



Shaikh Muqbil bin Haadi'ee Interview with Hassan al-Zayidi of The Yemen Times

Q: Recently, there have been some claims saying that your movement is a radical movement related to Islamic Jihad movements. What is your response?

A: Every group or movement is responsible for their centers and activities. It is true that we are common in our goals with some movements as the ones you mentioned, as we all intend to serve Allah and spread Islam on the globe. However, I heard that Dr. Abdulkareem Al-Iryani received a call, probably from London saying " *Your country has radical Islamic groups in Saadah.*" Then he said, " *all what we have is a Sheikh teaching the concepts of Islam and Quran peacefully in Saadah and no terrorist or radical groups.*" We are quite far from being terrorists. We call to the Quran and the Sunnet, and to abandon violence and intolerance. We ourselves have condemned the Islamic groups that use terrorism and violence to reach their goals, even in non-Islamic countries because it frightens citizens and innocent people, and gets them away from Islam and its original concepts of peace and harmony. It is legitimate for Sunnis to fight their enemies and enemies of Islam when they feel threatened by them in terms of military and other attacks.

However, we are the ones who fight terrorism and condemn such activities used in the name of Islam. But usually, the ones who don't know about us and about Holy Quran say what is unfair and untrue about us. There have been more than 100,000 students studying in our institutions in Dammaj- Saadah, and they all know how peaceful the Sunni movement is because it calls to the return to the Holy Quran and to Prophet Mohammed (SAS). Any how, I believe the ones who don't know about us will not harm us as we are confident of what we are doing, and everyone knows who we are, even politicians.

Q: We heard that you have students from many countries in the world, especially from western countries. Could you give us some statistics about them?

A: As for students coming from out of Yemen, I believe it adds to our credibility and gives us great encouragement to go on and spread Islam in the appropriate way. We have students from the UK, the USA, Germany, France, and many other countries, seeking to know more about Islam. They have only come with their own will to realize the goal of knowing their religion which they either converted to, or had little knowledge about. We feed them with humble food, less luxurious than they had before. We accommodate them in simpler rooms with a sociable environment which is less of luxury than what they used to live in. These students don't want to be comforted in luxury. They used to live in luxury in their original countries, and they escaped their luxury to know more about this valuable religion, Islam. I thank them for their patience and great efforts they have exerted, may god be by their side. They escaped their luxurious life to reach for their spiritual side. To

know their God, Allah, their religion, Islam, and to have the peace of mind, which is most precious than everything one can think of. It is simply priceless. They have come to know the virtual truth of life. They want to know what their life is for, why they are living. What is beyond life? What is death, a start or an end? They want the peace of mind, and to know that their life is only a test of their endurance, strength, and faith. When coming to us, these students are looking for what is more precious than one can imagine. They are seeking the truth.

Q: Reports say that you train them for military combat and sometimes send them to Chechnya, Afghanistan, and Kashmir for Jihad. How true is this?

A: I again stress that this is yet another rumor spread to damage our image. I said it once and I say it again. Our movement is purely to teach the concepts of Quran and Sunnet. We are not in any way involved in Jihad activities anywhere in the world and I challenge anyone who claims the contrary. We do not have the time and the facilities for Jihad. Anyone who stays with us for three days only would see how peaceful and different we are than other movements. I believe that stubborn people are extremely difficult to convince. These rumors come from stubborn people who do not realize what they are talking about. I only call them to come and attend one of our sessions and see what we are doing. We do not care about what they say any more because they have turned to liars.

Q: I repeat again my question regarding the number of foreign students you have and what their nationalities are.

A: Frankly speaking, I do not know about the numbers, however the one responsible and concerned with teaching them, Mr. Ahmed Al-Wasabi, knows about it. I personally give three lectures every day. I do care about foreigners who come as I do understand that they are away from their home. Hence, I try to get closer to them making them forget their agony of leaving their country by interacting with them extensively, and teaching the ones who do not know Arabic useful words and phrases. I concentrate on letting them feel as if they are in their own family and that they are all brothers.

Q: As for the murder of the British student, [...]. What happened? And do your students normally carry weapons and are taught how to use them?

A: First of all, we do not have any training camp and do not train students on using weapons, etc. We are only dealing with teaching them about Islam, the Holy Quran and Sunnet. Even though it is not prohibited for us to use and buy weapons, we do not have the financial resources to go beyond feeding these students, how would we ever think of buying weapons and training them. This is ridiculous. However, some students get their own guns and weapons on a personal basis and we do prohibit their usage in the campus, except for certain individuals who are trustworthy and would use the weapons for security measures only. The people who spread the rumors about the accident being not an accident are the same people who want to ruin our image in the eyes of the world. We are a peaceful movement working on spreading the concepts of Islam in a peaceful manner to the students who come from everywhere in the world. We offer what is more precious than guns, rifles, or even tanks.

We offer Islamic teaching, Fiqh and knowledge about prophet Mohammed's life and acts so that we can follow his steps. You can ask any of our students whether he prefers knowing about Quran or an expensive fancy weapon, he would definitely select knowledge. Why? Because they have strong faith, which makes them superior in their thinking and acts than normal greedy people. Before prejudging these boys studying at our institute, I want anyone who feels doubt in him to go as a curious person, not a spy or journalist, but as a person who wants to know what is going on. He will be surprised to see how faithful students are holding hands together like brothers, some even better than myself in their faith. They keep on praying in the long nights, they suffer from hunger sometimes, but resist as they have powerful faith that adds to their strength in enduring life's difficulties. They have shifted from a luxurious life in their homelands where they were uncertain what they were living for, to a humble life but with faith, and deep knowledge inside that there is life after death, and heaven and hell. They became closer to God, and to Prophet Mohammed. What else would they ask for? This is what brings peace of mind and virtual happiness. I feel that it is our responsibility, all of us to encourage them and support them in their difficult times.

The government knows, as we all do, that our movement is a peaceful one. President Ali Abdullah Saleh himself knows how more than many people even in Dammaj about our institutions and its activities. If we were a terrorist one, we would have been stopped long time back, but we are not.

Q: Once again, could you tell us what actually happened to [...], the British which was murdered recently?

A: I was in Sanaa when this happened. I received a phone call from Ahmed Al-wasabi with the unfortunate news about the death of [...]. I then received [...]'s brother who came to Sanaa and explained all what happened. I understood that they were cleaning or playing with the gun while a person took it and a bullet came out of the gun towards [...]'s chest leading to his death. I pray to Allah to have mercy upon his soul and have him in his heavens. This incident is the first of its kind in Yemen, and guns as I said are prohibited for the use of unqualified students.

However, news agencies took advantage of it to ruin the image of our peaceful movement and put pressure on the government to go against us. The death was a result of a pure accident, as there was no hatred among any of the students. Unfortunately, a UAE newspaper along with several Yemeni newspapers produced false reports on the story and on our institutions. This is certainly an act that we feel unjustified as they only produced the story with rumours coming from here and there. Why didn't they ask the Saadah security about the incident? Why didn't they go to Dammaj, where the accident took place and ask the students and witnesses about what happened instead of producing something inaccurate? We are disappointed and angered with the lies and rumors these journalists spread to the world.

Q: What is your stand towards the West? Do you believe you should launch an Islamic holy war against Western countries?

A: We do not pay attention to the West. We focus on our own nation, and concentrate on acquiring enough knowledge in our religion to be strong without giving much importance to anything that may distract us. The West has developed in industry and medicine and other sciences not because they left their religion, but because they gave more importance to science, which is actually what Islam calls for. On the other hand, we cannot fight enemies of Islam (West) if we do not have the power and internal strength in religion and physical capabilities. Westerners do not have a common belief in their Christian religion. Some believe that Prophet Jesus is of three, others believe that Jesus is the ultimate God, etc. They may know a lot about physics, math, and medicine, however they do not know much about their religion. This is a drawback that was the main reason for millions of Christians to convert to Islam, which is clear and has very specific concepts that are common for all Islamic movements.

Q: How do you evaluate the future of the Salafi movement in Yemen?

A: The past of the Salafi movement has been full of successes. Hence, I believe, with the grace of Allah, that it will continue to prosper. In the last 10 years, the growth of the movement has been rapid as it exceeded the Yemeni boundaries, and its reputation increased in Europe and elsewhere. However, we face difficulties and some harassment by some officials in the government who attempt to take away mosques from the control of Sunnis by force. Our movement asks all Muslims to go back to the way of life of our blessed Prophet Mohammed (sallallaahu `alayhi wasallam). The stories and tales of his life have always been of great inspiration for all Muslims everywhere. Hence, it is normal to think of his life as the ideal way of living that should be adapted to the furthest extent as possible. Our movement calls to the holy Quran and Sunnet. I do not want anyone to follow me as I don't see myself fit to be an idol. I also do not call to playact the prophet. We call to use the prophet as an example, as a person whom we should learn from in his life, in his acts, and in his submission to Allah.

Q: How do you see democracy, plural political and party-oriented system, and freedom of press and expression, etc.?

A: We look at these tools as no more than a seductive approach imposed on Muslims by the USA to weaken them. Allah in many of his verses in the Holy Quran explains that the Islamic nation should keep its solidarity along the rope of Allah. I do not believe that such a system is better than the one taught in Islam. Today, we can see how political parties are favoring their own interest over the interest of the nation. We are ready to cooperate and work together with all Yemeni sectors for the sake of the country. However, we are willing to do that under the theme of Islam and not under the propaganda of democracy, etc. In Islam there is nothing such as appreciating the viewpoint of a person if it is against Islamic regulations, in the sense for example that if a person thinks that drinking should be allowed, this should never be adapted as a means to setting new rules and guidelines away from Islam. This is actually the first step in weakening the Islamic nation, as it is almost like a horrible nightmare that should be stopped before it turns to a reality. Our system should be Islam, and it has all the rules and regulation to organize our lives in the best way possible.

Q: What is the relationship between you and the authority, and do you suffer from any pressure on a personal or general basis?

A: The authority is not in any way negatively affected by our movement. We always warn against violence and slaughter of innocent people. We also warn them from disobeying their rulers because this will cause chaos and disrupt life. I do not say this in favor of the state, but rather because our religion asks us to obey our rulers as long as they do not go out of the context of Islam. Apart from that, we are a peaceful group which brothers no one and interferes neither in the state's nor in other groups' business. Whenever we feel pressure, we hold ourselves strong and stay patient until the difficult times are over. We do sometimes face pressure from individuals from the government who have authority and crack down on our mosques with dozens of soldiers. But we never respond. We stay patient and continue our mission. If we are taken out of our mosques, we will still continue our sessions even in the street under the sunlight. This in itself is an evident of strong faith and we will definitely be rewarded by Allah for it.

Q: Do you face any harassment from other tribal or religious movements?

A: We do face harassment from some religious and political movements, but we never care and give attention. We keep our patience, and continue to believe in what we are doing. We consider these groups Muslims and do not accuse them of infidelity. However, we hope that they would treat us the same way. Every Muslims is sacred. His honor, life, and belongings are all sacred. Hence, we never attempt to cause any Muslim any harm, whatever his religious, political, or ethnic backgrounds are. We have the sufficient will and strength to endure these distractions with patience and faith, and we know that we will be the virtual winners of Allah's blessings and mercy.