

Reflections on Banna Martyrdom Anniversary



In the name of God, praise be to God, and peace be upon His Messenger...

On the night of February 12, 1949, Imam Hassan al-Banna joined the convoy of Martyrs of Islam. His assassination was not an aggression against his person as much as it was an attempt to kill the project he endeavored to carry out, and for which he dedicated his life: to restore the glory of Islam, its state and its civilization, in his modern, moderate reformative approach. Al-Banna founded the Islamic group "The Muslim Brotherhood" (MB) to achieve that noble objective. His assassination, furthermore, was an attempt to confiscate the right of our peoples to choose the divine path that they see as their way to liberation from backwardness and dependency, from tyranny and corruption, and to restore the position and status that God wants for them: (the best nation brought out to mankind), Chapter 3, Verse 110.

The ambassadors of the colonial countries met in Fayed (in Ismailia Governorate, Egypt) in November 1948 where they took the decision to try and dissolve the MB. Submissive politicians and allies of the colonialists did not delay in implementing the decision. Hence, an official order was issued on December 8, 1948 to dissolve the group, confiscate its institutions and property, and ban all its activities.

Arresting all MB members, so-called security forces left only Hassan al-Banna, having removed all protection that usually surrounded him, thus making it easier for themselves to assassinate him in the night, in one of Cairo's largest streets and public squares. They fired their bullets into his body but did not kill him straightaway: they let him bleed, until his pure soul left for its Creator, leaving behind the sorrows of the reformers who dared to long for salvation, and whose high hopes rested on Banna and his group. The Moroccan leader, Prince Abdul-Karim al Khattabi, said: "Woe to Egypt and the people of Egypt, for what they will get by way of punishment for what they have done. They shed the blood of an ally of God!! For, indeed, Hassan al-Banna is an ally of God. No Muslim was like al-Banna" Khattabi, of course, meant Egypt's despotic leaders in power at the time. As for Egypt, it overflowed with dignified sadness. Its rulers were terrified of the horror of their actions, so they prevented men from carrying his body and coffin. So, women carried him to his grave. Only the Coptic leader Makram Obaid was able to escape from the siege imposed on his mourners.

Sheikh Mohammed Maraghi, the Imam of the renowned Azhar Mosque, summed up how the people of Egypt felt when he described the MB's Banna as "a Muslim who is jealous for his faith, who understands the environment in

which he lives, who knows the disease in the body of the Muslim nation, and who understands the secrets of Islam". In the 1940's, Sheikh Hassanein Makhlouf, Egypt's Grand Mufti, said Banna was "one of the greatest Muslim personalities in this era. He is the Muslim leader who did his absolute best for the sake of God, and adopted for real reform the right approach and a clear path that he derived from Quran, Sunnah and the spirit of Islamic legislation, and implemented it with wisdom, patience and determination".

On this 73rd anniversary, the intellectual project of Hassan al-Banna still represents hope for millions of Muslims who believed in it and carried it forth, all over the world. Indeed, whenever the nation was given the freedom to choose – as happened in the revolutions of the Arab Spring – the people chose Islam, and lined up behind its leaders. Their enemies only managed to quell their opposition through tyrannical repression, military coups, and invoking new and old colonialism in its worst forms.

The assassination of Imam al-Banna and the fight against his group was only a means used by the major powers that control the destinies of nations in order to prepare the Arab and Islamic arena for their allies that they would place in power before leaving, to subjugate the peoples through oppression by the immoral military regimes that pave the way for the Zionist entity, and for Western colonialism to continue in new shapes and forms: intellectual, political and economic, and to finally, re-summon colonialism in its crude military form, as in Iraq, Yemen and Syria.

After more than ninety years now, many wonder about the reasons behind the survival of the Islamic project whose features were defined by Imam al-Banna, and which was carried forth by his group until today. These reasons are summed up as follows:

The Islamic Nature of this project. God pledged to preserve His Islam, support His religion, and immortalize his call, even if the road was long for the people, and if they were surrounded by misfortune and calamities. "Do the people think they will be left to say, 'We believe' and they will not be tried? (2) But We have certainly tried those before them, and Allah will surely make evident those who are truthful, and He will surely make evident the liars (3)" Chapter 29, Verses 2 and 3.

Addressing the nation, Imam Banna said: "O people, we are indeed proud companions of the Messenger of God, may God bless him. We carry his banner, spread his message, and preach his call: God's mercy to all mankind"... "The Muslim Brotherhood's call is not in any way peculiar amongst Islamic calls. It is like an echo of the first call of Islam that resounds in the hearts of these believers, and it reverberates on their tongues. So, they try to cast faith into the hearts of the Muslim nation, so they may succeed in their actions".

The Comprehensive Nature of Banna's Call: His call was characterized by its inclusion of all the aspects of Islam at a time when the realities of the faith were unclear for many people, the caliphate that expressed the political content of Islam was eradicated, and the powers of the West plundered the helpless nation's resources, and shared out its land, and moral corruption was rampant, and lovers of the West clamored loudly. Banna said: "Islam is belief and worship, religion and state, a homeland and a nationality, spirituality and work, the Holy Quran and the sword of action". Describing his group, Banna said: "We are a Salafi call, a Sunni way, a Sufi reality, a political body, a sports group, a scientific and cultural association, an economic enterprise, and a social idea".

The Need for Organization: Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood, to gather together and unite all those who called for reform, to organize their efforts, and plan to achieve their goals. He said: "This path of yours has its steps drawn, and its boundaries defined. I'm striving within those boundaries, on the best path for success".

It was necessary for the believers to raise a banner that would bring them together, four years after the eradication of the caliphate, to treat the pettiness that afflicted Muslims, weakened their strength, and got their enemies to attack them. As the Prophet, peace be upon him, warned: "Nations will soon summon one another to attack you, just like people invite others to share their food. Someone asked: Will that be because of our small numbers at that time? He replied: No, you will be numerous at that time: but you will be like the scum carried down by a torrent, and Allah will take fear of you from the hearts of your enemy and put enervation into your hearts. Someone asked: What is wahn (enervation), O Messenger of Allah? He replied: Love of this world and dislike of death", narrated by Abu Dawood and Ahmed.

Popularity of the Movement: Neither Imam al-Banna nor his companions were ever isolated from the masses of their nation, unlike elitist scholars and gatherings. In fact, Banna was active in three thousand villages where he preached and provided help and advice to all, and in many scientific institutes, medical hospitals, charitable societies, and advocacy institutions. His endeavors are also known to the pulpits of many mosques, politicians' meetings, parliamentary and legislative councils, and the arenas of jihad and honor in Palestine and elsewhere, as well as the dark dungeons of oppression and the prisons of the despots where MB members preferred to suffer and even perish rather than throw their country in civil strife and in-fighting.

Imam Banna used to repeat in his speeches and articles: "We would like our people to know that they are dearer to us than ourselves, and that our souls are ready and willing to be sacrificed for their honor, dignity, faith, hopes and redemption... and that we certainly loath seeing the hardships and predicaments afflicting our people and then submit to or accept humiliation, or succumb to despair. We work for the people, for the sake of God, more than we do for ourselves. We are for you, not for anyone else, beloved brothers, and we will never be against you".

Adopting Education as a means to deepen faith, consolidate convictions, prepare the souls to bear the hardships of the path and confront the inevitability of affliction. This is comprehensive education that takes care of the human mind, heart, spirit and body, morals and behavior, an education in moderation with no excess or exaggeration, an education through which God has saved thousands of Muslims from the snares of the devils of jinn and mankind. An education which mobilized thousands of Muslims in tight rows, knowing their goals, and endeavoring to go for them. They were patient with the afflictions of distress and adversity, and advanced steadily among the nation's geniuses and scholars.

Moreover, it was an education, an upbringing that preserved the flame of truth that Banna's call bears, and helped his group survive, despite the severity of the trial and the succession of adversities.

Practical Approach: Staying away from arguments and fruitless time-wasting endeavors. Often Imam Banna addressed his companions and students, asking and warning: Are we a practical people? He is the one who addressed them saying: "The field of speech is not the field of imagination, and the field of action is not the field of speech, and the field of jihad is not the field of action, and the field of true jihad is not the field of false jihad". Banna used to set an example by his own actions, set an example by himself. So, he built that great establishment, brought up this great crowd, and left those immortal legacies, then he went to God a martyr, just as he liked, and he was only forty-two years old.

Universality of the Call: Imam Banna reached out with the call (Da'wa) to all inside and outside Egypt, and established a department for communications with the outside world at an early period in the life of the MB. Thus the light of Da'wa spread across the horizons of the earth, expressing the universality of this religion, and Banna's desire to help and guide all people. He said: "All people are children of Adam. They are brothers. So, they should

cooperate, be at peace with each other, have mercy on each other, guide each other to goodness, and excel in deeds. They should strive, each in his field, so that humanity may advance.”

It is no secret that the MB’s call and Imam Banna’s project have been demonized by certain apparatuses, institutions and regimes that constantly war against the MB. It is only right that the truths of this call be known just as they were presented by the founding Imam: a balanced moderate call that seeks good for all people, defending people’s rights and dignity, and calls out for guidance, justice and peace.

A call with these unique features, a group whose founder is this great pioneer, have followers who realize the greatness of its worth and destiny. They adhere to its principles, preserve its structure, are proud of its path. They realize that their pride in this call does not mean that it is infallible. This is a group made up of humans. The laws of the universe and of societies apply to it. It does right and wrong. It rises and falls. It does not hesitate to review past actions and correct its paths whenever revision and correction are necessary. But it is certain that it is there for Islam, and that God will reward the efforts of those devoted to Him, the lives lost for His cause, in support of His faith. We see victory coming when others rule out the possibility or complain of delay of such victory, because we are certain of God's promise to us (Allah has decreed, “I and My messengers will certainly prevail.” Surely Allah is All-Powerful, Almighty), Chapter 58, Verse 21.

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