

# MILITANT LEADERSHIP MONITOR

## Personalities Behind the Insurgency

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### SAUDI ARABIA, U.S. AND INDIA COOPERATE TO CAPTURE MUMBAI "26/11" ATTACKER ABU JINDAL

Syed Zabihuddin Ansari (a.k.a Abu Jundal) is infamous for being the "voice" that delivered orders from a control room in Pakistan by telephone to the terrorists who infiltrated Mumbai's Taj hotel on November 26, 2008, a day now remembered as "26/11" (Times of India, June 27). He was recruited into Pakistan-based Lashakr-e-Taiba (LeT) in 2003 after a friend introduced him to LeT's commander for Jammu and Kashmir operations, Aslam Kashmiri. He then underwent basic training in Daura-e-Aam, a 21-day basic combat course, and Daura-e-Sufa, a 21-day religious course. He carried out a pipe-bomb blast in Ahmedabad, Gujarat Province in 2005 and escaped from police in Aurangabad, Maharashtra Province in 2006 after the police tracked his accomplices and him in vehicles that were loaded with a cache of 30 kg RDX explosives, 10 AK-47s and more than 3,000 bullets (DNAIndia [New Delhi], June 26).

A native of Maharashtra, the capital of which is Mumbai, Abu Jindal rose to become the "highest-ranking" Indian citizen in LeT by the time of the Mumbai attacks in 2008 (www.defence.pk, June 28). After the attacks, he used a Pakistani



Abu Yahya al-Libi

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passport issued in Karachi to travel to Saudi Arabia where he resided until his capture in early 2012. In Saudi Arabia, he created websites to recruit Indian youths into new terrorist cells, but Indian intelligence followed the recruiter's electronic trail and discovered that the recruiter's Facebook account belonged to "Zabihuddin Ansari," who claimed to be living in Riyadh. Both the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation and Indian intelligence were then able to identify four of his e-mail accounts and uncover his conversations with contacts in India (Times of India, June 28).

Saudi security forces cooperated with Indian and U.S. intelligence to capture Abu Jindal in early 2012 and transferred him to Indian security forces at the Delhi airport on June 21. The intelligence of most immediate value that India will obtain from Abu Jindal is about his contacts with networks of Indian Mujahideen (IM) fighters in India (IBN Live [Mumbai], June 28). Meanwhile, Pakistan's Minister of Interior denies Pakistan's responsibility for Abu Jindal, asserting that "Zabihuddin is Indian, he was caught in India, he did everything in India. Why are you blaming Pakistan (The Hindu [Islamabad], June 27)?"

#### ABU USMATUL AL-ANSARI ANNOUNCES BOKO HARAM BREAKAWAY FACTION

On June 4, Abu Usamatul al-Ansari appeared in a video to explain the ideology of his group, Jama'atu Ansarul Musilimina fi Biladin Sudan (Supporters of Islam in the Land of Black Africa). His group first became public in January 2012 when it issued a statement in Kano announcing the formation of the group. The group is yet to carry out any attacks and its actual size and strength are unknown to anyone on the outside, but the implications of an international-minded terrorist group, presumably based in Nigeria, is a troublesome development for Nigeria and the West African region. Already the region is threatened by Ansar Dine, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA), Boko Haram, and other criminal and militant networks.

The video released on June 4 featuring Abu Usamatul al-Ansari was in Arabic language, but also dubbed in Hausa, the dominant language of northern Nigeria and southern Niger, and English ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnmJN7DEiRU&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnmJN7DEiRU&feature=player_embedded)). In the video, Abu Usamatul al-Ansari distinguished the Supporters of Islam in the Land of Black Africa from Boko Haram by emphasizing three of the group's

core beliefs: First, he claimed that his group will not kill innocent non-Muslims, except in "self defense;" second, that the group will not kill "innocent security operatives" unless they attack his group; and third, that the group will defend the interests of Islam and Muslims throughout all of Africa, not only Nigeria or any particular state. Boko Haram, in contrast, does kill innocent non-Muslims and security operatives and has focused its attacks exclusively in Nigeria.

Abu Usamatul al-Ansari's group likely broke away from Boko Haram because of internal disagreement over Boko Haram's operations. In the first statement released in January, al-Ansari described Boko Haram, which has killed nearly 1,500 Nigerians in attacks since late 2009, as "inhuman to the Muslim Ummah (Sahara Reporters, January 31)." Al-Ansari's promise to bring back the "lost dignity to the Muslims of Black Africa" and references to Sokoto Caliphate founder Usman dan Fodio in the January statement show that he accepts traditional religious institutions in Nigeria. If al-Ansari's statements represent the beliefs of the Supporters of Islam in the Land of Black Africa, then the group may be more amenable to negotiations with Nigerian authorities; however, the group appears to be more committed to international terrorism than Boko Haram.

## **Taking Down Mexico's Miguel Treviño Morales: Los Zetas' Second in Command Targeted for Character Assassination**

*Guy Fricano*

### **Miguel Treviño Morales: A Founding Zeta**

**M**iguel Treviño Morales was born on November 18, 1970 in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico. [1] He is wanted in Mexico and the U.S. in connection with drug trafficking and murder-related charges. Legal processes against him are ongoing within several U.S. states, including New York, California, and Texas. [2] In 2009, the U.S. Treasury Department froze his assets under U.S. jurisdiction with regard to his alleged leadership within Mexico's Los Zetas cartel. [3] Widely recognized as the Zetas' second in command after Herbierto Lazcarto Lazcarto, Treviño is the target of various attacks launched by his enemies. The campaigns against Treviño are intended to degrade his character in the eyes of society as well as to paint him as a traitor in the criminal underworld, including among Zetas.

One of the recent attacks against Treviño involved a grainy video of cartel operatives arranging dismembered body parts of 49 victims for public display in Cadereyta, Mexico, accompanied by narco-messages dedicating the slayings to the Gulf Cartel, the Sinaloa Cartel, the military and the government. The messages were allegedly signed by Treviño, Lazcano and "El Loco". The slayings stoked public outrage, prompting the arrest of the alleged third Zeta co-signatory, Jesus Elizondo Daniel Ramirez (alias El Loco). [4] According to Mexico's organized crime division, Subprocuraduría de Investigación Especializada en Delincuencia Organizada (SIEDO), Elizondo confessed to having been ordered by Treviño and Lazcano to dump the bodies in Cadereyta with the intention of framing enemy organizations for the atrocity. 5]

Despite the Zetas known willingness to kill military and police officers, and Treviño's history of publicly displaying mutilated bodies, some people doubted that experienced leaders like Treviño and Lazcano would have openly taunted the Mexican state in conjunction with an atrocity that wasn't being framed as retaliation for state suppression. And following the slayings,

narco-messages appeared which conveyed Zeta acknowledgement of other mass killings but denial of responsibility for the 49 victims.

There were suspicions that it was the Gulf Cartel, not the Zetas, who mutilated the 49 victims and framed the Zetas for this act. The Gulf Cartel may have also been responsible for another narco-message that appeared on December 6, 2011 in Nuevo Laredo, which claimed Mexico lives under the Zeta regime and that the Mexican Army, Marines and security agencies were incapable of resisting Zeta dominance. [6] The message highlighted the Zetas' ability to strike in enemy territories, Sinaloa and Guadalajara, as evidence of the cartel's impunity. The messages were signed with Treviño's name. [7]

Six days later, additional messages allegedly signed by Treviño denounced the original threats as the work of imposters attempting to provoke a violent response from the Mexican government. The newer messages claimed the Zetas are not terrorists, guerillas, or a regime, and are dedicated solely to their occupation. [8] They claimed respect for Mexican and U.S. state authorities, and condemned Zeta operatives who had set afire the Casino Royale in Monterrey, Mexico [9] resulting in over 60 deaths and considerable public outrage. [10] They expressed suspicion that someone was trying to ostracize Treviño, but did not state who or why.

The Gulf Cartel has threatened Treviño directly and attacked his persona through messages signed by the Gulf Cartel as well as videos. In one video, disseminated in late December 2011, alleged Gulf operatives butchered live animals representing various Zeta leaders, including a pig bearing Treviño's alias (Z-40). In another video, Treviño's name and alias, as well as the words "killer of women and children," were scrawled across the body of a captured Zeta who had been interrogated, beaten and garroted. There are also several interrogation videos produced by self-described Gulf Cartel operatives, in which prisoners appear coerced to denounce Treviño personally.

The theme of Treviño's treachery has surfaced in narco-ballads; songs that glamorize the narco lifestyle while advertising or insulting reputed crime lords and their organizations. One widely circulated song challenges Los Zetas' leader Herbierto Lazcano to analyze the puzzle of why so many of Treviño's subordinates have been captured without a shot while he remains free. It warns Lazcano that Treviño is a Judas who has protected himself by betraying subordinates to authorities, and that

he would betray Lazcano to lead the Zetas. Like most drug war propaganda, it is of unknown origin. Lazcano cannot afford to turn a blind eye to Treviño's activities, nor could he afford to ignore the implications should loss of confidence in Treviño become widespread within Los Zetas. Given that reality, propaganda engineered to damage Treviño's reputation may not have to be based entirely upon verifiable facts to endanger him within his own organization.

### **Violence between Cartels**

Treviño is an original Zeta – one of 31 Mexican *Grupo Aeromóvil de Fuerzas Especiales* (GAFE) personnel who were bribed by the Gulf Cartel in the late 1990's to desert their posts in the Mexican Special Forces. Originally the Zetas served as the elite armed wing for the Gulf Cartel and were assigned duties such as intelligence gathering, assassination, torture, and extortion using their military expertise. Gradually however, the Zetas developed organizational independence from Gulf command. Zetas began to recruit elite military personnel from Mexico and Guatemala and ventured into profit-generating activities such as narcotics trafficking, human trafficking, extortion, murder-for-hire, and others without approval from Gulf leadership.

The arrest of Gulf Cartel leader Osiel Cardenas Guillén in 2003 and his eventual extradition to the United States in 2007 triggered a leadership succession, which facilitated the Zetas' separation from the Gulf Cartel to form their own organization in 2008. Following the split, a vicious struggle ensued for dominance of the Tamaulipas region, which borders Texas and the Gulf of Mexico and hosts key trafficking routs thereby affording disproportionate power to the cartel that controls it. The region, which was previously shared, and which both the Zetas (based in Nuevo Laredo) and the Gulf Cartel (based in Matamoros) consider their home territory, is currently dominated by the Zetas, though warfare continues.

For the Gulf Cartel, the Zetas' separation, as well as the humiliation of being overpowered throughout most of their former territory by a treacherous group they founded, created animosity toward the Zetas. The animosity has been expressed through the ongoing Gulf-Zeta conflict has seen extraordinary levels of cruelty, far exceeding what is tactically required to secure a plaza for profit generation. Treviño's ultra-violent approach, encouraged by the combination of brutality and bribery

required to maintain Nuevo Laredo, a key entry point for licit and illicit trade across the U.S.-Mexican border, has contributed considerably to the Zetas' reputation for preferring bullets of bribes. The Gulf Cartel's shared proclivity for violence has made the conflict abhorrent. For example, the cartels often produce propaganda aimed at each other, such as publically displayed messages typically accompanied with the bodies of mutilated victims.

Though his drug trafficking prowess is supported by social and familial networks throughout Eastern Mexico and Texas, Treviño has enemies besides the Gulf Cartel. [11] He is often a contributor to propaganda efforts against other cartels, Mexican government officials, and even civilians blogging about Zeta activities.

His persona is also a target of similar efforts originating from his other enemies such as the Sinoloa Cartel which has been producing narco-banners directed against Treviño, especially since the rise in violence between the two cartels that began in spring 2012. Although it is in Sinaloa's long-term interest that the Gulf and Zetas remain occupied with each other, the Sinaloa and Gulf Cartels are currently allied against the Zetas. Sinaloa Cartel leader Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzmán would have strategic and personal motivation to eventually strike at both organizations, which occupy key territories and have been complicit in murders of his family members. Nevertheless, the Sinoloa Cartel has left mutilations and narco-messages, accusing Treviño and the Zetas of betraying pacts. Allegedly signed by Guzmán, the messages further advertised Treviño's infamy by stating that Guzmán didn't get to where he is by being a traitor. [12]

### **Implications for Treviño**

While it is impossible to determine the origin of any of the accusations, the troubling aspect for Treviño is that they appear to originate from numerous enemies whose alliances are ephemeral at best, perhaps including the Mexican state, which claims to oppose all cartels. The Zetas have collectively made enemies with the Mexican state and with other cartels. Treviño is an easy target to frame because he has a legacy of violence. The attacks paint Treviño as a traitor in the criminal underworld, including among Zetas which could eventually compromise his ability to lead, or maybe even to survive.

*Dr. Guy Fricano lectures at the University of Chicago, Elmhurst College, and the University of St Francis, and is a Masters candidate at the University of St Andrews Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence. His current research examines propaganda of Mexico's drug war.*

## Notes:

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6] Mexican cartels typically seek impunity in their profit-generation, not revolution per se. It is unlikely the Zetas would intentionally represent themselves as a regime.

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12] "Born Another War, Miguel Angel Trevino Morales, Z-40, Now is the Principle Leader of Los Zetas" U.S. Open Borders, April 3, 2012. Available at <http://usopenborders.com/2012/04/born-another-war-miguel-angel-trevino-morales-z-40-now-is-the-principal-leader-of-los-zetas/>

## Analyzing the Role of the Top LeT Ideologue: A Profile of Amir Hamza

*Arif Jamal*

**M**aulana Amir Hamza is one of the most important leaders of the Pakistan-based Jamaat-ud-Dawah (JuD) terrorist group after its emir Hafiz Mohammad Saeed. He is a fiery speaker and a prolific writer. These two skills enabled him to rise to a top slot in the group. He also played a key role in shaping the JuD and connecting the founding members. In 2008 the United Nations declared the JuD a terrorist group; it was listed as an alias for the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militant group. [1]

Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi, the commander of the LeT, originally recruited Hamza in 1984 during one of Lakhvi's visits to Pakistan where he was recruiting new fighters. At the time, Hamza was an Ahle Hadith student from Central Pakistani Punjab (Ahle Hadith refers to various Islamic reformist movements that emphasize the use of hadith). In 1985 Lakhvi decided to organize the LeT as a jihadi group. Since the group comprised only the students from different Pakistani madrassas (Islamic seminaries), he needed an additional participant who could claim to be an accomplished alim (Islamic scholar). Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, a teacher of Islamic studies at the University of Engineering and Technology in Lahore, was one such person who could give some credibility to the group. Lakhvi asked Hamza in 1985 to meet Hafiz Saeed and convince him to lead the small group. Hamza met Saeed at the latter's residence in Lahore. Saeed did not make a commitment initially however two years after the initial meeting Saeed took over command of the group. [2]

### The Source of the Terrorist Group

The LeT was the militant wing of the Markaz al-Dawa wal-Irshad (MDI), a missionary-jihadi organization formally established in 1987. After its conception, the group started holding dawah (invitation) [3] and jihad conferences across the country. The MDI also started publishing pamphlets against democracy and in support of dawah and jihad, most of which were written by Hamza and Hafiz Abdullah Bahawalpuri, a well-known religious leader in Punjab. [4] The MDI held its first annual convention in March 1988 at the reform

centre of Hafiz Mohammad Yahya Aziz Mohammadi at Bonga Balochan "al-Badr" Bhaiphero. The second annual convention was also held at that centre in March 1989. It was on this occasion that the MDI published its magazine Mujalla Ad-Dawah for the first time. It was later turned into a monthly magazine and Hamza was appointed editor. The membership and followers of the MDI started growing dramatically. The Mujalla Ad-Dawah and other pamphlets written by Hamza played a key role in this growth. By the time the MDI held its third annual convention in Muridke on November 14-16, 1990, the number of followers had grown to approximately 10,000. [5]

### Networking in former the Soviet Union and Iran

As the Afghan jihad came to an end in 1988, the still small MDI decided to establish links with Salafist groups in the former Soviet Union. Hamza was one of several MDI leaders sent out for this purpose. He embarked on a long journey inside the former Soviet Union visiting Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Dagestan, Azerbaijan, and to Russia's Chechnya and Kazan, the capitol of Tatarstan. [6,7] These were the days when the Muslims in the former Soviet states were experiencing an Islamic revival. According to a senior MDI leader, "The goal of these visits was to establish permanent contacts with the Muslim religious leaders and give them the dawah for Salafism before they adopted any other sect." Hamza also visited Iran to establish links with Sunni groups there, which were fighting the Shiite majority. [8]

### Campaign against the United States

While the MDI was India-centric, the JuD started giving increased attention to instigating anti-Western sentiment, particularly against the United States. A vigorous campaign was run against the US-led invasion of Afghanistan. As part of this campaign, the JuD sponsored rallies in big cities, focused on stoking hate against the United States and West. Hamza personally planned and led many of these rallies. [9] The anti-U.S. campaign received a boost in 2003 when the United States invaded Iraq in April of that year; subsequently, rallies and propaganda they organized became more virulent and frequent. [10]

### The Rise of the JuD with the Asian Tsunami

Although the JuD has been active in East Asia since late the 1980s, the Asian tsunami in 2005 opened many

doors in the region for the JuD since massive devastations produced an abundance of people in need. As soon as he heard news of the tsunami, Saeed ordered the JuD to send as many volunteers and relief goods as possible to the calamity-hit countries. He appointed Hamza as head of the Tsunami Relief Committee. According to a press release from JuD, the committee collected Rs 4.1 million (roughly 161,000 USD) for the victims of the Asian Tsunami in just half an hour. [11] The JuD committee contacted the diplomatic offices for several of the affected countries to learn about their needs. The Sri Lankan office was one of the first offices to respond and within a short amount of time, the JuD transferred over six truckloads of relief goods to them, worth approximately Rs 10 million (nearly 180,000 USD). “The relief goods included family tents, stitched western suits, unstitched cloth, children’s garments, medicines, rice, etc. All the relief goods were new, [and] were bought or collected in view of the needs of the people affected” Hamza said. [12] Hamza went to the Maldives to personally offer relief to the Maldivian government and people. [13] This visit allowed him to establish closer links with the Salafist elements there where the JuD has since established a wide network. [14]

### **Getting Engaged in Politics**

The news that interrogators at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility had flushed some pages from the Quran to extract information from inmates caused an uproar throughout the Muslim world. [15] The JuD took this as an opportunity to launch two of its most important political campaigns: Tehreek Tehreek Hurmat-e-Quran and Tehreek Hurmat-e-Rasool. On May 18, 2005, The JuD called a meeting of 40 Islamist groups at Markaz al-Qadsia, the center of the JuD in Lahore, Pakistan to form the Rabita Ulema Committee, which would run a sustained campaign called Tehreek Hurmat-e-Quran under the leadership of the JuD. The Rabita Ulema Committee asked the United States to apologize to the Muslims and hand over the accused to the Ulema who would try them in a Shari’a court.

The Rabita Ulema Committee went beyond responding to the desecration of the Quran. [16] From the Martyrs Mosque in Lahore, they also launched the Tehreek Hurmat Quran in response to the Washington Times’ publication of cartoons mocking the Prophet Muhammad. Saeed asked the participants to turn each and every mosque in the country into a center for the Tehreek Hurmat Quran. He asked the government to expel the U.S. ambassador and U.S. armed forces

personnel, to shut down the U.S. military bases in the country, and to stop receiving Christina Rocca, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs under President George W. Bush. Saeed also demanded that the government stop all FBI operations inside Pakistan and to expel the agents. Furthermore, the committee requested the imposition of the Quranic order in the country [17] and held public meetings across the country in which they discussed the sanctity of the Quran. Hamza was appointed and served as the Convener of the campaigns. [18]

### **Prolific Writer**

Hamza is the editor of several JuD periodicals including its flagship, monthly Mujallah Ad-Dawah. He has also authored a number of books that include Torkhum se Kohqaf – Roos ke taaqab mein (From Torkhum to the Caucasus – Hotly Pursuing Russia), Shahrae Bahisht (The Road to Paradise), Mein ney bible sey poocha, Quran kyun Jaley? (I Asked the Bible Why the Qurans were Set Alight), Mazhabi aur siyasi bavey (Religious and Political Men), Afghanistan ki chotion par qafila dawato jihad (On the Mountain Tops of Afghanistan – The Caravans of Call and Jihad), and Rawaeey Merey huzoor key (The Mannerism of My Sire).

### **Conclusion**

According to report published in the beginning of June by The News in Pakistan, Hamza attended a meeting in which the Difa-e-Pakistan Council discussed plans to protest the increasing number of drone strikes in Pakistan [19], which demonstrates his continued involvement in protests and politics. Considering Hamza’s significant capacity to influence people through his writings and leadership positions, his role in future terrorist activities committed by the JuD or MDI should not be underestimated. And, like Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman has inspired The Blind Sheikh terrorist organization in Egypt, Hamza’s teachings could inspire future jihadis.

Arif Jamal is an independent security and terrorism expert and author of “Shadow War – The Untold Story of Jihad in Kashmir.”

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2. Amir Hamza, “Qafila Dawat-o-Jihad” published by Markaz Dawat wal Irshad, 1993, P 118.
3. Dawah is the practice of conveying the message of Islam to non-Muslims; literally means “making an invitation.”
4. Interview with Hafiz Saeed, October 1997, Lahore.
5. Interview with an attendee
6. Amir Hamza, “Torkham sey kohqaf tak – Roos key taaqub mein” published by Darul Andlus, Lahore, 2005. P 15.
7. Ibid.
8. Author interview with an MDI commander, Rawalpindi, February 2001.
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13. Ibid.
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## **The Ideological Inspiration for Boko Haram: A Profile of Mallam Muhammadu Marwa and His Impact on Religious Extremism in Northern Nigeria**

*Andrew McGregor*

A statement from the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN) issued on June 21 warned that last week’s Boko Haram attacks on Christians in Kaduna and Zaria and the subsequent reprisals against innocent Muslims represented a descent into a complete social breakdown in Nigeria “reminiscent of the horrific inter-ethnic and religious war that marked the violent break-up of the former Yugoslavia” (*Nigerian Tribune*, June 21). As the crisis mounts in Nigeria, the recent and surprising release from prison of a former leader of sectarian violence in northern Nigeria has almost been overlooked, but in itself threatens a resumption of the murderous outrages of the Maitatsine movement of the early 1980s that claimed nearly 10,000 lives and nearly shattered Nigeria’s social and political order. Though not identical in ideology, the ongoing violence of the Boko Haram movement in many ways takes its inspiration from one of the most dreaded and controversial figures in post-independence Nigeria – the late Mallam Muhammadu Marwa, better known by his Hausa nickname, “Maitatsine,” or “The One Who Damns.” As his successor Mekaniki returns to the streets of northern Nigeria, it is worthwhile to re-examine the life of Muhammadu Marwa, a man who sought not merely to reform Islam, but to change it completely, regardless of the cost in blood this would require.

### **Early Life of Muhammadu Marwa**

Though Marwa was born a member of the powerful and widespread Fulani tribe in the town of Marwa in northern Cameroon (close to the Nigerian border), we know little of his early life before he emerged as a young itinerant *mallam* (Islamic teacher). [1] From the beginning, there were aspects to his teaching that orthodox Muslims found provocative, and it was not long before authorities in British Cameroon quietly pushed him across the border to British-occupied Nigeria in 1945 in the hopes he would become someone else’s problem. [2] Physically, Marwa was described as

unimposing; a small, slender man, soft-spoken in his early days, bearded and with two gold incisor teeth. [3]

Marwa arrived in the garb of a religious scholar in Kano in the 1950s, where his idiosyncratic interpretation of Islam and claims that Muhammad was not an actual prophet drew his presence to the attention of Ado Bayero, the Emir of Kano, who had the controversial preacher shipped back to Cameroon in 1962. His residency there was short-lived, local Cameroonian authorities facilitated the return of this disturbing individual to Nigeria in 1966, where he established himself as a Quranic teacher to young boys, a situation that permitted him to begin building a loyal following indoctrinated in his particular interpretation of Islam, though not before he served another stretch in prison beginning in 1973 when authorities objected to his methods and teachings. [4] This incarceration appeared to have little effect on Marwa's progress in Kano, and it was not long before his followers began to comb the city for homeless youth who could be easily enticed by promises of food and shelter. With a development boom infused with petrodollars, Kano went from a city of 400,000 people largely confined within the old city walls in 1970, to a sprawling metropolis of 1.7 million people only ten years later. Wealth remained concentrated in the hands of a privileged few, however, and the streets of Kano were filled with young people seeking any means of survival. [5] In building his following, Marwa made full use of the *almajiri* system in which boys, usually between ten to 14 years-old, were attached to a religious teacher who provided sufficient instruction in Arabic to permit the reading and memorization of Islamic scriptures.

The students were largely self-supporting through daily begging for alms (a traditional means of support for religious students), a portion of which went directly to Marwa. The movement's funding was supplemented by Marwa's growing reputation as a composer of allegedly powerful amulets and charms, an activity shunned by better-educated religious scholars, but one that appealed to a wide spectrum of Muslims still influenced by traditional interpretations of Islam that incorporated pre-Islamic belief systems. Marwa's efforts in this area hearkened back to the 1906 Mahdist Satiru Rebellion in northern Nigeria, in which a briefly successful uprising eventually came to grief when insurgents eschewed the use of fire-arms in favor of traditional weapons and charms produced by a holy man named Dan Makafu that promised to turn bullets into water. [6]

### **Building a Base for Islamic Renewal in Kano**

During the 1970s, Marwa began to take on the established Sunni scholars, condemning anyone who used any other scriptural source than the Quran, including the Sunna and the Hadiths. [7] More broadly, he damned those who read any book other than the Quran or used watches cars, bicycles, televisions, cigarettes and many other products that reflected Western life, earning himself the nickname "Maitatsine," or "The One Who Damns." By the late 1970's, Marwa had become a well-known public figure by challenging all manner of authority. Such activities earned him a year in prison at hard labor in 1978, but this did little to deter him. Indeed, Marwa grew more powerful from this point as his followers began appropriating properties beside his Quranic school, eventually developing a self-ruling enclave of several thousand men to which opponents and alleged "traitors" to the movement were brought and summarily executed after a brief and predictable appearance before the movement's own "court." [8]

The 1979 Iranian Revolution encouraged the growing millenarian trend in the Muslim community and Marwa's own followers became increasingly violent in their rejection of state authority, partly by exploiting the greater degree of political and individual freedom promulgated by Nigeria's 1979 constitution. The growing tensions in northern Nigeria's Islamic community led to dozens of clashes between authorities and various Islamic groups in the lead-up to the Kano insurrection of 1980. Marwa began work on a new center for his followers, located in the unfinished 'Yan Awaki district of Kano. The fortified compound was based on high ground and partly protected by a stream that wound around part of the property. A separate one-storey building at the rear of the compound was known as "the slaughter-house," where numerous victims of the sect were murdered and their bodies dumped through a trap-door into the stream. Efforts to rein in Marwa through legislation against unorthodox preaching failed through fears it could be applied against the more mainstream ulema (religious scholars and clergy) and the Maitatsine enclave and its surroundings became a "no-go" area for local police. Even undercover work was abandoned, leaving security forces with little intelligence regarding the movement's intentions. In the absence of any opposition by authorities, Marwa continued to illegally expropriate neighboring properties and encouraged his supporters to settle on any unoccupied real estate, asserting that all land belonged to Allah and his people.

By 1980, Marwa had roughly 10,000 followers (mostly in Kano but with smaller groups in Bauchi, Gombe, Maiduguri and Yola) and confrontations with police and the *ulema* became common, often degenerating into pitched street-battles with multiple fatalities.

Marwa was accompanied by bodyguards everywhere and his followers began to appear armed at public events, having received training under the supervision of the movement's military commander Saidu Rabi'u from former soldiers and policemen who had joined the movement. It was common for sect members to carry concealed weapons in the streets while confident of the protection against firearms and other weapons bestowed by the charms and amulets produced by Marwa. [9] In this atmosphere it became clear that matters would soon come to a head, especially when rumors began to circulate that Marwa intended to take over Kano's market and main mosques. [10] Nonetheless, authorities in Lagos denied repeated requests from Kano for police reinforcements to deal with Marwa and his followers, who by this time vastly outnumbered the available police in Kano.

### **Beyond Orthodoxy**

Marwa's message appealed to the largely unemployed or underemployed masses that the rapid expansion of Kano attracted from the Nigerian countryside and even from across regional borders, many of whom could not afford the consumer goods denounced by the increasingly bellicose religious leader. Marwa's prohibition against carrying only small amounts of cash, on the grounds that carrying more displayed a lack of faith in Allah, did not require much adaptation by the migrants, working poor and impoverished students who flocked to his leadership, who were often inspired as much by resentment against the flourishing corruption and mismanagement that concentrated money in the hands of a few as by religious concerns. The anti-materialist theme in Marwa's teachings gave focus to the lives of the impoverished, replacing envy with righteousness. Though Marwa sought to reform Islam through a highly individual interpretation of what constituted orthodoxy, he did not hesitate to employ older, pre-Islamic spiritual beliefs regarding the concentration of magical powers in certain individuals, traditions that were familiar to his largely rural-origin following. Marwa also changed the wording and the ritual involved in daily prayer, a shocking display of arrogance to most Muslims. Most controversial, however, was Marwa's 1979 claim

to be a *nabi*, or prophet, at times equating himself with the Prophet Muhammad, and at other times declaring his superiority to this "mere Arab." [11] For orthodox Muslims, who believe Muhammad is the last Prophet, Marwa had now gone beyond all reasonable interpretations of Islam and placed himself at odds with the larger Muslim community in northern Nigeria.

### **An Inevitable Confrontation**

In response to public complaints, Kano State governor Muhammad Rimi (who was alleged to have previously had ties to the cult), sent Marwa a message on November 24, 1980 demanding that he and his followers vacate their illegally expropriated holdings or face government action. Marwa, in turn, began summoning his followers to his defense.

When police attempted to prevent a public demonstration by arresting some leaders of the 'Yan Tatsine (as Marwa's followers were known) at Kano's Shahuci Playing Grounds on December 18, 1980, they were attacked by 'Yan Tatsine wielding machetes, knives, spears, axes and bows and arrows. Police arms quickly fell into the eager hands of the 'Yan Tatsine and it did not take long for the security forces to lose control of the situation entirely. Kano was turned over to mobs of 'Yan Tatsine who murdered, raped and pillaged in the city for days, often while singing movement favorites like *Yau Zamu Sha Jini* ("Today We Will Suck Blood"). [12] At times the marauders were opposed by vigilante groups (the 'Yan Tauri), but these were generally ineffective as supporters of Marwa continued to pour into the city. [13] By December 22, with many of the outnumbered and demoralized police no longer showing up for duty, it was felt necessary to deploy the Nigerian military to retake Kano, which they began by "softening up" the militants (and their unfortunate neighbors) with a ten-hour mortar barrage by the 146th Infantry Battalion, together with aerial support. Militants and innocents alike perished in the bombardment, which was followed by military forces mopping up the remaining resistance with rockets and machine guns in bitter street fighting. Battalion Major Haliru Akilu noted later that the militants showed little fear of the Army's superior weapons: "They were ready to kill first, or be killed, but never to run" (*The Age* [Lagos], February 21, 1981).

A contributing factor to the ferocity of the onslaught of the 'Yan Tatsine on the ordinary citizens of Kano appears to have been the death shortly before the clashes

of Marwa's eldest son Tijani (a.k.a. Kana'ana). Though Tijani appears to have opted for association with members of Kano's criminal underworld rather than the pursuit of religion, Marwa blamed Tijani's death at the hands of his criminal associates on the people of Kano as a whole and vowed to make every father "taste the bitterness of losing a child" (*Sunday Trust* [Abuja], December 26, 2010).

Separated by only a decade from a bitter civil war, Nigeria's largely northern ruling class was in no mood to tolerate such challenges to its authority or national unity. Official figures claimed over 4,000 dead, though other sources suggest the figure was far larger. At least 100,000 people were displaced by the fighting. [14] Hundreds of children abducted by the sect for indoctrination were also freed when soldiers entered the Maitatsine compound.

Rumors that the insurgents had been aided by Libyan troops or provided with Libyan arms soon proved false (Libyan troops were fighting across the border in Chad at the time). Other claims that "Zionist forces" or various Western intelligence agencies were behind the rebellion were raised at the subsequent Aniagolu Commission of Inquiry but remained unsubstantiated. [15] The Zionist allegation appears to have had its origin in the sect's practice of praying while facing Jerusalem rather than Mecca. [16]

## The Legacy of Maitatsine

Once the Army had retaken control of Kano, Marwa's body was exhumed from a shallow grave on the outskirts of the city (News Agency of Nigeria, December 31, 1980). The would-be prophet was variously reported to have died from smoke inhalation or wounds to his leg during the attack on his compound (*The Age*, February 21, 1981). [17] On the orders of Justice Aniagolu the remains were cremated and remain today in an officially sealed jar on the shelf of the police laboratory in Kano (*Sunday Trust* [Abuja], December 26, 2010). The area where Marwa built his enclave is now home to a police barracks, all traces of the former complex having been destroyed in the fighting or demolished soon afterwards.

In the commission of inquiry that followed the devastation of Kano, there was inevitable criticism of police efforts. Most of the police rank-and-file came from the same culture as the members of the 'Yan Tatsine, and were just as prone to believing in the efficacy of

the charms and amulets worn by Marwa's followers. Their leaders also came under criticism, with the commission declaring the acting commissioner of police at the time "had totally succumbed to the permanent existence of the threat, which like the state governor and other government functionaries, was believed to be beyond suppression. It was a case of total surrender to an overwhelming situation" (*Sunday Trust* [Abuja], December 26, 2010).

Attempts by some Nigerian authorities to create an "Outsider Narrative" to explain the events in Kano were not supported by evidence. Police records confirm that Nigeriens, Chadians and Cameroonians were among Marwa's followers arrested after the 1980 uprising, but their numbers were relatively small and did not justify government attempts to characterize the 'Yan Tatsine as a "foreign" movement that had infiltrated Nigeria.

Marwa's rise took place at a time and in a region where Islam was perhaps more of a divisive than a unifying force. There was intense competition between the major Sufi orders (the Qadiriya and the Tijaniya), Saudi-inspired Salafists, anti-Sufists of the Saudi-supported 'Yan Izala movement and politically conscious Muslims inspired by the 1979 Iranian revolution. Wrapped in a resolutely anti-authoritarian, anti-state and anti-materialist garb, Marwa was able to present himself as the final prophet of Islam based on the millenarian fervor existing in the Islamic year AH 1400 (1979-1980). In doing so, Marwa exploited strong currents of Mahdism in the region, which was in expectation of a *mujaddid*, or "Renewer," an individual believed to appear at the end of every century (on the Islamic calendar) to restore Islam to its original purity. The strength of these beliefs not only gave Marwa a certain degree of immunity in the Muslim community, but also allowed for the close connections he was alleged to have with certain politicians and prominent businessmen in the area.

Despite the deaths in Kano and the arrest of several thousand of Marwa's supporters, the 'Yan Tatsine continued to exist, though much of the movement relocated to the city of Maiduguri in Borno State. Drawing strength from the belief that Marwa was not actually dead, the movement was soon operating in defiance of the state once more.

- October, 1982 – A 'Yan Tatsine clash with police at Bulunkutu, outside Maiduguri, left over 450 dead before the fighting spread to Kaduna State, where

scores more were killed.

- February, 1984 – More than 1,000 people were killed during rampages in Jimeta (Gongola State) that followed the mass escape of ‘Yan Tatsine from a local jail.
- April, 1985 – Efforts to arrest Marwa’s successor al-Makaniki (“the Mechanic,” a.k.a. Yusufu Amadu) in Gombe (Bauchi State) left at least another 150 dead after the ‘Yan Tatsine engaged in a gunfight with security forces. Makaniki fled to Cameroon, where he remained until 2004, when he returned to Nigeria and was arrested. In a surprise development, Makaniki was acquitted and discharged as a free man in early May, 2012 (*Daily Trust* [Abuja], May 9).

In 2006, one of Maitatsine’s wives, Zainab, told a reporter that Marwa had nothing to do with the Kano violence in 1980 and that her late husband was “an embodiment of scholarship, a father and a religious reformer that was misunderstood. He preached tolerance, peace, harmony and religious revival... To the best of our understanding of him, he was a man of humility and we are sure he was framed, misunderstood and castigated for preaching” (*Sunday Trust* [Abuja], December 26, 2010). While most Nigerians reject such an interpretation of the Maitatsine legacy, the calculated viciousness of contemporary attacks by Boko Haram extremists against Muslims and Christians alike suggest that religious extremism, police corruption, lack of opportunity, inept intelligence work, economic inequity and uninhibited urban growth continue to provide fertile ground for periodic and uncontrollable explosions of religiously-inspired violence in northern Nigeria.

*Andrew McGregor is the Managing Editor of the Jamestown Foundation’s Global Terrorism Analysis publications and the Director of Toronto-based Aberfoyle International Security, which specializes in security issues related to the Islamic world.*

## Notes:

1. For contemporary Fulani militancy in Africa, see Andrew McGregor, “Central Africa’s Tribal Marauder: A Profile of Fulani Insurgent Leader General Abdel Kader Baba Laddé,” *Militant Leadership Monitor* 3(4), April 30, 2012.
2. Francis Ohanyido, “Poverty and Politics at The Bottom of Terror (Part 1 – The Maitatsine Phenomenon),” *Ayaka* 3(2), June 2012, <http://www.ayakaonline.com/politics/poverty-and-politics-at-the-bottom-of-terror-part-1-%E2%80%93-the-maitatsine-phenomenon/>

3. Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies*, Rochester, 1998, p.141.
4. The dates of Marwa’s various convictions and the duration of his sentences is a matter of some dispute in the literature concerning him and is likely due to inconsistent record-keeping.
5. Michael Watts, “Black Gold, White Heat: State violence, local resistance and the national question in Nigeria,” in: Michael Keith and Steven Pile (eds.), *Geographies of Resistance*, London, 1997, p.47.
6. J.S. Hogendorn and Paul E. Lovejoy, “Revolutionary Mahdism and Resistance to Early Colonial Rule in Northern Nigeria and Niger,” *African Studies Seminar Paper*, African Studies Institute of the University of the Witwatersrand, May 1979, pp.26-27.
7. Niels Kastfelt, “Rumours of Maitatsine: A Note on Political Culture in Northern Nigeria,” *African Affairs* 83(350), 1989, p. 83.
8. Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis, *Understanding Civil War: Africa: Evidence and Analysis*, World Bank Publications, 2005, p.103.
9. Falola, op cit, p.146.
10. Rosalind I.J. Hackett, “Exploring Theories of Religious Violence: Nigeria’s ‘Maitatsine’ Phenomenon,” in: Timothy Light and Brian C. Wilson (eds.), *Religion as a Human Capacity: A Festschrift in Honor of E. Thomas Lawson*, Leiden, 2004, p.197.
11. Falola, op cit, p.143.
12. Ibid, p.154.
13. Allan Pred and Michael John Watts, *Reworking Modernity: Capitalisms and Symbolic Discontent*, Rutgers, 1992, p.24.
14. Watts, op cit, p.55.
15. Elizabeth Isichei, “The Maitatsine Risings in Nigeria 1980-85: A Revolt of the Disinherited,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 17(3), October 1987, pp.76-78.
16. Hackett, op cit, pp.199-200.
17. Abdur Rahman I. Doi, *Islam in Nigeria*, Zaria, 1984, p.299.

## **Purifying Islam and Combating the West: A Postmortem Analysis of the Indelible Impact of al-Qaeda's Abu Yahya al-Libi**

*Aaron Zelin*

Abu Yahya al-Libi might not have lived long enough to become the next Osama Bin Ladin, but over al-Libi's seven-year career with al-Qaeda he had an indelible impact. Al-Libi evolved from an ideologue to a military commander to senior leadership. It would not be a stretch to state that al-Libi was the most important individual who joined al-Qaeda in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks. He was allegedly killed in a drone strike on June 5, 2012, though al-Qaeda's media outlet has released videos of him since; they have neither confirmed nor denied his death. If he is dead, al-Libi's works will live on, but he will be difficult to replace in terms of his unique skill-set as a warrior-cum-jihadi philosopher.

### **Background**

Born Hasan Muhammad Qa'id in 1963, but best known as Abu Yahya al-Libi – also taking the names Yunis al-Sahrawi and 'Abd-al-Hafiz al-Libi – he grew up in the oasis town of Murzuq in the Fezzan region of southwest Libya, with a population of about 7,000. Prior to al-Libi's jihadi life, he studied chemistry for a year at the University of Sebha, three hours north of his hometown.

### **Jihad Before al-Qaeda**

Although al-Libi is not considered part of the old guard due to his relative youth, he began to associate with Libyan foreign fighters in the aftermath of the 1980s anti-Soviet jihad. He was amongst a group of Arabs that joined up to fight against the Soviet-installed president Mohammad Najibullah, who fell in 1992. While in Afghanistan, al-Libi linked up with the newly established Jama'at al-Muqatilah al-Islamiyyah (the Islamic Fighting Group better known as the LIFG), which sought to overthrow the Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi regime.

In 1991, al-Libi was dispatched by the LIFG to Mauritania where he studied under doctrinaire Salafi clerics, including Budah 'Uld al-Busayri and

Muhammad Salim 'Uld Adud, whom he eulogized in July 2009. One of his classmates was 'Atiyatullah 'Abd al-Rahman, who was considered bin Ladin's consigliere before they were killed by U.S. covert actions, in May and September 2011 respectively. [1] Al-Libi's time in formal religious training provided important bona fides that conferred upon him a level of credibility that other al-Qaeda figures, including Bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri, lacked. After two years, he went to Sudan and then later moved to Afghanistan as did the other jihadi groups that were kicked out of Sudan in 1996.

According to Noman Benotman, a former leader in the LIFG's Shura council who has since de-radicalized, al-Libi was not involved with the insurgency against the al-Qadhafi regime in the 1990s due to a lack of military experience or credentials. Al-Libi's main skills were used in the intellectual arena where he was involved with LIFG's da'wah (missionary) and fatwa committees. He also performed sermons, wrote articles and wrote poetry. [2] While still with the LIFG he published nineteen poems dealing with jihad, al-Qadhafi, martyrdom, and prisoners (specifically writing poems to the blind Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman and Salman al-Awdah), although his poetic output dropped during his time with al-Qaeda. At this point in his career, it is clear he was still largely focused on the local enemy.

The first sign of a shift to a more global jihadi focus was when al-Libi penned a fatwa two weeks after 9/11 titled "On the American Crusader Attacks on Afghanistan," which called for jihad against the United States: "By declaring war against the Muslims and occupying their countries, the United States of America has made all of its worldwide interests into legitimate targets for the mujahidin. They [the mujahidin] shall bomb and demolish them by any means necessary. Those interests include military, economic, humanitarian, diplomatic, cultural, tourism, or anyone else anywhere around the globe."

Based on his close connections to the Taliban, al-Libi may have written the fatwa to legitimize and defend his co-religionists than calling for mass out-of-area casualties in manner of al-Qaeda. Prior to al-Libi's arrest in Karachi in May 2002, he worked with the Taliban on its website al-Imarah al-Islamiyyah (The Islamic Emirate), an experience he recalled in an interview with the magazine Tora Bora following his break from Bagram Prison in 2005. [3]

**Post-Prison Break**

Based on his prior ties to the Taliban, it is unsurprising that his first public appearance came in a video produced by a Taliban-affiliated media outlet al-Labayk. In it, al-Libi reminds everyone that jihad will never die until the glory is returned to the Muslim ummah (community) and “the sharia is brought back to the pure land [Afghanistan].” He is shown in a variety of positions shooting an AK-47 and wearing a traditional Pakistani cap. [4] He also accuses the United States of human rights abuses, highlighting the United States’ treatment of female prisoner #650 at Bagram, who some believe is Aafia Siddiqui (though this point is disputed). This could explain why al-Libi dedicated a video and stood up for her cause in 2010. [5] He also rails against the United States’ war against “religion” and attempt to “uproot Islam.”

It is clear that his experience in prison changed al-Libi ideologically to focus on how the “crusaders” (the West and specifically the United States) were pulling the strings with the local so-called “apostate” regimes. [6] He illustrates that the United States brought the prisons to the “apostate” countries to lock up the “mujahidin” locally in countries such as Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Jordan, and Mauritania.

Al-Libi continued his media circuit with two interviews with al-Qaeda’s As-Sahab Media, in 2006 and 2007, essentially parroting similar points while revealing biographical details. [7] He would not officially join al-Qaeda though until 2007 when a faction from the LIFG led by Abu Layth al-Libi merged with al-Qaeda, but was soundly rejected by the LIFG leadership within Libya and exiled in Europe. [8] From there, al-Libi’s star continued to rise, so much so that he was later dispatched to gain field experience heading a battalion within Afghanistan, as attested by the American al-Qaeda operative Bryant Neal Vinas (CNN, June 5, 2012). By the time of his alleged death, American officials believed he had climbed to the number two spot under Ayman al-Zawahiri. Al-Libi also played a key role as broker in the Shura-i-Muraqaba, which was established with the various Taliban factions last winter to temper “unjustified killings” against Pakistan and refocus on the U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan (*Long War Journal*, January 3, 2012). In all, he released approximately sixty-five videos and/or monographs with al-Qaeda, most between 2006-2009.

**Purifying Islam: Al-Libi’s Historical Project**

In the aftermath of al-Libi joining al-Qaeda he became the go-to individual when al-Qaeda was looking to push back against ideological and theological attacks upon it. In al-Libi’s writings, he made boisterous counterattacks against key ideological and theological threats that were meted out against al-Qaeda’s worldview, most prominently: the *‘ulama* (religious scholars), the Saudi establishment, *muraja’at* (revisions), jihad, shedding Muslim blood, *wasatiyyah* (moderation) in Islam, and interfaith dialogue. All of these topics, al-Libi attempted to refute and explain why his interpretation was “pure” Islam while those who disagreed “abused” Islam at its “roots.”

A major theme running through most of al-Libi’s works was the role the *‘ulama* should play as the ones who show the way forward for the *ummah*: “[It is important] to know the value of scholars, their status, and their eminence. Scholars are like the sun during midday. If they are present, people are able to live a good life and are able to conduct their lives in a normal manner. But if the sun sets, what will happen? What will befall the people? Darkness, it will be darkness.” [9] In this way, when the *‘ulama* do not live up to this mantle or shirk their duties al-Libi puts them on notice: “No jihad. Do we not hear this phrase time and time again every day? And from whom? We hear it from scholars who should have been the heirs of our prophet.” [10]

According to al-Libi, the failure of the *‘ulama* to stand up to the Saudi establishment, has allowed a new “monstrous” Saudi version of *tawhid* (monotheism): “by bending the necks of the texts or even breaking them.” [11] This corruption, al-Libi believes has taken hold as a result of the pernicious Western creations of *wasatiyyah* in Islam and interfaith dialogue. Al-Libi explains that not only is the West in a military war against Islam, but a full on intellectual war: “In the name of moderation, the evil spreader tampered with the concept of jihad by targeting it with their pens and tongues. They stained its existence, tarnished its glamour, and emptied its rulings in the mold of their defeat, cowardice, and weakness to come up with a distorted form that was unknown to the ancestors and unacceptable to the faithful, but it is sufficient that the civilized infidels of the West are convinced.” [12] The “interfaith convergence” al-Libi argues is a dastardly trick of the Saudi government to please their masters in the West: “They [the Saudis] are making it effortless for their agents by laying the groundwork for the invasion of minds after having

eased the invasion of fortresses ... They have announced their clear support and unveiled favor for the present-day Crusader campaign.” [13]

Another issue that is a trick of the “apostate” regimes according to al-Libi is *muraja’at* (revisions) published by imprisoned jihadis who have realized they were wrong and written refutations of al-Qaeda, most notably Dr. Fadl, former leader of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. Al-Libi assures his global jihadi followers that one should not take these *muraja’at* seriously when released while one is still imprisoned: “ideas which oozed from the darkness of the prison cells and under the whips of the lashers and the policy of repression and compulsion ... perhaps you will agree with me that with ideas produced in circumstances like this, you cannot attribute true conviction to their producer.” [14]

One of the most significant problems for al-Qaeda is the media attention around violence al-Qaeda has been directing against Muslims. According to a study by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point in 2009, 85% of al-Qaeda’s violence has been perpetrated against Muslims. One of al-Qaeda’s responses was via a full-throttle theological argument for why it was okay to shed Muslim blood in the context of individuals being shielded (*al-Tatarrus*). Al-Libi concluded that because war is different today and there is a continual onslaught at the hands of the West even if an innocent is murdered, if they were a good Muslim, they will be seen as martyrs in the eyes of God. The argument is hypocritical considering how much of al-Qaeda’s propaganda is based around complaining about collateral damage caused by the United States. [15] Terrorism expert Jarret Brachman says the claim by al-Libi essentially ignores 1,400 years of Islamic scholarly debate as well as key aspects of the actual theory of *al-Tatarrus*. [16]

### Other Key Works

In addition to the works mentioned, al-Libi also attempted to rally global jihadi supporters in various countries to continue fighting and/or attempting to lay the groundwork to implement sharia law. The countries he focused on included: Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Algeria, and Syria. In these types of releases al-Libi lambasted local “apostate” regimes for being played by the “crusader” forces and upset at how the local *‘ulama* did not stand up for their fellow co-religionists. As a result, the vanguards of the “mujahidin” are the only individuals one should be supporting and praying for. Al-Libi touched on these

themes as well as describing the state of the *ummah* in his *khutaba’* (sermons) during the most important Muslim holidays ‘Id al-Fitr and/or ‘Id al-Adha in 2005, 2007-2009, and 2011.

In the past few years, due to the heightened pace of drones strikes in Pakistan, al-Libi released a piece on how to deal with spies among them. [17] He argued that it was important to provide at least two witnesses and have a strong *sharia* reasoning to justify killing someone for helping pinpoint leaders’ locations to U.S. forces. Al-Libi argued that it was better to be over cautious in this instance when convicting someone of such a charge.

### The Arab Spring

More recently, al-Libi has taken up the mantle of providing support and guidance to countries following the uprisings that started in the Middle East and North Africa in December 2010. He has released two videos to his home country in Libya, another to Algeria and another to Syria. [18] All four video messages have the tone of watching what is happening from afar and attempting to get in on the action. The videos on Algeria and Syria do not provide much in the way of true guidance. Rather al-Libi goes over their glorious struggles of the past and the present and calls on fellow Muslims to join them in their revolts. On the other hand, in al-Libi’s December 2011 video to the people of Libya, he does provide some instructions on how they should move forward in a post-Qadhafi society, providing recommendations for: the “formation of a board...to oversee the realization of the revolution’s demands”; a call for rebels not to give up their weapons; an invitation for Islamic scholars to form an independent committee that would have a direct role in formulating Libya’s constitution; and the severing of any ties the rebels had with Western governments. Indeed, this release is one of the more substantive points made by an al-Qaeda central senior leader regarding the Arab Spring.

### Conclusion

Although al-Qaeda has not confirmed or denied the death of al-Libi, his importance to the global jihadi movement is immense. His leadership skills and ability to control a more radical, younger cadre could lead to major internal leadership and strategic rifts if he was killed. If al-Libi is alive, escaping a second drone strike – the first in December 2009 – would provide even more lore to his story, which includes the prison break. On

the other hand, if al-Libi is dead he will be viewed as a glorious martyr that died at the hands of “crusader” America. He is not afraid of death, though, having previously written a pamphlet on forty *ahadith* (sayings and examples of the Muslim prophet Muhammad) that expounds on the virtues of martyrdom. [19] Further, he understands as do other jihadis that while his death will be a loss, the movement will continue apace without him [20]: “And the Ummah is full of champions who will fill these gaps, and just as the school of jihad produced them, it will produce others, and just as they have led, others will lead, with Allah’s permission.”

*Aaron Y. Zelin is the Richard Borow Fellow in the Washington Institute for Near East Policy’s Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence.*

## Notes:

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