Interview with Ahmed Al-Hamdan

by Tore Hamming

Part 1

(Analysis of the current situation in the global Jihad total war)

Translated by Al Muwahideen Media

Interviewer: Back in 2014, the Islamic State (IS) was winning territory while IS affiliated media and its official spokesperson Abu Muhammad al-Adnani were extremely active propagating its successes. In the meantime al-Qaeda (AQ) leader Ayman al-Zawahiri remained quiet. Now, in mid-2016, it seems to be the opposite situation as IS is loosing territory, while al-Adnani is increasingly absent from the media scene. Zawahiri, on the other hand, has lately been very active with several speech series e.g. The Islamic Spring and Brief Messages to a Supported Ummah. What does this development tell you?

Ahmed Al Hamdan: This is due to several reasons. Firstly, during the period in which Adnani came out several times, there were several successes achieved by this group such as them conquering large areas of Iraq and Syria and the opening of branches outside the region of Iraq and Syria. Normally when commercial companies make any profit, they exploit these profits for strengthening their advertising and marketing. So the multiple appearances of Adnani during that period is a normal thing and in accordance with the circumstances which his group was going through at that time. However as for Zawahiri appearing only rarely, there are a number of reasons such as:

Firstly, Al Fajr centre (the media forum for the Mujahideen) which releases publications of all the branches of Al-Qaeda contained within its ranks people who were sympathetic to the Islamic State. And these people would delay any verbal attack that would be launched from any branch of Al-Qaeda...!! And they would delay any correspondence relating to the same matter and would even send it to the leaders of ISIS and then the leaders of ISIS would make preemptive attacks in advance to absorb the effect of the publication of Al-Qaeda that was sent to Al Fajr Centre to be released. An example of this is the seventh interview by As-Sahab Foundation with Sheikh Ayman al Zawahiri which got published under the title "The reality between pain and hope". They released the speech of Adnani "This was not our methodology and it will never be" before releasing the interview, and also the release of this seventh interview by As-Sahab Foundation with Dr. Zawahiri was delayed for around twelve days, even though the date of this interview by As-Sahab was before the speech of Adnani. But the speech of Adnani got released before it. So Al Fajr centre played the biggest role in transforming the sympathy of many in the Jihadi movement to make them support the Islamic State through this manipulation by them, in addition to Al Fajr center turning to be a defence for ISIS.

And when the well known Jihadi researcher, Abdullah bin Muhammad, wrote about the possibility of the ranks of ISIS being infiltrated as had happened in the Algerian Jihad, this centre took an unusual step of issuing an official
statement... !!! They falsified this man and accused him of lying..!!!! And so the branches of Al Qaeda began to ignore this centre and they changed their means of publication by using their own two media delegates in the social media sites in a direct manner. For example the account ‘Abdullah al Mujahid’ belongs to Al Qaeda of Yemen, and ‘Abu Mus’ab Ash-Shanqiti’ belongs to Al Qaeda of Khurasan. And so they began to release all the publications directly without having the need for any intermediaries.

And what must be noted is that these are not exclusive information that are known only to those close to these sources, but they are known to anyone who used to follow the Jihadi forums. And the reality is just as a friend had said, that the Jihadi groups and their media establishments were like closed boxes which not even those close to them would know as to what they contained inside them. However the Fitna (tribulation) of ISIS caused every secret to become publicly known..! And I don't say known only to the supporters of these groups but also to all the people. This relieved the intelligence and the security agencies a lot, and so they no longer have to tire themselves much like how it was in the past in order to know what is inside the house of their enemy..! Thus there occurred polarization between two competitors and each would speak publicly on secret issues causing the other party to be the accused one which would make them want to defend themselves. And so they too would speak publicly about secret issues..!!. Due to this rivalry a lot of secrets became publicly known. And all praise belongs to Allah in every case.

Secondly, another matter is that Al-Qaeda needed to get its internal ranks to be set in order after they got swept by a tide. Previously there had been elements within Al Qaeda who were sympathetic towards the Islamic State but now the matter has developed and these sympathizers began to pledge allegiance to the Islamic state...! And they began to promote it from inside the ranks of Al Qaeda. So it would not be wise at such a time to come out in public frequently and release statements while your internal ranks have become flimsy and shaky. The priority was to rectify the internal ranks and absorb this attack. And in fact because of the stupidity of ISIS in taking the initiative in attacking the leaders of Al Qaeda in their other branches and slandering them and spreading doubtful allegations which would reach to the point of Takfeer upon them, this contributed to the awareness of some of those who were deceived by ISIS previously and they said that yes it is true that we differ with Al Qaeda in some issues, but not to the extent of Takfeer.

Yet despite that, I used to think and still now think that the role of Al Qaeda's media was negative to some extent because of them continuing to have hopes that ISIS would return back to the right path. Also from the mistakes committed by the media of Al Qaeda in general was to not confront in an official manner the charges made against them by ISIS. For example Abu Ubaida Al-Lubnani who was the former security official of Al-Qaeda before being expelled and giving the pledge of allegiance to ISIS, was one of the members of Al-Qaeda of Khurasan, and he had written his testimony in the official publication of ISIS known as 'An-Naba'. And then his former friend known as Abu Kareemah wrote an article in refutation to his testimony, but this was done in his individual capacity through the website of “Justpaste”, and he made evident many of the lies and contradictions that were present in this testimony..!

However I ask, which would have a greater impact- when the group Al-Qaeda officially adopts this article and publishes it through a media wing, or when its author publishes it by himself on his own capacity? By this, you will cause people to ask as to what is the evidence that Abu Kareemah is actually a Mujahid from Khurasan?! And what is the evidence that he is the actual author of this article? There is no doubt that the people will take the official publication as being more credible. On the other hand we see that in every issue of Dabiq, ISIS would heap allegations against Al-Qaeda even to the point of saying that they are agents and disbelievers, while the official media of Al-Qaeda represented by their two magazines "Resurgence" and "Inspire" would completely avoid responding to these allegations and would be content with the writings of some of the leaders and soldiers who would publish them in an unofficial manner.

And if I was a simple Jihadi follower, I would interpret the lack of official response by Al-Qaeda as a weakness in their standpoint, and I would not interpret this as a desire to not escalate the matter so as to not cut off the road for ISIS to come back to the right path. Rather I would say “If the talk that is being spread regarding this matter is not correct then they would have responded to it at the earliest”. But this is a mistaken policy which contributed to increasing the number of ISIS followers from amongst the Jihadi supporters.
With regards to the frequent appearances of Dr. Ayman lately, I sat down with my companions and I said to them "Let us think in the way how the men of intelligence agencies think. Can it be reasonable that these speeches are recent ones? That is they are published just a few days after been recorded? Or are they all recorded before some weeks, if not months, and then published gradually? Obviously it is the second one that is correct. And it is never wise in terms of security for the one who is number one in the wanted list of the security agencies to publish his statement in close intervals as this strengthens the chances of getting hold of the link in the thread which will lead towards him. The security official of Al-Qaeda, Abdullah Adam [1] has said “Two people who keep moving will definitely meet each other at some point”. But when you decrease the movement, then there is a greater level for your safety.

Footnotes:


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