



Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center

June 8, 2009

Initial Arab-Muslim responses to President Obama's speech in Cairo from Iran and Hezbollah, Syria, the Palestinian arena and the global jihad



American President Barack Obama, "peace cowboy" (*Al-Watan*, June 5, 2009)

Overview

1. American President Barack Obama's speech in Cairo was intended as a historic moment to redefine the status, image and mutual relations between the United States and the Arab-Muslim world. **Iran and Hezbollah** perceived it skeptically and at times even negatively. On the other hand, the responses of **Syria and Hamas** were conciliatory, stressing that the test of the speech would be translating it into action and American willingness to exert pressure on Israel (with regard to the settlements and other issues). **The pro-Western camp (e.g., Egypt and Saudi Arabia)** lauded Obama's conciliatory approach to the Muslim world, expressed support for his rigid approach to the issue of the settlements, and also called on the United States to exert pressure on Israel.]

2. The following are the main initial Arab-Muslim responses to Obama's speech, primarily from **America's opponents**: **Iran** expressed skepticism and to a great extent rejection. Its Supreme Leader Khamenei said that Iran viewed itself as playing a central role in the Middle Eastern agenda and as having its own plan to change the face of the region. Iranian President Ahmadinejad, in a television confrontation with reform candidate Mehdi Karroubi, attributed the circumstances leading to Obama's speech to Iran's successful foreign policy in an attempt to glorify his achievements on the eve of the elections. **Hezbollah** echoed Iran, saying that the speech did not represent a genuine change in American policy. **Syria** clearly seemed satisfied with the speech, but also called on the United States to exert pressure on Israel to change its policies on a number of regional issues. In the Palestinian arena, the **Mahmoud Abbas administration** viewed the speech favorably because it placed the ball in the Israel court; Hamas also responded in conciliatory fashion, calling on the United States to recognize its legitimacy and to exert pressure on Israel. **Osama bin Laden** attacked Obama's policies on the eve of the speech, sending a straightforward message that no matter what he said, Al-Qaeda would remain hostile.



American President Barack Obama meets Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt (Egyptian TV, June 4, 2009).

Iran

3. Iran responded to the speech with **skepticism and a considerable measure of rejection**. In general Iranian propaganda and spokesmen emphasized that to convince the Muslim world that the change was authentic and not just empty rhetoric, **action was necessary**. One of the main criteria of change would be American relations with Israel or, as the Iranian Supreme Leader said, with "the cancerous growth in the heart of the Middle East" (as he stated in a speech on the same day Obama spoke in Cairo). Other Iranian criteria would be the acceptance of the election results in Palestine [sic] and Lebanon, which, according to Tehran, would show whether the United States continued its double standard with regard to the democracy it preached (i.e., a demand that the United States recognize Hamas and Hezbollah, two organizations the State Department designates as terrorist organization).

4. **Iran has its own agenda to oppose that of the United States in the Islamic world in general and the Middle East in particular.** It used Obama's speech to point up the differences between its own path, that of radical Islam, and the path of the United States, which, it claimed, had entrapped the leaders of the Arab world, especially Egypt. Its strategy is intended to position Iran as the most powerful factor in the region, leading the "Muslim nations" and becoming a genuine alternative to American-Western hegemony.

5. The timing of Obama's speech in Cairo, which was held on the same day as the ceremonies marking the 20th anniversary of Khomeini's death, provided **Khamenei** with an opportunity to respond with **a religious-ideological speech of his own** to the awakening Muslim world. He spoke at great length about the Palestinian issue, the conduct of the United States in the Middle East, the model of the Islamic revolution and ancient Persian culture. Khamenei's responses again showed that **Iran regarded itself as having a central role to play in the Middle Eastern agenda, and that it had its own plan for changing the face of the Middle East. Khamenei's speech was interrupted with cries of "Death to America" and "Death to Israel."**

6. The main points of Khamenei's speech, broadcast by Iranian television on June 4,¹ were the following:

i) **The Islamic revolution, he said, was a turning point for the Arab-Muslim countries** after years of attacks on and the destruction of the Muslim image. The change led to a strong revival felt throughout the Muslim world, and, according to Khamenei, was what made the new American administration try to improve its image among the people in the Middle East. He added that the former government employed an aggressive, "unwise" policy which included the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq and led to a deeply-felt hatred in all the countries in the region, blackening America's image.

ii) **Change would not come about, he said, through speeches and mottos.** The Muslim nations should know that the sincerity of the American politicians would become manifest only if they genuinely changed their actions, and even if they gave 100 speeches and pearls came out of their mouths, they would have no influence and there would be no change.

iii) **Khamenei spoke at length about the issue of Palestine and what he called America's one-sided policy,** saying that the Islamic revolution had revived the Palestinians, who proved that the Zionist regime, which is a "cancerous tumor" in the heart of the Muslim world, is not "invincible." "It was slapped by the hand of young

¹ The full text can be found in 12 languages on Khamenei's website, leader.ir.

Palestinians" [he was here interrupted by cries of "Death to Israel," "Death to the United States," and "Death to the opponents of the principle the rule of the Islamic jurist." The intifada, he said, and "after it the war that lasted 33 days [the second Lebanon war] and after that the war that lasted 22 days [Operation Cast Lead]" were blows to the Zionist regime. On the day the Islamic revolution won, he said, the Zionist regime was invincible in the eyes of the Islamic countries and especially in the eyes of the West.

iv) The Palestinians, said Khamenei, "were aggressively and brutally robbed of their lands and rights" and the United States "not only paid no attention to the Palestinians and the need to defend them, but gave its full support to the oppressive regime [i.e., Israel], and if the Palestinians wanted to protest [i.e., the armed "resistance"], the United States presented the protest as sabotage and evil actions. Therefore, how can such behavior be corrected?" [i.e., **Khamenei again justified Palestinian terrorism and by implication the Iranian support of the terrorist organizations.**]

v) Regarding the American democratic vision, Khamenei said that Muslim nations from East Asia to Africa were planning to establish Muslim regimes and Islamic governments with "different systems, not necessarily the system of the Islamic regime in Iran...It makes no difference, they will choose Islam as the system of administration...I appeal to Muslims and say, if you feel today that the tone of the West is abrasive to everything in your lives, it is the result of the intervention and resistance in the Muslim world [more cries of "Death to America"].

vi) He also said that Western hegemony in the region had ended [implying that Iran was moving in to fill the vacuum]. The West, he said, "had a plan for the oil and the markets...[but] the revival changed those plans completely".

7. **Iranian President Ahmadinejad** responded to Obama's speech in a television confrontation with Iranian reform candidate Mehdi Karroubi, using it for his own campaign. Regarding his attempts to defend Iranian foreign policy during his term from the criticism hurled against him by his competitors, Ahmadinejad said that the speech did not come as a surprise and that Obama did not really care about Iran. He said that it was his own successful foreign policy that led the United States to reexamine its policies. He added that four years previously President Bush had spoken about toppling the Iranian regime but that Obama was now saying that nothing could be achieved without Iran and was calling for cooperation with it. He asked Karroubi, "How can you deny our political achievements?" (Iranian TV, June 6, 2009).

8. **Ahmad Jannati, Chairman of the Guardian Council (one of whose functions is the oversight of elections), a preacher of Friday sermons in Tehran** and considered a conservative, also related to Obama's speech. He said that Obama "has given us a number of green lights...He admitted that the United States overthrew a democratic Iranian government [the Moussadeq government, toppled by the CIA in a counterrevolution in 1953]...He admitted that Iran has the right to nuclear energy for peaceful uses." Jannati added that Obama had used "slogans that may herald change...but how does he intend to solve various problems at their roots[?]...One of them is Israel, which is a source of tension and conflicts in the Middle East...[it] oppresses people...and its policies are Satanic." **He said that the question Obama had to answer was whether or not he still supported Israel. If the answer was positive, then no change had been made.** However, if he meant to put an end to his support of Israel, he had to say so. According to Jannati, the heart of the disagreement between Iran and the United States was the Palestinian issue, and he asked whether the United States had a double standard regarding it, that is, would he honor Palestinian and Lebanese elections, or would he again interfere.



Ahmad Jannati, chairman of the Guardian Council
(Tehran's daily *Hamshahri*, June 5, 2009).

9. An editorial in **the Iranian daily *Kayhan*, mouthpiece of the Iranian Supreme Leader** and supporters of Ahmadinejad in the upcoming elections, described Obama's speech as "treading water." He said it did not say anything new about Iran, its nuclear program, the Palestinian issue or the Zionist regime. It said that Obama had tried to pretend that the United States' problem with Iran was merely historical, but that he was the same Obama who a few months previously had signed a law increasing the sanctions on Iran and pretending that his country was willing to take the first steps in normalizing relations. If the United States, he said, had really accepted Iran's right to nuclear energy, it had to initiate the revoking of four [Security Council] resolutions it had sponsored, to unfreeze the Shah's assets and to bring the commander of the USS Vincennes to trial.² **It also had to accept the legal**

² In 1988 the USS Vincennes fired a missile at Air Iran flight IR655 from Iran to the Gulf States, killing all 290 on board.

Hamas government and to recognize Hezbollah in Lebanon as a “legitimate reality.” In the spirit of the upcoming elections in Iran, *Kayhan* said that “in any case, as opposed to the opinion of some of the reform elements in Iran, we should not change our policies to accept the American invitation. **The change in American foreign policy, even if it was only made for the sake of appearances,** was in fact achieved by the firm stance of Iran and other resistance elements in the Middle East [i.e., the terrorist organizations], and to show that it has been put into practice, we should continue to hold fast to our positions and not reconsider them” (*Kayhan*, June 5, 2009).

10. **According to commentary on Iranian TV shortly after Obama delivered the speech,** his remarks about the Palestinian issue were **contradictory**. On the one hand, he recognized the right of the Palestinian to an independent state and said that the Israeli settlements were illegitimate, but on the other he criticized Hamas’s “resistance” [i.e., terrorism] and recognized Israel as a state. In addition, according to Iranian TV, his remarks about Iran were contradictory. He admitted that the United States had been behind overthrowing the Moussadeq regime in 1953 and recognized Iran’s right to a nuclear program for peaceful purposes, but accused it of violence and taking hostages. Therefore, “what remains to be seen is whether the American president will translate his words into action” (Iranian TV, June 4, 2009).

Hezbollah

11. The main theme of Hezbollah’s initial response, echoing Iran, was that Obama’s speech did not signal a genuine change in America’s position, and that words would not bring about a change as long as there was no action to support them (Al-Manar TV also quoted Supreme Leader Khamenei to support the claim). Some of Hezbollah’s other responses were the following:

- i) **Hezbollah issued a hostile, hate-filled statement to the United States** noting that Obama’s speech was a perfect example of contradictory American policy. According to the statement, it was not logical that the United States preach the establishment of peace while its history was based on the annihilation of other peoples, both past (native Americans, the Vietnamese, the Japanese) and present (Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan). The change felt by Middle Easterners, it continued, was the result of “the superiority of the power of resistance, liberation and independence” and the failure of “the oppressive policy” of the United States, which created an atmosphere of hatred and loathing for America, especially in the Arab-Muslim world. Obama’s speech, even if slightly different from the speeches of his predecessors, was nothing more than “fancy rhetoric” and “a public relations celebration” whose objective

was “to improve Washington’s ruined image” and which did not express a new American strategy (Lebanese News Agency, June 6, 2009).

ii) **Hussein Fadlallah**, a Hezbollah member of the Lebanese Parliament, said that Obama’s rhetoric **did not signal a genuine change in the American position on the Middle East**. He said that the Arab-Muslim world did not need preaching but rather “genuine actions and a radical change” in American policy, which would begin with America’s position on the Palestinian issue. He said that the Muslim’s problem with American policy was its support of Israel, “the continuing occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, and its intervention in internal Lebanese affairs.” He added that “Obama’s remarks about the problems and challenges in the Muslim world reflect the program of former President George Bush, which supported dictatorial regimes and was intended to deprive Arabs and Muslims of their right to self-determination and to choose democratic regimes” (Agence France Presse, June 4, 2009).

iii) Hezbollah’s **Al-Manar TV** reported that President Obama had delivered a historic speech which included preaching morality and sermonizing accompanied by quotations from the Qur’an. Evident in the speech was a difference in tone but not in content, and it therefore had to be read between the lines. Obama discarded the legacy of power and tried to enter into Islamic perception, but he did not abandon his dependence on the Jewish lobby when he expressed his adherence to the two-state solution in Palestine [sic], one of which was Israel, and when he had nothing new to say about Iran. **Al-Manar TV praised Iran’s Supreme Leader Khamenei**, who noted that hatred for America could not be assuaged only by slogans and sweet-talk, since “**talk will not bring change as long as there is no action...**” (Al-Manar TV, June 4, 2009).



Obama’s speech as effective as a Band-Aid
(Al-Nahar, June 5, 2009)

Syria

12. The Syrian regime did not immediately respond to Obama's speech. The Syrian media, however, supervised by the regime and expressing its views, issued satisfaction with the speech. The Syrian press, sometimes accompanied by careful optimism and vicious attacks on Israel, noted that the speech was only one step in the change needed by the American administration. It called on the administration not only to exert pressure in the issue of the settlements, but also to change its overall policies on many regional issues (a hint at the Golan Heights, which did not receive special attention in the Syrian responses to Obama's speech.) A June 4 article in *Al-Baath* expressed concern lest the American attempt to change Israel's position be accompanied by demands for concessions from the Arabs, such as waiving the right of return, normalizing relations with Israel and ceding Jerusalem.

13. The following were the initial reactions of the Syrian press:

i) **An editorial in the daily newspaper *Tishrin* written by Izz al-Din Darwish, editorial secretary for political affairs, June 4:** According to the editorial, President Obama expressed "some good intentions for the region and its problems" when he sent a message to Arabs and Muslims "from the heart of their homeland." Its main theme was that American policy took into consideration relations between the United States and Muslims, and that the time had come to work for peace in the Middle East. However, Obama's visit to the region was only the first step, and the American administration had to make a "genuine effort" to restore matters to their proper channels and to make Israel understand that peace was genuinely an interest for everyone, and that decisions made by international institutions and the Arab peace initiative were the only ways to achieve it. Darwish said that President Obama would not retract his promises for regional peace while "the Netanyahu-Lieberman government" and "Zionist pressure groups" said the opposite. The editorial ended by saying the coming days would show which approach would be victorious.

ii) **An article in the daily *Al-Thawra* written by Muhammad Ali Botha, June 4:** The article harshly attacked the "extreme right-wing government of the Zionist entity" for refusing to freeze building in the settlements. [The State of Israel and the Jewish people were referred to as "the Zionist entity," the "sons of Zion," and "so-called Israel."] It deplored the attacks made by "the rabble of the settlements" against Palestinian civilians, which expressed "arrogance, rebellion [and] disobedience of the Americans." In such a situation, it continued, President Obama had to show determination and demand that Israel freeze building in the settlements and accept the two-state solution [i.e., Botha expects the President of the United States to implement

the two-state solution while he himself uses Syrian propaganda terminology which does not accept the existence of the State of Israel.].

iii) **An article in the daily *Al-Baath* by Muhammad Kanaysi, June 4:** According to the article, the speech indicated the intention of the American administration to exert pressure on Israel to freeze building in the settlements and to accept the two-state solution. However, it warned, the Arabs were worried lest the Americans also ask them to make additional “concessions” to change the “stubborn Israeli position.” Examples of the kinds of “concessions” the Arabs might be asked to make were waiving the right of return [of the Palestinian refugees], normalizing relations with Israel and ceding Jerusalem. The article ended with a call to **Arabs to raise their demands on Obama**, to make good use of “America’s pressing need to improve its image in their eyes,” and “not to make other destructive concessions [to Israel].

iv) **An article in the daily *Al-Watan* by its editor-in-chief, Waddah Abd Rabbo, June 7:** According to the article, Obama’s speech did not express any fundamental disagreement with Syrian policy, and illustrated that there was no justification for tension between the two countries. It explained the main points of Syrian policy on various issues, including support for the “resistance” [i.e., terrorist organizations], “proving” that there were no disagreements between Syria and the United States and that “all the blame the previous administration tried to assign to Syria was a lie to convince Syria to bow down before its policies, which Obama himself described as mistaken.” The article called on the United States to restore Palestinian “rights,” saying that “just as relations between the United States and Israel cannot be severed, Arab and Syrian support for the Palestinians and their rights is not a matter for discussion. Only the Palestinians can decide how to resist the occupation, and it is the duty of Arabs to support their decision...” It ended with a call for the American president “to pay a visit in the near future to Damascus, the cradle of culture.”

v) **An article in *Al-Watan* by Khurshid Dalli, June 7:** According to the article, Obama’s speech was one of the most important speeches made by an American, because it lacked the threats of previous American administrations. Therefore, it could be said that the speech contained elements intended to turn a new leaf [in the relations] between the Arab countries and the United States, especially if the Obama administration put into practice some of the ideas he mentioned, such as the establishment of a Palestinian state and freezing building in the settlements. According to the article, the speech showed an ideological and political shift in American mentality. The true challenge facing Obama was turning his words into action.

vi) **An article in *Al-Watan* by Tahsin al-Halabi, June 7:** The article noted two issues **not covered** by Obama’s speech: the “occupied” Golan Heights and the Israeli

settlements established there, and the “barbaric embargo” against the million and a half Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. It complained that Obama had said that the peace initiative was only the beginning of realizing Arab responsibility, and regarded that as an expression of his readiness to please Israel and revoke the right of return. It also said that the Netanyahu government could be expected to delay and attempt to sabotage putting Obama’s intentions into practice.

The Palestinian Authority

14. Figures within the Palestinian Authority were warm in their praise for Obama’s speech, which they called “historic.” Senior Palestinian figures said the following:

i) **Saeb Erekat**, head of the PLO negotiating team, said that the speech would go down in history as the first Western attempt to approach the Arab-Muslim world (Al-Arabia TV, June 4, 2009). In a different interview he said that now, after Obama’s speech, “the ball was in the Israeli court.” He said that Palestinian suffering did not bother Obama’s conscience, and that his views had to be translated into a peace process. He added that that if building in the settlements were not frozen, Obama would have “a big problem” (*Al-Halij*, June 6, 2009).



Saeb Erekat (Egyptian TV, June 4, 2009).

ii) **Nabil Abu Rudeina**, presidential spokesman, said that the speech was sincere and reflected a genuine beginning that could be relied on (Agence France Presse, June 4, 2009).

iii) **Yasser Abd Rabbo**, secretary of the PLO’s executive committee, said that the speech represented a comprehensive strategy and that all its points were interlinked. He said that the most important point was the Palestinian issue, which was “respectably represented,” indicating a change in American relations with Arab countries, Israel and the Palestinians. He added that Obama had turned the Palestinian issue into a national American interest (Palestinian Television, June 4, 2009).

Hamas

15. Hamas spokesmen responded to the speech in a conciliatory tone but called on the United States to translate words into action, especially concerning the struggle against the settlements and lifting the “siege” of the Gaza Strip. They also noted subjects which did not appear in the speech, including recognizing the legitimacy of Hamas, which had come to power through [democratic] elections. During the speech Hamas held a propaganda display in the form of a quiet demonstration of dozens of Palestinian children standing in front of the Rafah crossing under signs reading “The message of the children of Palestine to Obama,” to lift the “siege” of the Gaza Strip (*Al-Yawm Al-Sabaa*, June 4, 2009).



Children demonstrating near the Rafah crossing for the lifting of the “siege” (Hamas’s Palestine-Info website, June 7, 2009).

16. Senior Hamas figures had the following to say:

i) **Musa Abu Marzuq**, deputy chairman of Hamas’s political bureau, said that the main point of the speech was that the American president wanted to send a message to the Muslim world but that he did not have a response for events on the ground, especially the wars in which the United States was directly and indirectly involved. He said that Obama had in fact changed the tone of his language toward Hamas, and that he now had to act more vigorously to talk with Hamas and act against the expansion of the settlements (*Al-Arabia TV*, June 5, 2009).

ii) **Ismail Haniya**, head of the de-facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, said that Obama had adopted a new rhetoric. He said it might signal the beginning of an era of reconciliation between the West and the Arab-Muslim world. However, he said, Hamas was of the opinion that policy and strategy were not limited to speeches, but had to turn into action. The Palestinians were waiting to see what would happen after the speech. Would their suffering end? Would the siege be lifted? Would the crossings

be opened? Would the occupation end and the Palestinian state spoken of by Obama be established? (Al-Jazeera TV, June 5, 2009).

iii) **Muhammad Nizal**, a member of the Hamas political bureau, said that there was no reason to celebrate the speech but that it had to be turned into action. Most of what the president had to say was nice, he said, but had to be put into practice on the ground (BBC in Arabic, June 5, 2009).

iv) **Fawzi Barhoum**, Hamas spokesman, said that the speech "made people feel good," was polite, and was meant to make the United States look better in the eyes of the world. However, it also had internal contradictions, for instance when he said that Hamas had the support of the Palestinian people but said nothing about its legitimacy and its rise to power through legitimate elections (Agence France Presse, June 4, 2009).

v) **Musheir al-Masri**, Hamas secretary in the Palestinian Legislative Council, expressed disappointment, saying that the speech offered nothing new and did not demonstrate a genuine readiness to change American policy regarding the Palestinian and other regional issues (Al-Alam TV, June 4, 2009).

vi) **Ismail Radwan**, senior Hamas figure in the Gaza Strip, said that the speech was favorable and that America was clearly making an effort to improve its image, but that only action on the ground would determine how serious the administration was (Al-Bayan Center website, June 4, 2009).

vi) **Yousuf Rezka**, adviser to Ismail Haniya, exploited the opportunity to invite Obama to visit the Gaza Strip to see their suffering for himself. He demanded that Obama pressure Israel to open the crossings, lift the "siege" and rebuild the Gaza Strip (Ramattan News Agency, June 4, 2009).

17. Another example of Hamas exploitation of the speech for propaganda purposes was the **letter sent by Hamas Deputy Foreign Minister Ahmad Yussuf to the American president during his stay in Cairo** on June 4. Its contents were posted on the website of an American women's pacifist organization called Code Pink: Women for Peace, whose representatives had visited the Gaza Strip. It was unclear whether the letter was actually delivered to Obama.

18. The letter stated that Hamas praised President Obama's visit to the Arab world and his initiative to bridge over disagreements with the Arab-Muslim world. It represented the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as one of the reasons for the continuing tension between the United States and the Arabs. In it, Ahmad Yussuf reiterated the call to Obama and senior members

of the American administration to visit the Gaza Strip, which was the victim of a brutal [sic] Israeli attack carried out with American weapons and money. He said he wanted the president to see the destruction in the Gaza Strip for himself (he used the term “ground zero,” an analogy to the Twin Towers), and also called on the United States to make a change on the ground by lifting the “siege” of the Gaza Strip and freezing building in the settlements. He ended by saying that Hamas was willing to be part of a “just solution” for the conflict with no preconditions, except that it had to be suitable to the positions of the international community, the UN, the International Court and the human rights organizations.

Al-Qaeda

19. **Osama bin Laden** issued a new audio cassette on **the eve of Barack Obama’s arrival in Cairo** (Al-Jazeera TV, June 3, 2009). It attacked Obama’s policies regarding the Muslim world which were, he claimed, a continuation of those of his predecessor, George Bush, and hostile to Muslims. Bin Laden said that “the president of the United States sowed the seeds of hatred of Americans” throughout the Muslim world through the actions of the United States against the Taliban in the Swat Valley (on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan).



Osama bin Laden audio cassette attacking Barack Obama before his speech (Al-Jazeera TV, June 3, 2009).

20. **Bin Laden warned the Americans that they had to be prepared for a reaction to the administrations’ policies**, saying that “in the coming years and decades the American people have to be ready to reap what was sown by the heads of the White House.” He also referred to the military actions of Pakistan against the Taliban in the Swat Valley, claiming that “it is a Jewish-American plot” intended to weaken Pakistan’s nuclear capabilities and destabilize its society. He also claimed that American pressure had led to a campaign of killing, fighting, bombs and destruction which had caused millions of Muslims in the northwestern part of the country to flee.

21. Bin Laden noted the September 11, 2001 attacks, saying that “the med of freedom responsible for the events of September 11 did not know the taste of bitterness, dissatisfaction and exile from their homes and lands, they lived in tents and ate little. Those 19 [who carried out the attacks] heard how their brothers in Palestine were oppressed with American weapons in Zionist hands” [An expression of Islamic solidarity with the Palestinians].

22. It was not the first time Al-Qaeda criticized the Obama administration. On April 20, 2009, bin Laden's deputy, **Ayman al-Zawahiri**, issued an video cassette on which he said that “the new President Obama will not change America's image in the least regarding Muslims and the oppressed.” He added that “America is still murdering Muslims in Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan...America steals their riches, occupies their land and supports the corrupt rulers who rob and betray their own countries. That is why the problem are far from being solved. **Actually, it can be expected that they will get worse.**”