years does not deserve to live or survive.

We have been negligent in implementing this great concept. Perhaps the reasons include that within the context of the honest competition to serve the faith we were not open to the other Islamic movements, because we were always preoccupied with relentless work, which would deprive the workers of mental relaxation and careful deliberation, not to mention the armed and unarmed confrontations that were continuing at various levels. If those working for Islam do not have enough time for careful thinking, their steps will not be devoid of mistakes. The best thing is to take your distance from clashes and conflict, and think; in this case you will be able to see the full picture from a distance and think carefully without being dragged into the events. Fighting has been allowed in Islam in order to avoid sedition; therefore, if fighting itself has become a cause of sedition in the faith, an obstacle in the way of worship, a repellent from the call to the truth, and a source of frightening the youths away from the fruits of a pure call, then fighting will be banned according to the shari'ah, and it ought to be stopped and prevented. Stopping and preventing the fighting in this case becomes the greatest offering to God Almighty. Furthermore, the tolerant Islamic shari'ah is above shedding the blood of its sons and shedding any blood in general without a legitimate aim, or a categorical and not probable, explicit and not implicit interest that is greater than the evil of the bloodshed.

If the only fruits of fighting are bloodshed, hatred, fragmenting the Muslim nation and weakening it before its real enemies, sowing fear in the heart of the nation and its youths, sowing fear of anything Islamic, hindering the call for God, and throwing Muslims into prisons, if fighting is like this, then it is a seditionist fighting, and ought to be prevented and stopped. One of the greatest shari'ah rulings is

the one specified by the sultan of ulema, Al-Izz (Izz-al-Din) Bin-Abd-al-Salam: What does not achieve its aim is null and void. Therefore, what if the fighting not only has not achieved its aim, but also wasted all the interests, brought all the evils, torn the nation, and attracted the ambitions of its enemies?

Mere killing is not a cause for pride; what is a cause for pride is to fight for the sake of God, for the sake of supporting religion, for the sake of strengthening the Muslims, for the sake of dignifying and serving the Muslim countries, and for the sake of repelling the usurpers of and aggressors against the Muslim countries. The Islamic Group stresses that this is the outcome of a long march, deep research, and deliberate study of the foundations of our religion, and the aims of our shari'ah; it is the result of studying Koran verses, gathering evidence, and the harvest of extensive reading of the heritage of our good predecessors.

We also examined the interests lost to our religion and our nation, and the evil and disadvantages that cascaded upon them, and we stopped and contemplated these pages of our experience. After that, we started to examine the pages of our Koran and read its verses anew. We saw a great Koran verse, "And reconciliation between them is far better;" we read it, and we realized that it is the truth. We directed ourselves toward this truth, and we invited our brothers to follow it. We extended our hands with flowers to our country; our kith and kin and our people accepted us, and we all said, "Reconciliation is far better." We also looked carefully into the reality of the world in which our nation, the entire world, and we live; we found that it needs reconciliation, and hence our commitment to reconciliation increased. We thought rationally about this, and our minds approved it, and our hearts testified to its correctness. Therefore, we started this out of conviction, internal wish, and free will. We submitted this to the ulema of our times and the scholars of our nation; everyone blessed our pursuit. We followed the advice of the scholars and ulema of the nation along the path of the predecessors, marching enthusiastically, enlightening ourselves with their opinion and being guided by their knowledge. They said to us the same thing God said, "And reconciliation between them is far better." We, together with our ulema, said: Let the country harvest the fruits of this reconciliation, and let security prevail, construction rise, the enemy go down, and the malicious and envious lose their opportunity.

We call on the sons of all the Islamic movements to follow this great Koran verse, "And reconciliation between them is far better." The Prophet, God's prayers and peace be upon him, reconciled with his people, despite the existence of some injustice, and God approved this reconciliation by saying, "Surely We have granted you a manifest conquest."

In reply to those who say that some of the rulings of religion are absent, we say: There is the graceful patience in which you do not complain; it will be the best aide in your ordeal. God says, "So endure patiently, with graceful patience." Resort to patience; it will light your way; be patient, "Surely with hardship comes ease (Koran verse)" and one hardship will not overcome two eases. The important thing is to keep the call for God alive in society, and it is not important that the truth come from you, as long as the guidance of God comes from other people, and as long as these others are sufficient, then you ought to be grateful to God. If you were deprived of this, then you should resign yourselves to God's will. There are other ways to spread all that is good, such as looking after the interests of people, living for society, spreading the useful knowledge that resurrects the dead souls and guides the delinquents to the right path, offering advice without slander or condescension, treating others well and with good ethics, and accomplishing daily work, production, and construction in the country, and supporting the families and wives, because the best of you are the best toward their women. There is no living better than the one you earn by your own work. Also there is charity work through the civil

society institutions. Furthermore, there is attracting people to religion and good ethics, helping those in trouble, caring for the needy, honoring the Koran readers, the scholars, and the wise men in society.

Dissent from the government is not a leisurely outing during which the rebels prance around, and then go back to their homes; it is a military, economic, political, and social suicide for all sides. It is total destruction for the Islamic movements more than it is for the governments. It weakens countries, tears up the nation, tempts the enemies to attack us, distorts our religion and tolerant shari'ah, and turns the people against us and against the great and pure call of Islam.

Lifting injustice is a noble aim in itself, and those who pursue it ought to be praised. However, we say, and we stress it, good intentions and honorable pursuits do not justify its pursuers to make mistakes, overlook what is right, and squander interests that everyone is obliged to achieve for Islam and Muslims. If fighting or war were to erupt between two groups of Muslims, the ulema and the callers for God ought to do their utmost to reconcile the fighting groups, and to make peace between the conflicting sides. This is their basic role and main duty; the Koran said, "Make peace between them." The ulema and the callers for God are the live conscience, the open mind, and the beating heart of the nation; they feel its pain, they guide it to the right path, and distinguish between what benefits it, and what harms it. The nation is safe with these ulema, finds what it needs in them, and sees the truth in their behavior and actions. The engagement of the ulema in the fighting and their death has deprived the entire nation of their knowledge, and has broken the hearts of the Muslims because of the grief over them. The absence of these ulema has led to the spread of ignorance. The presence of the ulema encourages people to do what is good, and their hearts gather around them. Therefore, it would be better if the ulema do not engage in war with their governments, because they might not achieve anything they want from this war. If they engage in such a war, they might find they have neither won the war, nor preserved their call; they would be killed, put under siege, and prevented from their call, and all the Muslims would be deprived of the knowledge of these ulema. If the ulema, callers, and reformists die or are killed, then the people will appoint leaders who will talk without knowledge, and hence through the pronouncements of these leaders, they and the people will be lost and be unhappy. With the death of the ulema the opportunity emerges for the rise of those without knowledge.

One of the greatest mistakes and dangers that could happen in the nation is that its internal distress becomes too strong, its swords turn against it, and its arrows become directed at the chests of its own sons, and when bloody conflicts erupt among the sons of the same religion and of the same homeland, and hence the resources get squandered, the money is exhausted, and lives are wasted. Thus the nation is distracted from fighting its enemy, who is waiting to ambush it, and who wants to kill it. Many of the Muslim conquests stopped conveying the message of Islam when the Muslims started to fight each other.

The human soul frequently aspires to perfection and idealism; frequently man lives longing to achieve what he wants. However, God has decreed that man will not achieve all that he wants. Many people are content with their reality, love this reality, interact with it, and this interaction leads them to achieve much of what they have aspired to and wished for. These are the rational people who accept what is available, and build on it their hopes and future. They accept the part in order that this part will lead them to what is greater and better. However, there is a group of people who like to live in hopes and dreams. A member of this group keeps chasing the impossible until he loses the possible from his own hands. He keeps wagering on the unknown until he loses the reality he has achieved. He spends his life running after the lost until what he already has is lost. They are people who want everything, and if they do not get all they want, then they will reject everything on the pretext of preserving their rights, not squandering anything and not abandoning any duty.

Those who have rights to demand are required to accept the available compromises until the day comes in which they can get their full rights. Politics is the art of the possible and not that of seeking the impossible, as the politicians say. This is compatible with God's law, as He said, "So fear God, as much as you can." Those who reject the part because they want the whole, and who follow the principle of all or none are following a futile philosophy, which shari'ah does not approve, and the reality does not accept. If someone is not convinced by what we say, then time will teach him a severe lesson. The sons of the Islamic movements ought to work according to the great principle, "What cannot be achieved in its entirety, should not be abandoned in its entirety," which is included in the Koran when He said, "So fear God, as much as you can," and "God does not impose on any soul a burden greater than it can bear."

All Muslims at all times and in any country ought to be rational and behave wisely. They ought to know that the decision to dismiss or appoint someone is in the hands of the ruler; therefore if they succeed in convincing the ruler of their sincerity, and if they manage to present their demands and proposals well, then they will succeed to a great extent in solving their problems without any need for armed dissent or fighting.

Not every approach of the rulers and sultans is an abandonment of religion and an act of moving away from God Almighty. Despite the correctness of what we said above, it is only a part of the complete picture of this issue and shows only one of its two sides. Without showing the other side, the picture will not be clear, and hence the understanding will not be correct. Did the Prophet not say in his Hadith: "Mediate and you will be rewarded?" How could the mediator mediate without approaching the rulers and knocking on the door of the sultan?

Approaching the sultans and rulers is not all evil and is not renounced in an absolute way. It is an evil deed whose culprit is renounced if the culprit were to approach the rulers to sell his faith and abandon his religion, and if he were seduced by the gold of the sultan to concede his principles. Such a person most probably will not be of the pious who are loyal to their faith, but will be one of those who trade their principles for cheap worldly gain. As for those who are true and sincere in their love for the good of the people, they approach the rulers to offer advice, lift injustice from the meek, pursue establishing the right and removing the wrong, minimizing evil, or doing what the people need. If such people were to abandon approaching the ruler and leave his court for the corrupt and bad people to roam freely in it, then who would convey to the sultan the concerns of his people and guide him to the good of the country and the worshippers. The history of Islam is full of honorable stances by great ulema who went to the sultan and the rulers, not because they wanted a temporary worldly gain, but to offer advice and remind him of God. There are ulema who approached the rulers and sultans, and this added to the faith and did not diminish it, and clarified the truth not blurred it. Not every approach of the rulers and sultans is forbidden; some of these contacts are allowed, they even could be obligatory and constitute a duty.

The idea of armed dissent, which prevails in the minds of some people, prevents them from seeing any alternative for it in dealing with the crisis and makes them consider that dialogue and understanding do not restore rights or repel injustice, but they are the first step on the road of conceding the right and distorting it. This thinking is not correct. The incidents of history along the years keep rejecting it and refuting its evidence. There is no relationship whatsoever between dialogue and understanding and the loss of rights and the distortion of the features of the cause. On the contrary, very often disregard of the principle of dialogue has caused the loss of rights and their irreversible disappearance. The one who has a right to pursue ought to follow the way of understanding and negotiations as long as he can, because it is the easiest and shortest way to achieve what he wants and fulfill his intentions. The most

likely place in which the right could be lost and distorted is the battlefield; in the atmosphere of thundering bullets, and roaring guns, many people lose their reason, and careful deliberations and patient examination do not find a foothold in the midst of battles and wars.

Most of the time, dialogue and understanding are the ideal way to solve problems and defuse crises, especially when the conflict is between Muslims. They were the way followed by Al-Hasan Bin-Ali (grandson of the Prophet Muhammad), God be satisfied with him, despite the blame of the objectors, and because of this the Prophet, God's prayers and peace be upon him, bestowed the status of master upon him. This happened despite the fact that he accepted some injustice in this reconciliation, but it was better than innocent bloodshed, violation of sanctities, and giving the enemy the opportunity to gloat over the problems of the Muslims.

Dissenting from the rulers, and disobeying them is not an easy or minor issue, but one of the greatest calamities and dangers that could befall the nation, because they could end up in breaking the unity and making the brothers fight each other, and, similar to wars, they could destroy everything.

(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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AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT

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"Going against the rulers provides foreign armies with the excuse to interfere. It gives them footing in our land on the excuse of protecting minorities. The Darfour crisis is not far from us. Neither is the US bill on protecting ethnic and religious minorities. The numerous negative consequences of taking

arms against rulers draw the attention of those who promote Allah's words and urge them to take after the model of Allah's messengers who had resolve and who displayed positive perseverance. This is the greatest ever strategic option whose great value and grandeur ought to be recognized by Islam workers.

"Refraining from branding rulers as infidels and preventing revolt against them bring them closer to religion and nurture their amity for Islam and those who promote it. It shows them that those who preach Allah's path have no ambition in their power or their posts and that they mean them no harm. It shows them that their ultimate objective is to uphold the creed and attain prominence for Islam. If the rulers attain that goal themselves, they will be generously rewarded and will be accorded that great honor before anyone else. Not only will they assume a high status in this world, but they will also gain sublimity in this life and in the hereafter as well. But when fatwas brand Muslim rulers as infidels and incite the people to take arms against them, it is not unusual to see hatred on the part of these rulers, their aides, and large sectors of the people toward the sons of the Islamic movement and toward creed and those who work for it and promote it. (When that happens) You see all these people lying in wait for Da'wah, distrusting those who preach the word of God, looking down at the righteous with suspicion, and seeking to restrain them and avert the hazard of their preaching. Consequently, the voice of reason, logic, and tolerance dies down and is replaced by cruelty, violence, and harshness and all blessings are replaced by evils, affliction, and corruption. (In which case) Governments take liberties against the creed and embark on acts they would not have dared adopt or even talk about or approach before that.

"No verse in Allah's book has ever gained more attention from the Islamic movement than the verses that talk about governorship in general, and the three verses that came in al-Ma'idah sure in particular. The verses are: "If any do fail to judge by what God hath revealed, they are (no better than) unbelievers," "if any fail to judge by what God hath revealed, they are (no better than) wrong-doers," and "if any do fail to judge by what God hath revealed, they are (no better than) those who rebel." These three verses have been the object of so much debate and argument. The different factions of the Islamic movement have had numerous visions and interpretations of these verses, which have been the primary preoccupation of many of the sons of the Islamic movement in Egypt and the Arab world, and even the world at large, since 1960s.

"These three verses are most articulate when it comes to the issue of ruling by Allah's revelation. They distinctly vilify and warn those who apply judgments other than those revealed by Allah. Therefore, these verses provide definitive indications that applying Allah's revealed judgment is an obligation. Although they largely explain the judgment which Shari'ah hands down on the rulers who fail to apply Allah's revealed judgment s and show the consequences of their acts-most serious of which is armed rebellion-- they do that in a non-definitive manner. Therefore, these verses are suppositional rather than definitive in terms of judging those who fail to apply Allah's revealed judgments.

"These verses have been the subject of numerous views and interpretations. Although these interpretations often swayed from one end to the opposite, every team took them as their main and most powerful proof. It is no wonder that these verses received that much concentrated attention.

"The verses were revealed when a Jewish man committed adultery. The Jews went to Allah's Messenger to consult him on the issue. When he asked them about the penalty Torah hands down on a free man who commits adultery, they held back Allah's judgment, devised a judgment other than Allah's, and falsely attributed it to Torah. They did not admit Allah's judgment which they had in the Torah until God's Messenger, may Allah's prayers and peace be upon him, pushed them to the corner

until they reluctantly admitted the stoning judgment.

"The Jews who were meant by these verses committed a number of serious violations, where each one is sufficient to warrant God's wrath and punishment. Their sins may be summed up in the fact that they lied to Allah and attributed to Him what he did not say about the penalty of adultery. They changed Allah's words and falsely alleged that what they personally invented was God's penalty as stated in Torah. They lied to Allah's Messenger, may God's prayers and peace be upon him, and tried to deceive him by holding back God's penalty. They denied the existence of the stoning penalty and denied that it was ordained in the Torah. They persisted in that denial for ages.

"They wanted to evade Allah's judgment. Instead of referring to Torah and handing down its penalty on adulterates, they referred to the Prophet, may Allah's prayers and peace be upon him, hoping to find with him a lighter penalty than the one stipulated by Torah. They wanted to strike two birds with one stone. On the one hand, they would evade the Torah's stoning penalty and, on the other, they would use the prophet's fatwa to argue with Allah on Doomsday and say that it was the fatwa of one of His prophets. The main reason why the Koran described them in the verse as "unbelievers" was their ingratitude and their outright denial of one of Allah's judgments, and not just neglecting that penalty while admitting its existence. Contrary to what most Muslims think nowadays, these verses were specifically revealed in connection with an incident that involved a group of Jews and Jewish clerics. They were not basically meant for rulers.

"The menace resulting from failure to apply Allah's revealed judgment was different in each verse--unbelievers, wrong-doers, and rebels. Each of these words has two meanings and can denote the biggest ever sin as well as the smallest act of disobedience that does not bring its perpetrator out of the circle of Islam. Consequently, interpretations were numerous and far apart. Some classify the application of judgments other than Allah's as a sin that does not reach the extent of infidelity. Some apply it to those who fail to apply Allah's judgment out of ingratitude or denial, some apply it to those who abandon God's judgments completely, and others apply it to those who violate texts deliberately rather than out of ignorance or misunderstanding. Some apply it to the followers of other heavenly religions and others say that applying judgments other than Allah's is sufficient to take a person out of his creed.

"Following the views of scholars and interpreters, one realizes that they all revolve round one meaning and join forces to establish one fact; namely that failure to apply Allah's revealed judgments is not blasphemy. Rather, it is a set of sins and acts of disobedience. Although the person who does not apply Allah's judgment commits a major sin and bears a grave guilt, his negligence alone does not bring him out of the circle of Islam. He is only faithless or infidel when he associates that negligence with another line of behavior that proves his infidelity, such as by denying or showing contempt to Allah's judgment, declaring his rejection of that judgment, or opting to apply a judgment other than that which Allah ordained. But when he fails to rule by Allah's judgment and, at the same time, recognizes that judgment and admits his negligence, then his act is deemed as a sin. The Koran uses the term unbeliever only to warn sinners of the harsh penalty warranted by their acts.

"Sunnis agree that one who neglects a religious obligation or commits a prohibited act is not blasphemous as long as he admits that duty and refrains from denying it, and as long as he does not deem that prohibited act as kosher. There is no dispute among scholars when it comes to that rule. Those who brand other people as infidels just because they neglect Allah's revealed judgment are just like renegades, who labeled Muslims as infidels just because they committed sins or neglected a single ordained obligation. Ibn-Hazm, may God have mercy on his soul, said: 'Ruling is an act. So, if a ruler

denies Allah's judgment, then he is unfaithful, even if he does not apply judgments other than those which Allah revealed. But if he only executes or gives orders to carry out a judgment that violates Allah's judgment, without denying God's judgment, then he is a sinner and not a renegade.'

"Hence, applying Allah's revealed judgment is an act of Islam. Neglecting that act does not necessarily make a person an atheist. Even those who neglect all the acts of Islam can still be Muslims as long as they harbor faith deep in their hearts and testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His prophet. However, one's faith decreases by as many acts he neglects. As Ibn-Hazm says, one who neglects all the acts of Islam is a sinning believer who is lacking in faith, but he is not an atheist. By that rule, we can understand why interpreters agreed that the infidelity referred to in the three verses of al-Ma'idah Sura refers to minor infidelity and not the major infidelity that takes one out of Islam. They knew that applying by Allah's revealed judgment, although a duty, was an act of Islam, and that neglecting that act is not enough reason to brand the sinner as infidel. Rather, it is reason to deem him as lacking in faith. If failure to apply Allah's judgment were blasphemy, why does that rule not apply to all other Islamic duties, where everyone who neglects a duty becomes an atheist? Had that been the case, no Muslim on this earth would have remained within the circle of Islam. Those who hold that failure to apply Allah's revealed judgment is a major infidelity contradict themselves unknowingly.

"Fear that some people might violate the rules of Islam should not lead us to make exaggerated judgments or punish the people by something which God Almighty had not ordained. Exaggeration and delinquency are equally disparaged. They are the two faces of one bad coin. Misplaced stringency is as detrimental to Shari'ah as delinquency. Scholars strive in all honesty and precision to show the truth to the people in the manner God Almighty intended it to be, without manipulating the rules and duties of Islam. Some people may resort to trickery and loose track of the right path. But there are many others whose hearts are filled with faith and who voluntarily submit to heavenly judgment.

"As to the relationship between failure to apply Allah's judgment and apostasy or falling out of faith, we say that ruling by laws other than Allah's may lead one to blasphemy and apostasy. But this is not only because one fails to apply Allah's laws, but also because he associates that negligence of Allah's judgment with the adoption of a deep heartfelt belief that deviates from Islam and provides outright proof of faithlessness, such as denying the Almighty's judgment, ridiculing it, banning its execution, rejecting it, and opting for a different judgment. At that point, apostasy and infidelity may be attributed to these associated acts and not to the person's failure to apply Allah's judgment. This rule applies also to all other religious duties. One who neglects an Islamic duty is a sinner who may not be held infidel because of that negligence, unless he associates that with denial, tendency to do the forbidden, or any other act of infidelity that lets one fall out of faith. This rule applies equally to the ruler and the ruled.

"The three verses that came in al-Ma'idah Sura are the most explicit in terms of showing that applying Allah's judgment is an obligation. The proof they provide to that obligation is definitive. However, the verses provide presumptive proof when it comes to judging failure to apply Allah's judgment. This explains the debate that surrounded them in Islamic circles. Moreover, these verses were intended for a nation of Jews. However, in spite of the uniqueness of the occasion on which the verses were revealed, most scholars, if not all, agree that they apply to Muslims who do what the Jews did.

"The verses were not basically meant for rulers or leaders. They were meant for Jews and their scholars. They generally apply to all Muslims who do not apply Allah's judgment, both the rulers and the ruled. They do not apply exclusively to rulers. Interpreters agree that applying Allah's judgment is a work of the senses and that neglecting any of the works of the senses is not enough reason to brand

one as infidel, although it is enough to decrease his faith as much as he neglects his duties. This has been the established belief of the upholders of the prophet's tradition over the ages. Applying judgments other than Allah's is viewed as major blasphemy only when it is associated with an act that is not condoned by Shari'ah or an act which denotes blasphemy, such as denying Allah's judgment, ridiculing it, or opting for the prohibited. In which case, blasphemy is attributed to those things and not to the mere act of neglecting Allah's judgment. Failing to apply Allah's judgment alone is not enough reason to view any man as atheist.

"One of the signs of major infidelity in applying judgments other than Allah's is for one to deny the obligation to apply Allah's judgment, regardless of whether the person is a ruler or ruled, and to ridicule, reject, and refuse to comply with God's judgment, use improper names to describe it, prefer to resort to other judgments, and to see no distinction between Allah's definitive judgments and other judgments. When one assumes that attitude, he legitimizes his own negligence of Allah's judgment. It does not make a difference here whether the person is a ruler or ruled. But all these things are far from a true Muslim.

"Saying that negligence to apply Allah's judgment does not qualify as major infidelity does not mean that we downplay the importance of Muslim obligation to apply Allah's judgment or underestimate any of the parts of Islamic Shari'ah. No faithful man who realizes the grandeur of Allah and the greatness of his divine Shari'ah can do that. It is Shari'ah which sheltered the Islamic nation over the ages. Neglecting Allah's laws is undoubtedly a grave sin. But sins have different degrees. A guilt which Allah deems as an act of atheism in His book is undoubtedly more serious than a sin which the Koran did not classify as atheism. A frequently repeated sin is graver and more effective than a rarely committed sin. As much as gazing is the messenger of adultery, sinning is the messenger of atheism. So, let every Muslim try to apply Allah's judgment in all his affairs and seek to learn His judgment in everything, big and small. If this is the obligation of Muslims in general, then it is a bigger obligation for those who are in charge of Muslim affairs, since they carry a heavy burden for which they will be brought to account on the day where an infant's hair turns grey; a day when God Almighty brings every pastor to account for his subjects.

(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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Egypt: Islamists View Islamic Group Latest Book on Authority**Report by Muhammad Hamdi, from Cairo: "Controversy Within Prisons, Revisions Among Intellectuals in Egypt: Islamic Group Revises Its Reading of Al-Hakimiyah"***AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT**Thursday, August 18, 2005 T14:42:53Z***Journal Code:** 1431 **Language:** ENGLISH **Record Type:** FULLTEXT**Document Type:** FBIS Translated Text**Word Count:** 1,713

As Egypt was trying to overcome the effects and consequences of the Sharm al-Shaykh explosions which occurred on 23 July 2005, Al-Sharq al-Awsat surprised those following the political peace movements by publishing a new book by the Egyptian Islamic group entitled "Authority: Shari'ah View and Realistic Vision (Al-Hakimiyah: Nazrah Shar'iyah wa Ru'yah Waqi'iyah)."

This book has aroused controversy over its contents. The controversy started within the Egyptian prisons, where thousands of members of fundamentalist and Salafi groups participated in discussing the book and its contents, and extended to the Egyptian cultural arena, which was mobilized again to confront the terrorism that struck Egypt forcefully once more.

The importance of the book lies in the fact that it discusses the concept of authority (Al-Hakimiyah), which presented itself forcefully on the political and Islamic arenas in both the Arab and Islamic worlds since the middle of the past century. This concept was first presented by the founder of the Pakistani Islamic group, Abu-al-A'la al-Mawdudi, and the Muslim Brotherhood leading member, Sayyid Qutb, who made authority one of the bases of Islam. The political Islam groups, particularly the violent ones, grabbed the concept, and used it to accuse the leaders of the Islamic countries, the governments institutions, and even the ordinary Muslim citizen of infidelity.

Authority, as interpreted by its hard-line supporters, means the authority of God. Therefore, they reject a rule that is based on anything other than what God sent. They consider any ruler who does not govern according to Islamic shari'ah to be an infidel. Thus, these groups spread their definition of the infidelity of Muslim rulers and the government institutions of the Muslim countries, and then allowed themselves the right to armed dissent against the ruler. In this point lies the importance of the Islamic Group's book.

The member of the Egyptian Islamic Group Shura Council, Najih Ibrahim, wrote the book. Ibrahim spent some 24 years in prison as a result of the case of the assassination of the late Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat. The assassination took place after the jihadi groups in Egypt issued the famous fatwa considering Al-Sadat an infidel, and joined together to kill him in implementation of the concept of authority as formulated by two of the most prominent theoreticians at that stage, Shaykh Umar Abd-al-Rahman, the spiritual leader of the Islamic Group currently imprisoned in the United States, and Muhammad Abd-al-Salam Faraj, the author of "Absent Religious Duty," which was the constitution of the Egyptian jihadi groups.

As those who participated in judging Al-Sadat to be an infidel and assassinating him are the ones who

issued the Al-Hakimiyah book, the controversy aroused by the book seems justified.

Commenting on the Al-Hakimiyah book, Mamduh Isma'il, a lawyer of the jihadi groups in Egypt, says: The Islamic Group is trying to present new interpretative judgments about some of the bases on which the Islamic groups movement was established. Also, it is trying to discard its old cloak and to present a new interpretative judgment that is different from the thinking of these groups.

Isma'il considers that for any interpretative judgment to be unblemished, it needs to be established on a number of bases, including knowledge, impartiality, and not being subject to other influences.

Isma'il considers that in this thesis (Al-Hakimiyah book), the Islamic group contradicts the vision of its spiritual guide and former leader, Dr. Umar Abd-al-Rahman, who talked explicitly about authority in his book, Rulers and the Foundations of Government. Isma'il concluded his comments by saying that it would be better for the Islamic Group, particularly at this stage, to leave the jurisprudence issues to the people of interpretative judgment, and to dedicate itself to restructuring a new vision that would benefit Egyptian society, or to keep silent as it did about many issues.

As for Dia Rashwan, the specialist researcher in political Islam at the Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, he considers the new book to be one of a collection of theoretical books issued by the Egyptian Islamic Group, of which four books have been published previously, in addition to three other books about the Riyadh explosions and the Al-Qa'ida operations.

Rashwan points out that the Islamic Group is keen on proceeding along two lines. The first line is to emphasize the theoretical revision of the faulty concepts on which the political Islam groups rely, to correct them, and to present new concepts. The second line is to participate in the issues discussed in the regional and international arenas. This means that the Islamic Group is not merely carrying out an internal revision for the benefit of its members, but it also wants to be a part of the current discussions in the entire world of basic issues of destiny. Perhaps this is in preparation for the return of the Islamic Group to the field of public action.

Rashwan adds that the greatest distinguishing feature of the books of the Islamic Group, of which Al-Hakimiyah is the latest, is that they are collective books. This means that if one person wrote the book, then seven others of the groups' leaders would have participated in its revisions. This confirms the collective nature of the work, and that no single individual would unilaterally undertake issuing fatwas. This gives the revisions weight, credibility, and influence within and without the group on the basis that whatever the revisions say is the opinion of the leadership.

Rashwan believes that the extensive reactions aroused by the Islamic Group books are proof of their importance, especially as the group has widened the sources to which it resorts to infer new jurisprudence judgments. The Islamic Group does not restrict its sources to the jihadi tendency alone; the sources have been diversified to include even those not affiliated to the jihadi tendency. This means that the group's horizon has become wider, and the isolation to which it restricted itself has been removed.

Dr. Kamal Habib, the specialist in political Islam and former leading member of the Jihad Group, considers that authority started to appear in Islamic thinking since the 14th century A.D. when some rulers started to adopt policies that were not based on shari'ah. This happened when some scholars thought that the shari'ah was merely texts, and the texts were limited while reality is not; when the politicians could not get satisfactory answers to new issues from the scholars, they adopted policies of a different character. This was shown in the "Methods of Government (Al-Turuq al-Hukmiah)," by

Ibn-al-Qayim, who tried in this book to prove that shari'ah could answer the emerging questions of the new reality.

Habib says that there is no disagreement over authority as a value or a principle, in the sense that shari'ah ought to be the authority, and all Muslims believe that the Islamic state ought to be governed by the shari'ah. The disagreement is over the application of the principle to reality; this is when the human mind assumes its role of considering the details.

Habib believes that the gravity of the issue of authority does not lie in the accusations of infidelity, but in the armed dissent from the rulers who do not govern according to God's laws. Authority is not necessarily linked to accusations of infidelity. The danger lies in the violent behavior of the organizations that adopt violence.

Habib considers that the Islamic Group talked in its first four books about the issue of judging the ruler and the ruled to be infidels. Habib stresses the need for a new method to dismantle the knowledge theory of the jihadi Islamic tendencies in a scientific way in order to put an end to the violent behavior of the organizations that resort to violence to dissent from the ruler.

If authority has preoccupied both the Arab and Islamic worlds all through the past century through Sayyid Qutb in Egypt and Abu-al-A'la al-Mawdudi in Pakistan, then this theory has been refuted within the Muslim Brotherhood themselves in the book, "Callers Not Judges," whose author was the former general guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hasan al-Hudaybi, in the sixties of the last century. In his book, Al-Hudaybi says: "Some scholars have used the term authority (Al-Hakimiyah), and then it was attributed to the name of the Almighty by saying 'God's authority (Hakimiyat Allah).' We are certain that the word authority (Al-Hakimiyah) has not been mentioned in any Koran verse, and we have not found any prophet's hadith that included it."

Many people think that the new book of the Islamic Group about authority and its seven other books published previously under the title, "Series of Correcting the Concepts (Silsilat Tashih al-Mafahim)" are similar to great extent to the revisions undertaken by the Muslim Brotherhood Group from within the Egyptian prisons after the arrest of its members in 1965. The Muslim Brotherhood revisions were published in the book, "Callers Not Judges," which represented a Muslim Brotherhood turning against the ideas of Sayyid Qutb, especially on authority, accusing the ruler of infidelity, and dissenting from him. The book, "Authority: Shari'ah View and Realistic Vision," has aroused controversy among former leaders of the Egyptian Islamic groups; it has also done the same within the prisons. The Egyptian prisons, especially Turah prison south of Cairo, have witnessed a dispute among the members of the Islamic Group, the Jihad Group, Hizb al-Tahrir, and Salafi organizations. However, the cultural circles in Egypt consider it necessary to strengthen the tendency opposing Al-Hakimiyah on the basis that it is the trigger of accusing the society and the rulers of being infidels; they also consider that the assessment of this interpretative judgment (the Al-Hakimiyah book) ought to be through its application on the ground, especially as Egypt and other Arab and Islamic countries are still suffering from many terrorist operations carried out by groups that judged the rulers and the ruled to be infidels.

(Description of Source: London Al-Sharq al-Awsat (Internet Version-WWW) 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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