

This is an ICSR insight produced by Senior Research Fellow, Shiraz Maher

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has released the latest edition of its English-language magazine, *Inspire*.

This quarterly publication serves as AQAP's primary means of addressing its followers and sympathisers in the West, while providing a unique insight into the strategic thinking of al-Qaeda's most potent affiliate.

Executive Summary

- The latest edition of *Inspire* magazine calls for renewed terrorist attacks against the United States including directions to 'blow up Times Square' and 'pull off Mumbai [styled attack] near White House until martyrdom'.
- Anwar al-Awlaki, the fugitive American-Yemeni al-Qaeda ideologue, states that attacks should be directed against both government and civilian targets. This is supported in an accompanying article from AQAP's head of religious affairs, Adil al-Abbab, discussing the jurisprudence on killing civilians.
- Recent terrorist attacks in Sweden and Britain are singled out for praise by AQAP coupled with renewed threats.
- Roshonara Choudhary, who stabbed Stephen Timms MP, and Taimour Abdulwahab al-Abdaly, who led the abortive terrorist attack in Sweden, are celebrated as embodying AQAP's spirit of 'Open Source Jihad' and displaying 'borderless loyalty'.
- A new article by Anwar al-Awlaki incites Muslims in the West to jihad, marking an ongoing campaign by him to produce a jurisprudence of jihad specifically tailored to Muslims in the West.
- The magazine republishes existing material from Osama bin Laden, Adam Gadahn, and chief al-Qaeda strategist Abu Musab al-Suri. The inclusion of al-Suri's work is highly significant, and is the second time *Inspire* has sought to popularise his work in the English language.

Renewed calls to attack the United States and others

- The following 'to do' list appears in the 'Open Source Jihad' section:
 - o Buy handguns
 - o Make bomb in mom's kitchen
 - o Blow up Times Square
 - o Pull off Mumbai near White House until martyrdom
- Anwar al-Awlaki calls for indiscriminate attacks against the United States. Although his article

ostensibly discusses financial fraud, it is clear that this passage is intended as a general instruction:

In the case of the United States, both the government and private citizens should be targeted. America and Americans are the Imam's [sic] of *kufir* in this day and age. The American people who vote for war mongering governments are intent on no good. Anyone who inflicts harm on them in any form is doing a favor to the ummah.

- AQAP's head of religious affairs, Adil al-Abbab, provides theological validation for targeting and killing civilians.

...when we look at the state of the Americans and Europeans, we see that they are in a state of war with us because of their participation in elections that choose governments that wage war against Muslims. They are in a state of war with us because their governments kill our brothers in Palestine, Afghanistan, and Iraq. These governments fight those who want to establish shari'ah law. Thus we target them because they are disbelievers and because of their war against us. They are in a state of war with us and they are not in a state of covenant since their governments have not seized [sic] their aggression against Muslims...it is legitimate to target the people of the West and we have no doubts about its legitimacy.

This passage restates al-Qaeda's principle of holding Western populations vicariously liable for the governments they voted for.

- Beyond the specific threats made against the United States, a more general warning is also issued:

We say to the *kuffār*. The borderless loyalty is a religious sentiment of the people in your midst. As long as the Muslims remain in your focus, you will remain in ours. No matter the security precautions you may take, you cannot kill a borderless idea.

Borderless loyalty: the attacks in Britain and Sweden

- AQAP celebrates the recent terrorist attacks in Britain and Sweden as 'proving to the world the power of a borderless loyalty: Islam.'

- Roshonara Choudhary, who admitted to being radicalised after listening to lectures by Anwar al-Awlaki, is held up as an example to others. The magazine rhetorically asks:

How could Roshonara remain indolent when she resides in the nation that picked apart the last remains of the *khilāfah*, and mounted its Crusader flag and agenda across the Muslim world? How could she remain silent when encountering the very people that permit their government to wage its war against Allah and His Messenger?

- Later, the incident is used to embarrass men into fighting jihad:

A woman has shown to the ummah's men the path of jihad! A woman my brothers! Shame on all the men for sitting on their hands while one of our women has taken up the individual jihad! She felt the need to do it simply because our men gave all too many excuses to refrain from it.

[...]

To the men of the ummah: Take the example of this woman and you will find success in the afterlife.

- The attempted bombings in Sweden by Taimour Abdulwahab al-Abdaly are used to threaten the Swedish government into reconsidering its foreign policy and its involvement in the Mohammed cartoons controversy:

It is about time that the Swedish government rethinks its position towards Islam and Muslims before the mujahidin strike again...This operation may serve as a reminder for the Swedish government and people to reconsider their position before their list of crimes against us becomes too long and it becomes too late.

Notably, Osama bin Laden has previously stated that al-Qaeda would not attack Sweden. AQAP's approach here demonstrates just how quickly the group's priorities can change, and the relative autonomy between different chapters. They acknowledge that bin Laden told the Swedes not to expect an attack by al-Qaeda, but Sweden's perceived belligerence towards Islam has led them to issue the above warning.

Anwar al-Awlaki and the jurisprudence of jihad

- Anwar al-Awlaki writes a new article discussing the jurisprudence of jihad called, 'the ruling on dispossessing the disbelievers wealth in *dar al-Harb* [the abode of war].'
- This article presents a dense and verbose legal treatise on the issue of stealing money from countries deemed to be at war with Islam. The intended audience is Muslims living in the West.
- It becomes clear that AQAP is suffering from a shortage of funds and is in need of additional revenue streams. Awlaki states:

Dear brothers: Jihad heavily relies on money...without wealth there can be no jihad. Our enemies have realized that. Therefore they are "following the money trail" and are trying to dry up all the sources of funding "terrorism".

And:

Since jihad around the world is in dire need of financial support, we urge our brothers in the West to take it upon themselves to give this issue a priority in their plans. Rather than the Muslims financing their jihad from their own pockets, they should finance it from the pockets of their enemies.

- Awlaki's article also discusses whether the West can be considered at war with Islam and, if so, what implications this will have on the 'covenant of security' idea that is used by some extremists in the West. Because the West is regarded by al-Qaeda and its affiliates as prosecuting a war on Islam, Awlaki argues that:

Muslims are not bound by the covenants of citizenship and visa that exist between them and nations of *dār al-ḥarb* [the abode of war].

Open source jihad

- 'Open source jihad' (OSJ) is a regular feature in *Inspire* magazine. OSJ is defined as:

A resource manual for those who loath the tyrants; includes bomb making techniques, security measures, guerrilla tactics, weapons training and all other jihad related activities...the open source jihad is America's worst nightmare. It allows Muslims to train at home instead of risking a dangerous travel abroad.
- This section typically provides sympathisers with the encouragement and expertise needed to carry out a terrorist attack.
- The current edition of *Inspire* discusses methods of producing chemical and mechanical explosions directed against buildings.
- Other articles look at how to train with an AK47 assault rifle; and how to assist AQAP's media arm, *al-Malahem* (including a request to send them 'anything useful from Wikileaks').
- Another constant feature is the 'what to expect in jihad' series which explains the realities of fighting in AfPak or Yemen to would-be jihadists in the West. These articles are designed to prepare them mentally for what they can expect to encounter should they wish to travel to al-Qaeda training

camps abroad.

The Central Issue: Reviving the spirit of jihad

- American citizen, and suspected editor of *Inspire*, Samir Khan, writes about ‘the central issue’ which he describes as the point when a Muslim embraces jihad. Khan states that the motivation of al-Qaeda is:

...entirely theological and *fiqh* [jurisprudentially] based. The central issue is that jihad is individually obligatory (*fard ‘ayn*) on all Muslims from East to West until all of our lands are freed. The issue of jihad being *fard ‘ayn* is the fulcrum of the modern jihad.

- The article seeks to claim the legacy of Abdullah Azzam who first led the ‘Arab mujahideen’ against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

- Khan discusses Azzam’s famous anti-Soviet fatwa, *Defence of the Muslim Lands: the first obligation after faith* portraying al-Qaeda as the heirs to his legacy:

The idea of defending the Muslim lands from the disbelieving occupation forces had taken on a new meaning. It was an idea that paved the way for the al Qaeda Organization.

- Elsewhere the article develops the intellectual tradition of Azzam’s earlier fatwas to encompass al-Qaeda’s doctrine of *takfir*. It explains al-Qaeda’s rationale for fighting Muslim governments in the Middle East, arguing they have committed two mistakes. The first is their failure to implement *Shariah* law comprehensively. The second is to have made alliances with the West. For al-Qaeda this constitutes *kufr akbar* (major disbelief) and leads those governments into apostasy – for which al-Qaeda believes the penalty of death applies.

- Al-Qaeda holds that anyone connected to the government is also a legitimate target due to their indirect support for the imposition of an ‘un-Islamic’ regime in the Muslim world. In one of the most explicit statements of just how broadly it conceives this idea, Khan writes:

The question then comes: within a modern government structure, just exactly who are the apostates? This ruling applies to all those within the government sectors that carry out the acts of disbelief.

- The article tells readers that fighting jihad has become *fard al-ayn*, an individual obligation on every Muslim. Islamic theology recognises another category of obligatory actions too – communal obligations (known as *fard al-kifayah*) – which applies to matters such as burial. While burying the dead is not a personal responsibility for each Muslim, if no one undertook the act then the entire community would fall into sin. Azzam had initially argued that jihad against the Soviet Union in the 1980s was *fard al-kifayah*, though he later revised that opinion making it an individual rather than communal obligation. AQAP is borrowing from Azzam’s more uncompromising beliefs in this respect.

- Elsewhere in the magazine Anwar al-Awlaki reiterates the opinion that jihad is *fard al-ayn*.

Background

- *Inspire* magazine is a quarterly publication of AQAP produced in the English language. Although it is not the first time al-Qaeda has produced a magazine in English, *Inspire* is noted for its high production values and relative sophistication.

- Two American citizens, Anwar al-Awlaki and Samir Khan, are believed to be the principal architects behind the magazine.

- AQAP states its aim as fighting the “triangle of enemies” which it defines as “the Zionist-Crusader

alliance, the apostate regimes and the Shi'a". Significantly, this edition of *Inspire* states, "our war is with the Rafidha Shi'a sect which is alien to Yemen and was only imported from Iran, and not with the Zaydi Shi'a sect which is considered to be the closest sect of Shi'a to ahl as-Sunnah". This is a rare statement of conciliation towards any Shi'a sect by al-Qaeda, which normally regards the Shi'a as universally heretical. Zaydi Shi'as are currently involved in an insurgency against the Yemeni government, and as such AQAP do not wish to alienate them. This is a far more practical approach than previous al-Qaeda affiliated groups, like al-Qaeda in Iraq, who have alienated the majority of their host populations due to their uncompromising doctrinal stance.

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