

A Selected Translation of the LIFG Recantation Document

Translated by
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A NOTE ON TRANSLATION:

A Selected Translation of the LIFG Recantation Document is a translation of passages from the preface and introduction of the 'Corrective Studies' document which explain the authors' intentions in writing the document and gives it much needed context. It also contains a translation of the authors' summaries, which appear in the original Arabic at the end of each chapter to summarize the main points of the chapter, which we have included in full. Further, we have added footnotes where appropriate to explain religious concepts and ideas and comment on the salient themes of the passages. Finally, It is important to note that the authors have written the summaries in the form of short passages which we have not changed.

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Translator's Introduction:

In September 2009, the imprisoned leadership of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), a prominent jihadist group allied with al-Qaeda wrote and released a revision document over 400 pages long, in which they renounce the 'use of violence to change political situations'.

The revisions are the result of a reported two years of consultations with the Libyan government represented by the Gaddafi International Charity and Development Foundation and headed by Saif al-Islam al-Gaddafi.¹ These consultations have facilitated the release of the document named ***Corrective Studies in Understanding Jihad, Accountability and the Judgment of People***, which is comprised of nine chapters dealing with varying issues including jihad, religious extremism and the judgment of people's beliefs. The authors of the revisions are six of the most senior members of the LIFG in jail, namely: **'Abd al-Ḥakim Balḥaj a.k.a Abū 'Abd Allah al-Ṣādiq (Emir of the LIFG), Abū al-Mundher al-Sā'īdī (Spiritual leader of the LIFG), 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Qāyed (The elder brother of Abū Yaḥyā al-Libī a leading member of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb), Khālīd al-Sharīf, Miftāḥ al-Dūwdī and Muṣṭafā Qanaīfīd.**

Their revisions are potentially important because the LIFG has not only been a key regional ally for al-Qaeda but also because of the strong organizational ties between the two groups and the direct connections some of the revisions' authors have to al-Qaeda's leadership. For example, Abū al-Mundher al-Sā'īdī has been praised on several occasions by Ayman al-Zawāhirī, most recently in a recording released in August 2009 while another senior LIFG member, 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Qāyed, is the elder brother of Abū Yaḥyā al-Libī, the public face of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and one of al-Qaeda's most active ideologues.

Previously, the most notable such revisions by a former jihadist was written by Dr. Faḍl, a former leading member of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, who launched a highly-personal attack on Ayman al-Zawāhirī in 2007. However al-Zawāhirī responded to this by accusing Faḍl of jumping "directly on the alleged mistakes

1 Muḥammad al-Shāfi'ī 'Fundamentalist website: the leadership of (the Libyan Fighting Group) are on the verge of appearing on a satellite channel to announce its recantation', *Al-Hayat*, 29/08/2009, <<http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=529647&issueno=11201>>, [accessed 18/09/2009].

in jihad without explaining the circumstances surrounding these mistakes” and using “an unscientific approach” in “presenting Islamic jurisprudence” among other criticisms about the personal nature of the attacks made by Dr. Faḍl.² However, it seems that the LIFG leadership have taken Ṣawāhiri’s criticism into account while writing their own revisions, making sure to put their own past actions into the context of ignorance and other circumstances they claim to be the reason for their errors. The LIFG also spent a considerable amount of time and exerted a great deal of effort in producing this highly detailed and methodically sound jurisprudential study which cannot be accused of having “an unscientific approach.” In addition, the LIFG have successfully avoided personalising the issue and do not mention another Jihadist group or personality by name in over 400 pages, making their revision document a considerable advance on Dr. Faḍl’s effort in some respects.

However, it has been suggested that the document is “a very sweeping repudiation not just of salafi jihadism but of all forms of revolutionary Islamism in general”.³ This would seem to be an over-optimistic reading of the document. The LIFG’s refutation singularly fails to address many key theological issues which underpin salafi jihadist methods and tactics. For instance, while it rejects ‘the use of violence in changing political situations’ in Muslim majority countries whose leader is a Muslim, the document does not define the key factors, the *nawāqidh al-Islam*, which negate a person’s Islam and make him a disbeliever. In other words, the LIFG have not definitively tackled the concept of takfir which is the main theological trigger for attacks against other Muslims by salafi-jihadists. For example, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula recently justified their attempted assassination of Saudi deputy interior minister Prince Muḥammad Bin Nayef by accusing the Saudi royal family of apostasy for ‘aiding the west and the enemies of Muslims against Muslims.’⁴ Among the *nawāqidh*, or signifiers of disbelief, that are typically cited by salafi-jihadists to legitimize such violence against governments in Muslim majority countries are:

2 Abdul Hameed Bakier ‘Al-Qaeda’s al-Zawahiri Repudiates Dr. Fadl’s “Rationalization of Jihad”’, *Terrorism Focus Volume: 5 Issue: 17*,
<[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=4891](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=4891)>,
[accessed 22/09/2009].

3 Vahid Brown, ‘A First Look at the LIFG Revisions’, *Jihadica*, 14/09/2009,
<<http://www.jihadica.com/a-first-look-at-the-lifg-revisions/>>,[accessed 22/09/2009].

4 Ahmad al-Masry, ‘al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula threaten Saudi royal family’, *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 22/09/2009.

- Ruling with something other than what Allah has revealed
- Replacing the shari'a with other law
- Implementing the rules of 'kufir' and obeying the 'kuffar' in their legislation
- Taking the 'kuffar' as allies against Muslims.

Unfortunately, none of these issues have been mentioned either in the jihad chapter or the chapter dealing with the judgment of people's beliefs, especially given that salafi-jihadists believe that these issues are grounds for legitimizing jihad against innocents and were the very grounds on which the LIFG was itself formed.

Finally, any renouncement of violence by Jihadists and Islamists is a welcome first step, but unless the aforementioned points are answered in future 'Corrective Studies', counter terrorism specialists and Muslim communities should view this revision with some scepticism.

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LIFG Recantation Summary*

PREFACE:

Allah has sent messengers over the centuries to humanity to preach and to warn, guiding the way and explaining humanity's existence in this world; that they were not created frivolously and were not left without a guide. Every prophet told his people: "O my people! Worship God alone: you have no deity other than Him" (Q 7:59). Allah guided people through the messengers and others were miserable for their disbelief, and Allah wished to seal his messages to humanity with Muḥammad bin 'Abdullah who was sent to the whole of humanity, unlike the prophets and messengers before him who were sent to certain peoples. Thereafter, a clear *sharī'a*¹ was sent to Muḥammad so that people may be guided by it, and Allah said he would not accept any other religion from people: "Whoso desires another religion than Islam; it shall not be accepted of him" (Q 3:85).

It was therefore natural that this religion that Allah revealed as a mercy to humanity would encompass everything that would benefit them in their affairs, in this life and the afterlife. The *salaf*² appreciated and firmly held on to this great religion, and spared no effort in spreading it with mercy and sympathy for people as they saw them lost in the darkness and manipulated by whims. Then the Muslim generations inherited this religion, holding on to it without doubt of its validity in every time and place, and through this religion they were elevated to the highest peaks, and when they carried its weight they became the leaders of people and guides to the world.

Muslim progress continued throughout the ages until they changed themselves and neglected the orders of their Lord, so Allah changed their affairs and

* This paper is a translation of selected passages from the preface and introduction in addition to the summaries that appear at the end of each chapter of a more detailed book. The book is available at <<http://www.mediafire.com/?uiqiyiqjzy/www.akhbar-libyaonline.com>>.

¹ *Sharī'a* is the body of Islamic religious codes and ethics derived from the Qur'ān and ḥadīth.

² The first three generations of Muslims who are seen to be the best Muslims and an example to be emulated. The three generations are known as the Companions, the Successors and the Successors of the Successors.

circumstances. The fate of this *ummah*³ in its latter generations was that they be subject to the plots of their enemies from Christians and Jews and others who discovered the real strength of this *ummah*, so its lands were occupied and its wealth was plundered and its sacred symbols were desecrated in order for the *ummah* to remain subject in all its affairs. Further, the enemies of the *ummah* sowed the seeds of division and denied the *ummah* the tools to progress and imposed bounds and blockades, however none of these things would have affected the *ummah* were it firmly holding on to its religion and truly relied on God. But the forts of the Muslims were threatened from within due to ignorance of their religion and neglect of the orders of their Lord, in addition to their disunity and fragmentation therefore it was natural that this be their state today.

Muslims today agree that salvation from their weakness will not be possible without the same thing that advanced their forefathers who liberated the hearts of people before liberating countries. Every Muslim who observes the weakness and relapse of the *ummah* will no doubt be weighed down with grief and sorrow and will try to raise his *ummah*, therefore many people who are zealous and enthusiastic have tried to contribute in one way or another to serve the religion and elevate their *ummah*, and because their endeavours were human, it was inevitable that they be tainted by error and imperfection. This was for many reasons, most notably a lack of religious guidance and inexperience among other reasons mentioned in this study. As a result, it was imperative upon the individual who discovers those errors and shortcomings either in himself or in others to fix and reform what he can, seeking the pleasure of Allah, and fearing his questioning on the Day of Judgement, and out of concern for the people of the community who might not have realised what he has. And it is for this reason and so that Allah may excuse us, and our desire to advise the *ummah* based on our personal experiences, we have written these jurisprudential studies that are directed at whoever might benefit from them.

We have written it for every zealous Muslim who has been pained by the state of his battered *ummah*, who has seen how daring other nations have become with the *ummah*,⁴ who has heard the screams of its people as their lands have been plundered and their blood has been spilt in many countries from Palestine to Iraq to Afghanistan.

³ *Ummah* means community or nation and is used throughout this text to mean the community of Muslims.

⁴ Daring to offend, insult and attack Muslims because of Muslim weakness.

We have written this for every Muslim who sees the disparity between what he recites in the Holy Book of Allah alongside his knowledge of the greats among his *ummah*, and the disturbing images he sees of some Muslims today.⁵

We have written it for every youth who has observed his religion and held on to it and wants to serve it and assist its progression without having the means to do so in the right place or in the most beneficial way for the *ummah*.⁶

We wrote it for every student of religious knowledge or *dāʿī* [propagator of religion] concerned with the guidance of people.

We wrote it to every *mujāhid* concerned with the progression of his *ummah*, standing up against the plots of non-Muslims with his pen or tongue or wealth or weapon or prayer.⁷

We wrote it for anyone who we might have once had organisational or brotherly ties with and who wants to find out the summary of our experience and our convictions.⁸

We wrote it for every fair person who does not follow our religion and hears the distorted descriptions of our *ummah* and our religion.

⁵ This refers to the disparity between the moral teachings of the Qurʾān and early Muslim generations, and perceived state of corruption amongst Muslims.

⁶ Serving religion here means propagating religious teachings and it is believed to be a great act. Additionally, any action intended for the betterment of Islam would be considered as serving Islam.

⁷ *Mujāhid* here is meant in its widest sense that includes anyone carrying out any action in defence of Islam and Muslims.

⁸ This is a clear reference to al-Qaeda.

INTRODUCTION:

It is no secret that those who have written these studies [Corrective Studies] have themselves previously written, papers and articles opposite in content to what is in the studies today, and that those who yesterday encouraged the taking up of arms to change political situations are today reminding people of its impermissibility and advising whomever takes their advice against it. How could this be possible? It is important that we answer this question for these studies to be understood in their correct context and for the studies to achieve their desired objectives.

Change is undoubtedly a human trait, and it could be a sign of power or weakness depending on the nature of the change, its place, and reasons. Can this be the same for the change of religious understanding and conviction?

The importance of this question lies in the identities of those who have written these studies (the members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group in jail) who were not motivated by personal or material interests when they embarked on their journey. They were never bandits who took up arms for wealth or pleasure, nor did they do what they did out of ambitions of power or dominance, rather their premises were based on religious objectives and convictions reached by their personal *ijtihād*⁹ believing that their religion had demanded those actions of them. Regardless of whether their beliefs were right or wrong, they firmly believed in them and the need to implement them on the ground, which they did and they sacrificed their time and youth in doing so. They saw the disparity between the state of Muslims today, people and their governments, and the ideal picture of Muslims, people and their governments in the ages of Muslim prosperity and elevation in the time of the Prophet and the Rightly Guided Caliphs.¹⁰ They saw that the nations of the East and the West were assaulting Muslim lands, and the *ummah* was weak and divided and they realised that this is because the *ummah* is distant from Allah's religion, the religion that was the reason for the *ummah*'s initial progress. Further, they believed that there were religious obligations upon

⁹ *Ijtihād* in *sharī'a* is the process of making a contextualized jurisprudential decision through independent interpretation of religious sources. It can only be practised by jurists in matters that are not clearly addressed by the primary sources.

¹⁰ The Rightly Guided Caliphs are the four caliphs who ruled the Muslims directly after the Prophet. They are Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Ali.

them, most importantly to seek to raise the *ummah* from the darkness of ignorance and the blackness of sin and the bleakness of perversion.

And because reality is different to imagination and action is different to theorization, their path took a different direction. Their efforts could have been exerted in calling to Allah with wisdom and good advice, and they could have guided many. That would have been possible if their circumstances were different. However, that was not the case; reality had its role to play.

The absence of '*ulamā*' [scholars of religion] and adequate methods to spread religious knowledge and a scarcity of guides had a role to play in making the wrong choices, as did the lack of opportunities to serve the religion, to the extent that in some cases there was no room to do anything, narrowing down the possibility of choices. It is no surprise that the outcome of those circumstances was what indeed took place,¹¹ and as for what should have happened; these studies have been written for exactly that.

Islamic scholars past and present are agreed that a person should return to the truth whenever it appears to him and that returning to the truth is far better than insisting on falsehood. Given that our previous intentions were to seek the pleasure of Allah even though we might have strayed from the truth, can we now hesitate in holding onto the truth that has appeared to us? We took a path in the past knowing its difficulty and its strangeness in the eyes of people, and we did not listen to the critics and objectors at the time, so now that we see truth in a path other than that which we originally followed, is that path not more worthy of following?

A person's knowledge increases day after day, be it religious knowledge or life experience; a person's circumstances dramatically change from one day to another and it is known among scholars that religious *ijtihād* is based on the knowledge of both religion and reality. Through our religious studies in addition to close scrutiny of our experiences over the years as well as our observations of our circumstances, we have reached the convictions which we have placed in these studies. By writing them we wanted to place clear guidelines for anyone who

¹¹ This is a reference to the violent confrontations which took place with the Libyan government during the 1990s especially the attempted assassination of President Gaddafi in 1996. Center for Defense Studies, 'In the spot light: the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG)', Center for Defense Studies, 18/01/2005., <http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?documentid=2836&programID=39&from_page=../friendlyversion/printversion.cfm>, [accessed 22/09/2009]

wants to take a path toward serving his religion and *ummah*. We wrote these studies in the knowledge that the premises our actions were based upon are latent in the hearts and minds of many in the Islamic resurgence¹² today, and the circumstances that led to the actions carried out by us, might exist for them.

The summary of our experience is:

- The people of the resurgence will be in a good position so long as they refer to the trusted '*ulamā*' in their affairs and actions, especially those matters that relate to the public interest of their country and *ummah*.
- The path to the *ummah's* progression is long and requires a great deal of patience and perseverance, and time and effort because the *ummah* did not get to its present retreat overnight, but it was due to many factors which cannot be solved by hasty solutions or emotional outbursts.
- The *ummah* has major interests that we must recognise and protect like the unity of Muslims, their prestige, their stability, their security, the reputation of Islam etc. So if protecting these interests conflicts with interests of lesser importance then we should forego the latter.
- There are some religious duties which have the status of 'objectives' like the guidance of people and the spread of Islam, and some which have the status of 'means' which fulfil the objectives like enjoining good, forbidding evil, and jihad. Therefore we should not make the means objectives in themselves, or give them precedence over the objectives if they conflict.

¹² The authors have used the Arabic term *ṣaḥwa islāmīyya* which is used to mean 'Islamic resurgence', or the rise of Islamism.

CHAPTER 1 - THE COVENANT OF ISLAM AND HOW IT IS AFFIRMED

Islam is the final message and the Prophet of Islam, the seal of the prophets, has been sent to all peoples, and his *ummah* has been ordered to carry this message to others after him.

Islam means surrender and compliance and the word is used for two denotations:

- a** To assign worship for Allah alone; this is the religion of all the prophets.
- b** The final religion that was brought by our prophet Muḥammad.

Islam is the greatest of Allah's bounties upon Muslims, and the greatest gratitude is for Muslims to convey it to others.

Some '*ulamā'*' are of the opinion that Islam and *īmān* [belief] are the same thing, and others are of the opinion that they are different. Further, if one was mentioned the other would be included in its meaning, and the '*ulamā'*' added: the person who commits a major sin leaves *īmān* and remains within Islam, and does not become an unbeliever as the Kharijites claim.¹³

This disagreement about the relationship between Islam and *īmān* is accepted *ijtihād* that does not result in major effects, and, with either opinion, a Muslim who wants salvation on the Day of Judgement has to come with both Islam and *īmān*.

Islam is affirmed for whoever has one or more of these three traits:

- a** To bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muḥammad is the messenger of Allah, or something that takes its place like saying "I have become a Muslim" or "I am Muslim".¹⁴
- b** Denotation: which is every utterance or action or symbol that is specific to Muslims and distinguishes them from others, like prayer especially if a man was leading the prayer, or the *athān* [the call to prayer] as the abode of Islam is distinguished by it from the abode of polytheism, or the dress that is specific to Muslims and so on.

¹³ By accepting Islam a person becomes Muslim and has the same rights and responsibilities as any other Muslim, however this does not necessarily mean that this person has true belief in the Islam which is *īmān*.

¹⁴ A verbal testimony of submission to Islam.

- c Subjection to Muslim parents or one Muslim parent: the principle is that anyone born to two Muslim parents or one Muslim parent is Muslim, or the subjection to the abode of Islam for someone whose situation is unknown.¹⁵

It is incorrect to impose conditions that Allah has not permitted in accepting the Islam of someone who has one of the traits mentioned, like imposing learning the evidences of the *mutakallimūn* [scholastic theologians], or detailed knowledge in the meanings of *tawhīd* [the concept of monotheism in Islam], or the requirements of '*la ilaha illallah*'.¹⁶ Further, it is not permitted to inspect people's beliefs and their conditions but we have to accept people at face value and Allah will deal with their intentions.¹⁷

Among the reasons of error in the above is confusing the roles of *da'wah* [propagation] and the judiciary or *iftā'* [issuing religious edicts] and taking jurisprudential rulings from guidance sermons, or propagation articles, as well as the oversight of the fundamental differences between evidence [jurisprudential evidence from Qur'ān and ḥadīth] and reality, like comparing Muslim societies today to the *jāhilī* [pre-Islamic] society in Makkah at the advent of Islam.¹⁸

The importance of knowing the traits, which affirm Islam for the person who has them, lies in that knowing them protects a person from squandering the rights of his Muslim brethren. Further, that he does not take any matter relating to their wealth or honour lightly, and not knowing what affirms someone's Islam might sometimes lead to shedding their blood, these are rights that have been made clear by the Qur'ān and the Prophet.

¹⁵ Someone whose situation is unknown could be an orphan, drifter, homeless person and so on.

¹⁶ '*la ilaha illallah*' means there is no god but Allah. It is part of the testimony of faith and there are extensive theological explanations about its meanings and the requirements to fulfilling 'true monotheism'.

¹⁷ The traits which affirm Islam are important to mention due the prevalence of *takfīr* which is accusing other Muslims of apostasy that is widely practised by Wahhabi and jihadist groups. These groups also impose unfounded conditions to accepting a person's Islam like the belief in *ḥākimiyyah* which is the sovereignty of Allah in legislation that completely excludes humans from the process. It is worth noting that the authors have not discussed *ḥākimiyyah* in this text.

¹⁸ This refers to the ideas of Sayed Qutb who divides societies into 'Muslim' and '*jāhilī*' according to his definition of Islam which includes Muslims as well as non-Muslims in the '*jāhilī*' category. Further, the passage refers to the reliance of people on sermons of guidance delivered by clerics and propagators for jurisprudential ruling instead of reliance on the '*ulamā'*', which the authors view as a cause for people being lead astray.

CHAPTER 2 - KNOWLEDGE BETWEEN THEORISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Allah has assigned a great status and an elevated rank for knowledge and *'ulamā'*.

Religious knowledge like other great matters cannot be attained without effort, hardship and patience and it is for that reason that the *'ulamā'* used to suffer hardships in order to attain it, and their stories and biographies testify to this, so whoever wants to attain knowledge without pain and tiredness has taken a different path to that of knowledge.

Islam has ordered the veneration and respect of *'ulamā'* and has forbidden their disrespect as they are the bearers of this religion and the conveyers of the religion of God.¹⁹

The reverence and respect of *'ulamā'* does not mean the belief that they are not prone to error or intolerant to opinions other than theirs, as they themselves do not claim that. The Muslim *ummah* is unanimous that there is no one who is infallible after the Prophet, and that infallibility is for the entirety of the *ummah*, as for its individuals, they are prone to err in theory and practice.

Reverence of *'ulamā'* does not mean following them in their errors, as truth is more deserving to be followed, and by following truth alone the religion is protected from error, all the while the *'ulamā'* preserve their status and rank even if they were to err from time to time. The *'ulamā'* have agreed to the impermissibility of following an *'ālim* [single of *'ulamā'*] to whomever the error of the *'ālim* becomes evident.

Not everyone who thinks that an *'ālim* has erred is to refute what he thinks is an error, and it is only for someone who is qualified, like another *'ālim* to do so. Numerous have been the things that unlearned people thought were errors of *'ulamā'* when they were not.

Speaking in the name of the religion of God without knowledge is forbidden in *sharī'a* and is a major sin, and many great tribulations and perversions occur as a result, and Allah has warned against this in His Book and through his Prophet.²⁰

¹⁹ This refers to repeated attacks on some *'ulama'* made by jihadist organisations accusing them of being cowards, traitors and *'ulamā' al-sultān*, which means the scholars of the sultan.

²⁰ This refers to issuing religious edicts and judgements without qualifications.

The *'ulamā'* have placed conditions upon people who speak in the name of religion whether by practising *ijtihād* or issuing fatwas, and it is not permissible for whoever does not meet the conditions to deduce religious rulings from their sources.²¹

The *sharī'a* has given sincere *'ulamā'* many attributes which distinguish them from others, so *'ulamā'* must typify those attributes so that they and their work may have an effect on people.

A great duty is upon the *'ulama'* of the *ummah* in guiding the people of the *ummah* and spreading knowledge amongst them and lighting the path for them, and they are required to preserve its identity more than anyone else, much more than its people, and spread virtues and forbid evils and to nurture the *ummah* to be charitable and pious.

We finally say:

The lack of religious knowledge whether it was a result of an absence of *'ulamā'*, or the neglect of people in receiving it and attaining it, or due to the absence of its sources, is the biggest cause of errors and religious violations. These violations can be apparent sins which take place due to a lack of knowledge and education or the dominance of desires or the scarcity of guidance and admonition, or they can be religious errors that people commit due to a lack of knowledge, thinking that they are doing things that *sharī'a* has commanded them to do. So if a split between the *'ulamā'* and the observant youth, or an exchange of accusations or an absence of reverence for *'ulamā'* or an error from *'ulamā'* in embracing the youth occurs, it will only make matters worse.

²¹ These are the requirement of being a jurist which some very prominent *'ulamā'* have explained in detail, most notably Imam al-Shāfi'ī (d. 820).

CHAPTER 3 – *da'wah* [CALLING TO ALLAH]²²

Da'wah is the function of messengers and their followers and it is one of the greatest actions which brings proximity to Allah.

Da'wah is *fard kifāyah*²³ upon the general *ummah* and it is required of every Muslim according to his circumstances, and it is not specific to a group excluding another or an individual excluding another, and every Muslim is required to convey what he knows to people.

The purpose of *da'wah* is to announce the religion of Allah to people, and establish the proof upon them,²⁴ and teach them the tenants of their religion and elevate them educationally and spiritually and increase goodness and vitality in the *ummah*.

The means of *da'wah* are many and sophisticated according to time and place. The means to *da'wah* are also various, as there are actions that an individual can carry out and those that a group of people carry out like organizations, institutions and bodies and there are those that governments carry out.

There are ethics and morals that a *dā'ī* [propagator who carries out *da'wah*] to Allah must observe. Aside from the fact that they are among the ethics and morals that Islam has encouraged and commanded that people abide by, they are the means to the acceptance of the *da'wah* and not avoidance of it.

There is a big difference between the function of a *dā'ī* and that of a mufti or a judge, and not distinguishing between a function and another results in many negative effects.

Most of the concepts mentioned are known theoretically, but many errors occur in their implementation, and the flaws occur due to the absence of the precise concepts of the jurisprudence of *da'wah*, whether in terms of arranging priorities or consideration to the circumstances of people or not gradually educating people about the teaching of Islam or other things.

²² Calling to Allah or *da'wah* means the propagation of Islam amongst non-Muslims and activists use it to mean the encouragement of Muslims to be more observant.

²³ An obligation upon all believers which elapses when appropriately addressed by some.

²⁴ 'To establish the proof' is an expression that generally means fulfilling the promise of Allah that all people will receive the message of Islam leaving them with no excuse for not believing. However, there is an ongoing debate to its specific meanings and applications.

CHAPTER 4 – JIHAD FOR THE SAKE OF ALLAH

Jihad [the term] when used denotes exertion of capacity in fighting for the sake of Allah directly or indirectly. However, its grades are a lot wider than that, as it has thirteen grades, among which are the jihad of the self and the *shayṭan* [devil] and the non-believers and the hypocrites, and included in that is the jihad via the word written or spoken. The reduction of jihad to fighting with the sword is an error and shortcoming.²⁵

Jihad [in all its forms] is the peak of Islam's summit, and the people of jihad are the most glorious in this life and the afterlife, but that is dependent upon being confined to the rules and ethics of jihad.

Jihad is *farḍ kifāyah*,²⁶ and if carried out by a sufficient amount of people, does not remain obligatory on the rest. It is an obligation in certain places for example where non-believers invade a Muslim country then it is upon the people of that country to push back the enemies and expel them from their land, and if they are unable to do so, it is upon the people who neighbour them. Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan are amongst the places of jihad today.

It is not permissible to leave for jihad that is *farḍ kifāyah* without the permission of the parents and the lender [someone you owe money to], as well as it being impermissible to insult those who have not left for it.

There are ethics and morals to jihad, among which are: that the jihad is for the sake of Allah, and the proscription of killing women, children, the elderly, monks, wage earners (employees), messengers (ambassadors), merchants and the like. Also among the ethics and morals of jihad is the proscription of treachery, the obligation to keep promises, the obligation of kindness to prisoners of war, the proscription of the mutilation of the dead and the proscription of hiding spoils from the leader. Adherence to these ethics is what distinguishes the jihad of Muslims from the wars of other nations that do not give any weight to ethics.²⁷

²⁵ This refers to jihadist groups who reduce jihad to violence.

²⁶ Al-Qaeda and other jihadist groups argue that jihad is *farḍ 'ain* which is an obligation upon every single Muslim.

²⁷ The passage is ambiguous and does not clearly explain what is meant by monks and does not specify the kind of employees that are not allowed to be targeted in a modern context. Further, it does not mention journalists and humanitarian workers who are regularly seen as easy targets in conflict zones.

The opinion of the '*ulamā'* of *Ahlul Sunnah* [Sunni] has settled upon the impermissibility of resorting to arms in order to change political situations (*khūrūj*) after the old disagreement in the matter,²⁸ once they witnessed its harms and recounted its proscription in the books of jurisprudence and belief.²⁹

Fighting because of sectarianism or tribalism or social position and fighting for the *dunya* [worldly matters] or power falls under the fighting of *fitna*.³⁰

It is obligatory in every fight that erupts between Muslims in addition to not participating in it to endeavour to mediate between the fighting parties, in application of the verse: 'Hence, if two groups of believers fall to fighting, make peace between them' (Q 49:9).

The legitimate alternatives to using violence for reform and change are enjoining good and forbidding evil and *da'wah*.

We note that the fighting that takes place in Muslim lands is of three kinds:

- a Fighting the foreign colonialist if he invades one of the Muslim countries.³¹
- b The fighting of *fitna*.
- c To fight against the rulers to change political situations or reform, and we have mentioned our opinion in this matter that it is religiously impermissible to use violence for reform or change in Muslim countries, and we explained on many occasions in this study this ruling with its evidences and they can be summarized in:
 - a The religious texts and evidences that indicate fighting against the governors and rulers to be forbidden, and we have mentioned the statements and interpretations of the *salaf*.

²⁸ In the absence of calls to end dictatorships, it is possible to suggest that this statement is what the Libyan government wants to hear.

²⁹ Specifying Sunni '*ulamā'* in this instance could be due to two reasons; Shī'ī '*ulamā'* do not agree with this opinion and to say that jihadist groups do not represent the mainstream majority of Sunnis.

³⁰ *Fitna* is disorder and unrest that risks the stability and security of the *ummah* and is forbidden. This passage refers to the ethics of jihad and that it should only be for the sake of Allah, further the fighting of *fitna* is any fighting that takes place between two Muslim parties without right and wrong being apparent.

³¹ It is possible that the authors have used the word colonialist to signify their belief that colonialism still exists.

- b** The historical examples which *Ahlul Sunnah* have agreed upon: the impermissibility of fighting rulers and governors, and their agreement that patience and calling to Allah and enjoining good and forbidding evil is the correct way.
- c** The restrictions on forbidding evil: which we clarified to a larger extent in the (enjoining good) section, in which we mentioned the clear sayings of the scholars which state the proscription of using violence to forbid evil and that it is only for the ruler or whoever he appoints, and it is not permissible for individual citizens.

CHAPTER 5 - *fiqh al-khilāf* [RULES OF DISAGREEMENT], ITS FORMS AND *ādāb* [ETHICS]

There is *ijmā'* [consensus among '*ulamā'*] that the *sharī'a* forbids disunion, conflicts and schisms, and it calls for unity and coalition. Further, the unity of Muslims is one of the general objectives of *sharī'a* which Muslims must consider.³²

Religious *khilāf* [disagreement] amongst Muslims is a reality that has existed since the age of the Prophet and will continue to exist as long as Allah wills it. Some of these differences are permitted and others are not.

The Islamic *sharī'a* has laid down precise guidelines to distinguish unacceptable *khilāf* from permitted *khilāf*, and it has also laid down guidelines to deal with those who adopt both kinds of *khilāf*.

In matters of *ijtihād* there is no disapproval of a divergence in opinion, as the *sharī'a* did not anticipate resolving this type of *khilāf*, and the '*ulamā'* continue to disagree on many matters since the time of the Companions [the first generation of Muslims] yet they do not disapprove of one another.

Khilāf in *ijtihād* should not prevent the unity of the hearts and cohesion in the ranks of Muslims, but rather the variance of *ijtihād* should be a factor of expansion and strength for the Muslims and not weakness and fragmentation.³³

Ignorance of *ādāb al-khilāf* and in distinguishing between when *khilāf* is permitted and when it is not can cause [the ignorant person] to limit himself and others, lead to arguments and result in distorting the image of *da'wah* and repel people from it.

An absence of this understanding might make a *dā'ī* or a student to wrong someone or diminish their value whether they be a scholar or someone else, like another *dā'ī* or student. There is no doubt that oppression and fragmentation are among the greatest reasons for disappointment and lack of *tawfīq* [success granted by Allah] and it brings the anger of Allah.

The *salaf* did not have a habit of following irregular matters and stirring disagreements.

³² This is in reference to the many differences between Muslim schools of thought and the resulting tensions and conflicts. The passage expresses a desire to overlook differences when possible and present a united Muslim front.

³³ This passage shows a clear break from exclusionist Wahhabism that dominates jihadist groups.

Jurisprudential *khilāf* was never a reason to stir strife in Muslim communities in the time of the *salaf*.

'*Ulamā'* ('*ulamā'* of every age) are the ones responsible for the management of every *khilāf* and they have to guide the lay people.

The methods of *Ahlul Sunnah* in dealing with someone with an opposing opinion should be spread.

The objective is to learn how to disagree in all of these cases whilst maintaining affection and unity as the Companions did.

An observer of the reality of life for Muslims today does not need lots of reasoning to see the importance of understanding *ādāb al-khilāf*. The reality of Muslims and their fragmentation is clear and apparent, and there have been many disagreements that originated from a matter of *ijtihād* that the *salaf* had the capacity to understand whilst maintaining the spiritual bond between each other.

We wrote this section with an eye to the aversion and indifference between Muslims that occurs because of an absence of *ādāb al-khilāf*.

The absence of understanding the *ādāb al-khilāf* has many adverse effects including:

- Sectarian, ideological, methodical and jurisprudential fanaticism and narrow mindedness in accepting other opinions and accusing others of deviation and error and maybe innovation or debauchery or apostasy.³⁴
- The appearance of psychological barriers and sensitivities between *dā'īs* and their followers and between other lay Muslims.³⁵
- The abstinence of youth from acquiring knowledge from '*ulamā'* due to differing with them in some matters of *ijtihād*.³⁶

We will mention a great deal more in detail in the section of extremism in religion.

³⁴ Wahhabis are one example of a Muslim group accusing other Muslim groups like Shī'īs and Ṣūfīs of innovation and disbelief because of sectarian, methodical and jurisprudential differences. There is an unfortunate abundance of examples of other such groups.

³⁵ People are split according to the sheikh or cleric they listen to or respect, creating an 'our sheikh' verses 'your sheikh' mentality causing numerous problems.

³⁶ There have been numerous campaigns carried out by zealots against various scholars because of unpopular rulings or opinions.

Knowing *ādāb al-khilāf* in our opinion is a big factor in the cohesion of Muslim societies and a strength in building unity amongst its people, as well as it being a reason for enriching the sphere of jurisprudence with variety, regeneration and development. This makes Islamic jurisprudence encompassing of all developments in any one country or the whole of the *ummah*, which is the opposite of what happens if the propagators and students of religious knowledge do not accept other opinions and forbid them.

CHAPTER 6 - EXTREMISM IN RELIGION

Extremism in religion is exceeding the permitted limits with the addition or rejection of religious acts and beliefs, and it is reprehensible in *shari'a* and contrary to the nature of this religion, which based its rules on ease to alleviate the difficulties of life.

Extremism is a reality existing amongst all nations [Muslim and non-Muslim] and is not specific to one nation.³⁷

Some of the reasons for extremism are: the prevalence of sins in Muslim societies,³⁸ an absence of a correct understanding of religion and reality, emotional reactions, unqualified people taking the lead and the absence of comprehensive education among others.

Some of the manifestations of extremism are severity upon self and others, severity in objecting to *taqlid* [emulation which is the opposite of *ijtihad*], wronging those who have a differing opinion, aversion toward '*ulamā'*' and insulting them amongst others.

Curing extremism on an individual level or the general level is easily accomplished because many of those who fall into extremism of a certain kind have a genuine intention and desire for good but have taken a wrong path, the remedy of this is very easy if the correct methods were followed which are looking at the causes and solving them.

³⁷ This is to highlight that extremists exist in every religion and culture and are not specific to Islam.

³⁸ The authors argue that the prevalence of what they believe to be sins in Muslim-majority societies drives some religiously observant sections of those societies to adopt extreme positions in their implementation of 'forbidding evil'.

CHAPTER 7 - *al-maṣāliḥ* [THE INTERESTS] AND *al-mafāsīd* [CAUSES OF HARM]³⁹

The *'ulamā'* have agreed that the Islamic *sharī'a* has general objectives that are intended to achieve the best interests of people and to protect them from harm.

It is also known that consideration for the objectives of *sharī'a*, and the *maṣāliḥ* and the *mafāsīd* has a solid connection to the juristic ruling whether it be in the deduction, legislation or application of the ruling. .

The objectives of *sharī'a* and the *maṣāliḥ* are not the same, but differ according to scriptural evidence.⁴⁰

The *sharī'a* is dedicated to achieving interests and preventing harm as much as possible, which is why the discipline of balancing the interests and the harms is needed if they conflict. .

'Ulamā' have laid down many principles that regulate rulings relating to the objectives of *sharī'a* and the *maṣāliḥ* and *mafāsīd*, the absence of which would result in many violations.

³⁹ *Maṣāliḥ* is plural of *maṣlaḥa* and *mafāsīd* is plural of *mafsada*. The authors have included the definition of Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111) in which he states: "*maṣlaḥa* is that which preserves the five objectives of the *sharī'a* which are the protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage and wealth. Whatever preserves them is *maṣlaḥa* and whatever relinquishes them is *mafsada*", (LIFG), 'Corrective Studies in Understanding Jihad, Accountability and the Judgment of People', <<http://www.mediafire.com/?uicjuyiqjzy/www.akhbar-libyaonline.com>>, [accessed 22/09/ 2009] p.300.

⁴⁰ The objectives of the *sharī'a* are the reasons for rulings, and can only be known to Allah unless explained in the Qur'ān or ḥadīth. However, the *maṣāliḥ* can be logically deduced and recognized.

CHAPTER 8 - ENJOINING GOOD AND FORBIDDING EVIL⁴¹

Enjoining good and forbidding evil is one of the greatest characteristics of this *ummah* that is blessed with the mercy of Allah, and the reason for it being the best amongst nations, as well as it being the fort that protects the *ummah* from deviations. Enjoining good and forbidding evil is also the reason this *ummah* has avoided the anger of Allah, and as long as it enjoins good and forbids evil it is protected from being included in Allah's punishment.

Enjoining good and forbidding evil is *fard kifāya* upon the *ummah*. If some undertake it, the obligation is removed from the others except for certain occasions. Renouncing evil with the heart [to hate the evil act] is an obligation upon whoever sees it, as for by word and deed, it is dependent on ability and the benefit that it incurs.

The merit of enjoining good and forbidding evil is very great and the reward for the person that undertakes it is great as well, which is why the *salaf* used to compete in undertaking it.

There are conditions and ethics that guide a Muslim who enjoins good and forbids evil, like doing what he orders others to do, being friendly in his orders, and considering the outcomes of his orders.

The '*ulamā'* have placed conditions for evil that should be changed which we have mentioned, the most prominent of which are that there is no renouncement of matters of *ijtihād* and the evil must be apparent and present to be changed.⁴²

Enjoining good and forbidding evil is like good food for the body, whenever it is possible to increase it with its conditions it would be good to do so, because it brings about welfare and develops kindness and spreads virtues. Forbidding evil is like a medicine which a person only uses enough to treat the defect and resolve the problem, so what can be treated by the word does not require the intervention of the deed and so on.

⁴¹ The authors state that "*sharī'a* is the standard by which we know good and evil; whatever the *sharī'a* commands and looks favourably upon is good and whatever it prohibits and looks unfavourably upon is evil", 'Corrective Studies in Understanding Jihad, Accountability and the Judgment of People', <<http://www.mediafire.com/?uiqiyuiqjzy/www.akhbar-libyaonline.com>>, [accessed 22/09/2009] p.344.

⁴² Matters of *ijtihād* are not to be seen as an evil to be changed or objected to.

Changing evil has many levels, the least of which is renouncement of evil in the heart, which is done when there is no ability to do anything else.

A condition to changing evil is that it does not result in a greater evil than the one changed, and a condition to enjoining good is that it does not miss a greater good or else it is not legitimate.

It is not obligatory for a Muslim to exert effort to find evils, look for them, and spy on people to know their affairs and whoever does that has committed a sin. However, a Muslim should forbid evil that is apparent to him in accordance with the conditions which we have mentioned in this section.⁴³

Using violence to change evil under any pretext is forbidden except for the ruler or whom he deputizes to do so, and the statements of *'ulamā'* are elaborate on this matter, and evils that result from this [violence] are apparent and undeniable whether in the past or present.⁴⁴

⁴³ There have been examples of extreme elements in Muslim history that went to great lengths to forbid evil, like climbing over walls, breaking into people's houses and spying on people.

⁴⁴ This intends to give the state a monopoly over changing evil by violence.

CHAPTER 9 - THE JUDGMENT OF PEOPLE'S BELIEFS

The discussion of religious rulings concerning the judgment of people as innovators or depraved or unbelievers is considered very dangerous, which is why many Prophetic ḥadīths forbid haste in the matter. Further, the *'ulamā'* clearly warned of hastily issuing judgments due to the great effects it has upon the public and private lives of Muslims, and ignorance of this results in erroneous practices which are far from *sharī'a*.⁴⁵

The judgment of a person as being an apostate is not due to a whim or opinion or reasoning or a result of enmity and so on. It is a religious matter that is subject to controls and conditions, and it is not permitted to make such a judgment with the absence of those conditions.⁴⁶

The errors that take place when judging the *mukallaf*⁴⁷ are many. They are the result of a lack of religious knowledge or of people not qualified to take charge of the affairs of Muslims.

Among the reasons for these errors:

- Inference of ruling for some Muslims from what was intended for original non-believers.⁴⁸
- Not differentiating between minor and major disbelief.⁴⁹
- Not differentiating between the disbelief of a form or genus and the disbelief of a specific individual.

⁴⁵ This is a reference to Wahhabism, which is the basis of judgements of innovation and unbelief issued by extremists and jihadist in the present day.

⁴⁶ Islam has parameters which if crossed, one does not remain within the fold of Islam.

⁴⁷ A *mukallaf* is a Muslim who has reached the age of puberty and is deemed accountable before God.

⁴⁸ An original non-believer is referred to here as a person not born into Islam like Jews, Christians and others. Extremists use verses from the Qur'ān or ḥadīths that speak of non-believers to deduce a ruling for Muslims.

⁴⁹ The authors explain that "disbelief in the opinion of *Ahlul Sunnah* is divided according to its ruling into two kinds; major disbelief that makes a person excluded from the fold of Islam and eternally resided in hell and minor disbelief that does not" *'Corrective Studies in Understanding Jihad, Accountability and the Judgment of People'*, <<http://www.mediafire.com/?uiqiuyiqjzy/www.akhbar-libyaonline.com>>, [accessed 22/09/2009] p.387.

- Ignorance of the conditions and deterrents of issuing judgments and subsequently issuing judgments without consideration of the conditions and the deterrents.
- Mixing religious roles and not distinguishing between the role of propagators and the roles of judges and scholars.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Many clerics and propagators either volunteer or are asked their opinion of other Muslim groups, and they make judgements while not being qualified to do so.

Glossary of terms

ādāb: Ethics.

'ālim: Scholar of religion, pl. *'ulamā'*.

dā'ī: Propagator of religion, in this case Islam.

da'wah: The propagation of Islam.

iftā': Issuing religious edicts (fatwa).

ijmā': Consensus of scholars of religion.

ijtihād: The process of making a contextualized jurisprudential decision through independent interpretation of the religious sources.

khilāf: Disagreement based on different interpretations of scripture.

salaf: The first three generations of Muslims who are seen to be the best Muslims and an example to be emulated.

sharī'a: The body of Islamic religious codes and ethics derived from the Qur'ān and ḥadīth.

ummah: Community of Muslims.



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