

## An Egyptian Journalist on the Connection Between Wahhabism and Terrorism

*Following the bombings in Riyadh on May 12, 2003, the deputy editor of the independent Egyptian weekly **Roz Al-Yousef, Wael Al-Abrashi**, who is also an expert on Sunni terrorist movements, wrote several articles on Saudi Wahhabism and the development of Islamist terror. The following are excerpts from Al-Abrashi's article:*

### A Wahhabi World View

In an article published on May 31, 2003 in Roz Al-Yousef, Al-Abrashi wrote: "A Wahhabi Saudi sheikh warned young people not to speak English and not to try to study it. He swallowed his saliva, wet his lips, and screamed: 'This is the language of the infidels, to the point where it has the word 'blease' ['please'], which is derived from iblis [Satan]. This is the language of the devil...'"

"Anyone can come and say that this sheikh does not represent all Wahhabis, but I will reply that most of the Wahhabi sheikhs have in the past forbidden the study of geography, English, philosophy, and drawing; besides that, what is the difference between what this Wahhabi sheikh said and the Fatwa of [Sheikh] Bin Baz - the [late] leader of Wahhabism - which stated that the planet Earth does not rotate?"

### Al-Qa'ida - A Saudi Wahhabi Organization

"Wahhabism prohibits the woman from working, forbids her to drive a car, and bans democracy, treating it as a religion in addition to the religion of Allah. Wahhabism attributes great importance to the [outward] forms of Islam - growing a beard, ankle-length garments for men, and the requirement to use toothpicks instead of the satanic Western toothbrush. One Wahhabi leader, Sheikh bin 'Athimein, prohibited smoking, praying behind a smoker, shaving one's beard, praying behind a clean-shaven man, and wearing European clothing because it is polytheists' clothing..."

"I say that this Wahhabism is incapable of establishing a modern state and incapable of spreading the values of tolerance that Islam has set out. On the contrary, this Wahhabism leads, as we have seen, to the birth of extremist, closed, and fanatical streams, that accuse others of heresy, abolish them, and destroy them. The extremist religious groups have moved from the stage of Takfir(1) to the stage of 'annihilation and destruction,' in accordance with the strategy of Al-Qa'ida - which Saudi authorities must admit is a local Saudi organization that drew other organizations into it, and not the other way around. All the organizations emerged from under the robe of Wahhabism."

### 'Saudi Arabia Helped Perpetrators of Terror Attacks in Egypt, Beginning with Sadat's Assassination'

"I can state with certainty that after a very careful reading of all the documents and texts of the official investigations linked to all acts of terror that have taken place in Egypt, from the assassination of the late president Anwar Sadat in October 1981, up to the Luxor massacre in 1997, Saudi Arabia was the main station through which most of the Egyptian extremists passed, and emerged bearing with them terrorist thought regarding Takfir - thought that they drew from the sheikhs of Wahhabism. They also bore with them funds they received from the Saudi charities."

"Apparently, we had to wait all these years and the September 11 explosions had to happen, and many

other explosions that harmed Saudi Arabia's stability, for the Saudi authorities to understand the two dangers: "The danger of Wahhabi Takfir Fatwas [and] the danger of charities, most of whose money ultimately flows to the treasuries of extremists..."

"...Based on the documents and the investigations in all cases of terror that harmed Egypt [in the 1980s and 1990s], I determined that there was not a single case in which Saudi Arabia was not the main station for the extremists..."

"The ideas of the Wahhabi sheikhs and the funds of the charities turned into rifle bullets in the breasts of the innocent. An official memo by the Egyptian Interior Ministry immediately after the assassination of the late president Anwar Sadat enumerated the reasons for the buildup in extremist religious activity in Egypt. It was written there - and first published here - that the investigations and the confessions of the terror organization members showed that Sheikh Omar Abd Al-Rahman, the mufti of the [Al-Gam'ah Al-Islamiyya] organization, brought a tape-duplicating machine from Saudi Arabia and, from his home in Al-Fayoum, recorded and disseminated numerous cassettes of lectures and sermons expressing the ideology of the organization and serving its strategy and its plans. The cassettes accused the ruler of heresy and said there must be a coup against him..."

'Arab Leaders are Always Infidels - Except in Saudi Arabia'

"The Wahhabi sheikhs used the Fatwas of Ibn Taymiyyah dealing with the Mongols and the conquerors for disseminating the ideology of Takfir and Jihad against the ruler. What is strange is that while the Wahhabis accused the rulers of heresy and called to fight Jihad against them in countries such as Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Jordan, they ruled that cooperating with the government in Saudi Arabia was a binding religious commandment and that the ruler is the [only] one authorized to declare Jihad, implement punishments, collect alms, and [enforce] the imperative of promoting virtue and preventing vice, and that it was an obligation to cooperate with it and obey it as long as it applied Islamic law."

"We used to ask the Wahhabi sheikhs and the members of extremist Egyptian religious groups: 'You demand obedience to the Saudi ruler and refraining from rising up against him, while you call for Jihad against the ruler and toppling the regime in Egypt and in other Arab countries. What is the meaning of this contradiction?' Their answer was: 'The difference is that Islamic religious law is implemented in Saudi Arabia, and not implemented in the other Arab countries.' But the day came when Saudi youth accused the Saudi authorities too of heresy, called for [Jihad] against them, and accused them of defiling the places holy to Islam via the American forces. Anyone who adopts the Takfir ideology and uses it for his own interests will be burned in its fire, because no one can control it..."

'Today, Saudi Arabia Has Become the Biggest Arena for Extremist Ideology'

"Today, Saudi Arabia has become the biggest arena for extremist ideology and [provided] the broadest scope for the development of its viruses. As a result, the Saudi authorities have, for the first time, begun to carry out security detention of 'inciters to violence' among the Wahhabi sheikhs."

'Egyptian Workers' Passports Confiscated in Saudi Arabia End Up With Terrorists'

"I call for an attempt to protect Egyptians from the old-new terror coming from Saudi Arabia. Egypt must be fortified ideologically and through security against Wahhabi ideas. In this framework, I call for an investigation of what I call 'the phenomenon of the disappearance and theft of Egyptian passports from Saudi Arabia,' and I use the term 'phenomenon' accurately. According to [Egyptian] Foreign and Interior Ministry sources, Saudi Arabia [is the number one country from] where passports of Egyptian workers are stolen and disappear. This phenomenon has been on the rise from the early 1990s, the period of the large terror operations [in Egypt], until today."

"In accordance with the method of guaranty - a method no less backward than Wahhabism itself and

which contains all the seeds of racism, hatred, and repression - the Saudi 'guarantor' holds the passports of the [foreign] workers, and if the Egyptian or other worker wants to travel, [it is easy for] the guarantor not to give him his passport; he can even throw him into jail. If the Egyptian complains, the guarantor can say he already gave him his passport but the Egyptian lost it. The [Egyptian] Foreign and Interior Ministry files hold dozens of complaints connected to the disappearance or theft of the passports of Egyptians working in Saudi Arabia, primarily in the last 15 years."

"It is suspected that the lost and stolen passports find their way to extremist religious organizations. Nine Egyptians complained about a Saudi guarantor named Muhammad Haroun several years ago, because he stole their passports and fled with them to Afghanistan..."

#### Wahhabi Terror and U.S. Bases in Saudi Arabia

"All that is left to say is that the Saudi leaders sought to gain religious protection, so they took Wahhabism as a shield; they sought to gain military protection, so they opened their land to the American forces. But it is odd that Saudi Arabia was burned by the fire of both Wahhabism and the American bases. Those who fight, sabotage, and destroy do so in accordance with the Wahhabi Fatwas, and justify their deeds by the presence of American bases. The only solution for the Saudi crisis is to trim the claws of Wahhabism, and to purify it and empty it of its content, so that it can become mainstream, moderate Islam. That is, Wahhabism should be gotten rid of, and then the American bases that provide a pretext for the armed violence should be gotten rid of."

"I will be even more frank. The Wahhabis and the Saudi princes hate Muhammad 'Ali, and have a complex because of him, because he sent his forces against them, eliminated them, invaded their capital, and scattered them from the Arabian Peninsula. Some historians and commentators, and even residents of the Arabian Peninsula, think Muhammad 'Ali's attack on the Wahhabis was an attack on terror and terrorism. The British commissioner of Kuwait, Dixon, who was responsible for Saudi matters, wrote at the time: 'Ibrahim Pasha, commander of the army of Muhammad 'Ali, gained the admiration and trust of the public in Najjd. He was received at Mount Shamar, Al-Qassim, and Al-Ahsaa as a deliverer from the Wahhabi fire, not as a foreign conqueror.'"

#### 'An Attack on Wahabbism is Needed'

"Wahhabism needs now an attack of another kind that will be like the attack of Muhammad 'Ali, but will be this time an ideological, cultural, religious, and political attack that will be led by the Saudi authorities themselves, and will not be forced from without. The attack must be Saudi, and not American, it must be more ideological and political than [based on] security. The attack on Wahhabism is an attack on terror, backwardness, and fanaticism. Wahhabism has moved from Takfir to destruction, and we do not want it ultimately destroying Saudi Arabia."(2)

#### 'The Roots of Terror are in Saudi Arabia, Not Egypt'

In another article, Al-Abrashi wrote: "...Following the September 11 attacks, everyone was stunned by the reversal in Saudi Arabia's attitude towards the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, despite the close strategic relations they had maintained since the days of Abd Al-Nasser when dozens of [Muslim Brotherhood members] fled to Saudi Arabia. But we quickly realized, based on special sources, that the Saudi authorities aspired to rescue Wahhabism and exonerate it of charges of terror. The only way to do so, they thought, was to place the blame on one of the branches [of Wahhabism] - the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood."

"But this trick did not succeed, and the Americans continued to claim that the ideology of Al-Qa'ida and bin Laden had been formed in the Saudi atmosphere. So some Saudi princes and top officials used another trick, spreading the claim that Egyptian extremists had taken over bin Laden and changed his ideological thought. According to them, 'Ayman Al-Zawahiri, the leader of the extremist Egyptian Jihad

organization, was the brain and the ideologue of the Al-Qa'ida organization, and it is he who leads bin Laden. With this claim, they tried to eradicate the Saudi color from the Al-Qa'ida organization and state that the organization was no more than a continuation of the Egyptian Takfir organization..."

"Saudi Arabia supported the closed Wahhabi religious and ideological extremism and created the Al-Qa'ida organization. It persecuted the Shi'ite minority and permitted the deployment of the American presence on its land, in a way that contradicts its religious position and its national sovereignty. Thus began the catastrophe, and when it will end we do not know."(3)

In another article, Al-Abrashi wrote: "...Although Saudi Arabia has adopted a strategy of exporting Wahhabism to the rest of the world, it has continued in recent years to claim that the ideology of the extremist Takfir was imported from abroad and was brought into Saudi Arabia, primarily from Egypt, and that it has no roots of any kind in Saudi culture. Saudi Arabia created the monster, exported it abroad, and then lost control of it. Then, the monster turned on it..."

"Saudi Arabia is in danger. It can neither relinquish Wahhabism nor leave it as it is; it can neither keep the American presence nor get rid of it. I say again, Saudi Arabia is in danger, since the Al-Saud family has placed it between the Wahhabi hammer and the anvil of the American bases."(4)

(1) Accusing Muslims of heresy in Islam

(2) Roz Al-Yousef (Egypt), May 31, 2003.

(3) Roz Al-Yousef (Egypt), May 17, 2003, as cited in Al-Quds Al-Arabi (London), May 19, 2003.

(4) Roz Al-Yousef (Egypt), May 24, 2003, as cited in Al-Quds Al-Arabi (London), May 26, 2003.