

Al-Oadah's message to al-Zawahiri: How long will you persist in this policy of bloodshed?



'If you admit that you are not a scholar of Islam, then how can you issue religious edicts about life and death and apostasy?'

Sheikh Salman bin Fahd al-Oadah – General Supervisor of Islam Today – during the eighth memorial of the September 11 tragedies, addressed a message to al-Qaeda's second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri, considered to be al-Qaeda's real mastermind, and appealed to him to stop the bloodshed and to seriously reconsider his policies.

Sheikh Salman al-Oadah, speaking yesterday on his Ramadan television program on NBC entitled Hajar al-Zawiya, began by mentioning an interview he read online that had been conducted with Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri. During the interview, the interviewer had asked al-Zawahiri if he was a scholar of Islam, to which he replied negatively.

Sheikh al-Oadah said he considered it laudable that a man like al-Zawahiri would admit to this. However, he found it strange that al-Zawahiri, a little later on in the very same interview, made pronouncements on the gravest matters like excommunication, warfare and killing, these were issues that scholars of Islamic Law are wary to speak of.

Why the Muslim World?

Sheikh Salman al-Oadah stressed that the killings that al-Qaeda is carrying out in the Muslim world is an illustration of their inability to target the West. Western nations have been successful with the security measures they have adopted to protect themselves, so that few attacks are carried out in the West, and the ones that take place are of lesser severity. Sheikh al-Oadah reiterated his well-known stance that such attacks against non-Muslim

civilians are against Islam and must be condemned. He also added that those attacks only harm the Muslims, since they give anti-Muslim individuals in the media the means to incite and spread hatred against Islam and Muslims throughout Western societies.

Sheikh al-Oadah referred to a number of factors that make Muslim countries easy targets for al-Qaeda's killing operations. These factors include the underdeveloped infrastructure and security capabilities, the increased level of discontent that exists within the populations of these countries, and the receptivity many people in these countries have to any message that appeals to religious sentiments, however erroneous and misguided that message might be.

Where is the Respect for Islam's Scholars?

Sheikh al-Oadah explained that these attacks bring nothing but death, destruction, and ruin. He then quoted a verse of the Qur'an that reads: 'O you who believe! Respond to God and to the Messenger when he calls you to what gives you life.' [Qur'an 8:24]

He added 'In stark contrast [to what the Qur'an teaches], these attacks do nothing but bring death to many people, ruin the lives of many others, and bring ruin upon everything. Therefore, I must ask Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, who admits that he is not a scholar of Islam 'What is the role of the scholars?'

Salman al-Oadah stressed that throughout all of history, no one who can rightly be called a scholar of Islamic beliefs and Law – neither Egypt, Saudi Arabia nor any other country – ever condoned such acts of violence as are now being perpetrated in Islam's name throughout the Muslim world and elsewhere. Moreover, no scholar would condone the perversion of Islam's teachings into a violent discourse which makes any human being an enemy to be fought, and thereby justifying the mass killing of numerous people. No scholar would condone the abominable act of setting off explosions in a public place or in a mosque, a prayer area, a recreational center, or at a funeral. Indeed, it is wrong to perpetrate such acts of violence even in places of sin. God does not condone wanton killing under any circumstances.

Sheikh al-Oadah highlighted from the Quran 'Do not insult those whom they worship besides God, lest they wrongfully insult God through their ignorance.' [Qur'an 6:108]

He explained that in this verse, God forbids ridiculing the idols worshipped by the polytheists. This is to avoid instigating the idolaters to react by insulting God.

He then posed the question: If this reaction to insulting their false gods is to be avoided, then imagine how much more serious it must be when killing is involved, when the result is the death of Muslims? This is what we see in Afghanistan, a country that has lived in the shadow of war for far too long. It is possible that in this most recent of conflicts, more lives have been lost than during the Soviet occupation.

Sheikh al-Oadah added that Afghanistan is a country which falls way below the poverty line. The opinions of its people its religious scholars and the common masses and were never solicited in the September 11 atrocities. They never chose to be implicated. Furthermore, those attacks were far beyond their country's capabilities. It is a travesty that they are now involved in; it is a war with no end in sight.

A Call to Account

Sheikh al-Oadah continued by saying: 'I address Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri who wrote a book entitled 'The Bitter Harvest' wherein he criticizes the seventy-year experience of the Muslim Brotherhood. Now, I support the idea that Islamic groups are in need of criticism, criticism that is clear-sighted and transparent, just like nations and their governments are in need of criticism. Yet, al-Zawahiri has written about groups whose decisions brought few consequences that extended beyond their own selves, without serious consequences being brought to bear on other groups and nations, certainly not consequences as grave and tragic as those we are now talking about, which have come as a result of al-Zawahiri's policies.'

'Is it not more appropriate for Ayman al-Zawahiri to rethink his own position, as someone who used to belong to the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, most of whose members have now altered their outlook and renounced their violent ways? Does it not make sense, eight years after the September 11 attacks, for Ayman al-Zawahiri to take account of how many people have died as a result of his policies, and of how many Muslim countries have suffered?'

Does He Not Fear God?

Sheikh al-Oadah continued his message to al-Zawahiri by saying: 'Does he not fear God? Does he not fear that, on the Day of Judgment, he will bear the heavy burden of all those who will accuse him, saying: 'O Lord! Ask him why he killed me without reason!''

Sheikh al-Oadah stressed that self-criticism takes far greater foresight and courage than what it takes to kill others. It takes courage to face up to oneself, to make an honest account of oneself, and to admit when one has wronged.

Sheikh al-Oadah described the brazen killings as a fire in which it has left a destructive path in any Muslim country suffering in its wake. Today, you find tragic acts of violence erupting in Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Somalia.

The Absence of Religious Authority

Sheikh al-Oadah stressed that many of the young people who are caught up in this violence are not acting out of religious conviction, nor are many of them convinced on an intellectual level. Most of them are acting out of frustration, depression, despair, and alienation. This is what makes these young people susceptible to violent ideologies. This is happening at the same time the mass media keeps saying that Islam is a bloodthirsty religion, on account of the actions perpetrated by some young people who have never had a chance to give any genuine thought to their actions.

Sheikh al-Oadah pointed out that those who adopt the ideology of bloodshed dismiss the idea of dialogue and negotiation, even with their fellow Muslims. By contrast, many militant groups around the world, like the IRA, the Southern Sudanese resistance, and many militant Muslim groups who have renounced violence have realized that they can reach their objectives far more effectively by peaceful means: through negotiation, prudence, patience, and other methods that are conducive to living in the modern world. They have achieved things they never could have achieved through violence and force. Violence has never brought about the desired outcomes, rather more casualties, and for Muslims, it has blackened the reputation of Islam. People have even begun to accuse Muhammad of killing his companions.

Sheikh al-Oadah then explained how the Prophet Muhammad refused to have the traitors in his midst executed, even after they became legally deserving of punishment for treason by violating their covenant, compromising the security of their society, and exposing the community to the danger. Muhammad explained: 'I will not have people



ever saying that Muhammad killed his companions." If you admit that you are not a scholar of Islam, then how can you issue religious edicts about life and death and apostasy?"