



The Meir Amit Intelligence and  
Terrorism Information Center

February 27, 2011

## Portrait of Sheikh Dr. Yusuf Abdallah al-Qaradawi, senior Sunni Muslim cleric, affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood

---



Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi ( Hamas' Palestine-info website, August 15, 2010)

### Overview

1. Sheikh Dr. Yusuf Abdallah al-Qaradawi is a central figure affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood. He was expelled from Egypt and found refuge in Qatar, and operates from there throughout the Muslim world.
2. **After President Hosni Mubarak was ousted al-Qaradawi returned to Egypt and delivered the Friday sermon at a mass rally held in Al-Tahrir Square in Cairo. Many**

**consider him the supreme religious and ideological authority for the Muslim Brotherhood, although he is not officially its leader** (in the past refused to accept the title of the Muslim Brotherhood's General Guide). **He is influential in Egypt and considered one of the most important Sunni Muslim clerics of our generation** and a spiritual authority for millions of Muslims around the world, including the Hamas movement.

3. **Al-Qaradawi's popularity among the Sunnis has grown because of the massive use he makes of electronic media, mainly television and the Internet. One of his most important tools is the Al-Jazeera TV channel**, which broadcasts his popular program "Life and Islamic Law," viewed by tens of millions of Muslims.

4. Al-Qaradawi has often **exploited the program for blatant anti-Semitic propaganda and incitement** (see below). **He was also one of the founders of the IslamOnline website** in 1997, which often quotes him.



Sheikh Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi on Al-Jazeera TV's popular "Life and Islamic Law " program (Al-Jazeera TV, March 15, 2009).

5. **Al-Qaradawi refers to his religious views as "moderate Islam," which seeks to balance intellect and emotion.** He has positive attitudes toward reforms in Islam, which he calls "correcting perceptions which were corrupted." He is considered one of the foremost propounders of the doctrine of the "the law of the Muslim minorities," which **provides the Muslim minorities around the globe with space in which to maneuver and compromise between their daily lives and Islamic law.** The aim of implementing his doctrine is to unite and unify Muslim minorities **to make it possible for them to live under non-Muslim regimes, until the final stage of spreading Islam to the entire world.**

6. At the same time, building a bridge between the exigencies of Muslim emigrants' daily lives and Islamic religious law also includes **regarding taking over Europe as Islam's next target.** In 2003 al-Qaradawi issued a fatwa declaring that **"Islam will return to Europe as a victorious conqueror after having been expelled twice. This time it will not be conquest by the sword, but by preaching and spreading [Islamic] ideology...The**

future belongs to Islam...The spread of Islam until it conquers the entire world and includes the both East and West marks the beginning of the return of the Islamic Caliphate..."

7. **Although al-Qaradawi opposes Al-Qaeda and its methods, he enthusiastically supports Palestinian terrorism, including suicide bombing attacks targeting the civilian Israeli population.** In the past he also supported "resistance" (i.e., terrorism) to the occupation of Iraq, including, by implication – although he denied it – abducting and murdering American civilians in Iraq. **He issued fatwas calling for jihad against Israel and the Jews, and authorizing suicide bombing attacks** even if the victims were women and children. He regards all of "Palestine" as Muslim territory (according to Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas ideology), strongly opposes the existence of the State of Israel and rejects the peace treaties signed with it, and **opposes the Palestinian Authority** (and in the past called for the stoning of Mahmoud Abbas).

### **Al-Qaradawi and the recent events in Egypt**

8. In response to the dramatic events in Egypt, al-Qaradawi (whose statements are widely reported in Egypt) expressed his support for the demonstrators. **He called on the Egyptian people to fight the despots and forbade the security forces to shoot civilians.** The IslamOnline website has recently posted a chapter of his book [*Islamic*] *Law and Jihad*, according to which **jihad against corruption and a tyrannical regime is the most exalted form of jihad**, even more important than jihad against external enemies.

9. **Al-Qaradawi was expelled from Egypt in 1997 because of his affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood, which was outlawed in Egypt.** After Hosni Mubarak was ousted, on Friday, February 18, 2011, al-Qaradawi appeared at a rally attended by more than a million people in Cairo's Al-Tahrir Square and delivered the sermon. He expressed his esteem for the young people of Egypt who had revolted against the "despotic Pharaoh" Mubarak. **He sent a message of interfaith unity between Muslims and Christians, who had stood and demonstrated side by side.** He praised the Egyptian army which had "adhered to freedom and democracy" and called for the immediate release of all political prisoners and for the rapid formation of a civilian government. **He ended the sermon with a call for the liberation of Al-Aqsa mosque and asked the Egyptian army to open the Rafah crossing and allow aid convoys to enter the Gaza Strip** (Al-Jazeera TV, February 18, 2011). A few days later, apparently on February 21, he returned to Qatar.

10. The Muslim Brotherhood, which until al-Qaradawi's arrival was careful to keep a low profile, **was quick to declare that it was not behind the invitation that brought him to Egypt**, apparently to prevent tensions with the other protest movements. Dr. Muhammad Sa'ad al-Katatni, Muslim Brotherhood spokesman, said that the Muslim Brotherhood had not invited Dr. Al-Qaradawi to Egypt, but rather that the invitation had come from "the youth in [Al-Tahrir]

Square" (Al-Sharq al-Awsat, February 19, 2011). Spokesmen for other protest movements tried to diminish the importance of al-Qaradawi's appearance (ibid).



Sheikh al-Qaradawi speaks at a mass rally in Cairo's Al-Tahrir square (Al-Jazeera TV, February 18, 2011).

11. Al-Qaradawi's appearance at the rally in Cairo **was a tribute to the great popularity he enjoys in Egypt and reflects a new stage in the Muslim Brotherhood's public involvement in the events in Egypt.** However, the statement made by the Muslim Brotherhood spokesman **may indicate a potential rivalry and/or dissention** between the Muslim Brotherhood leadership in Egypt and al-Qaradawi, who entered the leadership vacuum which has plagued the Muslim Brotherhood in recent years.

### **Al-Qaradawi's biography**

12. Al-Qaradawi was born in a small Nile delta village in 1926. His father died when he was two and he grew up in his uncle's house, in a religious environment. When he was four he was sent to a religious school. According to stories, when he was nine he knew the Qur'an by heart. As a youth he studied at a religious school in Tanta **where he delved into the writings of Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, whom al-Qaradawi said shaped his political and religious thinking.**

13. When he was 18 he became a student in the religion department of Al-Azhar University in Cairo. He graduated in 1953. The following year he passed the exam to receive a teaching license. In 1958 he received a Master's degree in Arab language and literature and in 1973 received a Doctorate. So far he has written more than 50 books about various aspects of Islamic jurisprudence. **During his studies at Al-Azhar he was exposed to the Muslim Brotherhood ideology** and devoted himself to political Islamic activity and to preaching against the British presence in Egypt. His preaching against Nasser's regime led to his being arrested several times.

14. His Islamic political activity and sharp tongue **caused him to be dismissed from Al-Azhar University** in 1961 and assigned to head its branch in Qatar. However, sent to Qatar and released from the pressures of the Egyptian regime, enabled him to become prominent as

an independent cleric. **He has lived in Qatar since 1961**, where he headed an high religious school. **In 1977 he founded the Department of Islamic Law Studies in the University of Qatar and headed it until 1990**. He also founded an institute for Sunnah study.

15. To this day, the institutions he founded are important centers for his activity in the Arab-Muslim world and among Muslim communities in the West. He was granted Qatari citizenship in honor of the services he performed for the country. He has received a number of awards and decorations, among them the King Feisal of Saudi Arabia Award, the Islamic University of Malaysia Award and the Sultan of Burundi Award.

16. **After the Muslim Brotherhood was outlawed, al-Qaradawi was a wanted man and could not return to Egypt**. Until now he has lived in Qatar, where he has held a number of posts, both in and outside the country. They included head of the Qatar University's institute for the study of the history of the prophet Muhammad; chairman of the association of Muslim scholars; head of the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR – an Islamic-European umbrella organization for the rapprochement between Muslim communities throughout Europe and for building bridges between the various Islamic schools so that they can integrate life in democratic Christian Europe with Muslim law). In July 2007 he launched a forum for moderate Islam named after himself and funded by the Shari'a' department of the University of Qatar and the moderate Islamic Center in Kuwait.

17. Although al-Qaradawi began as a Muslim Brotherhood activist he later **denied membership in it and several times even refused to head the movement in Egypt** (i.e., to accept the title of General Guide). However, **he has a special status among members of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas**, its Palestinian branch, and the Islamic movement in Israel, for all of whom he is the supreme authority on Islamic law.

### **Ideology, political activity and publications**

18. **Al-Qaradawi refers to his religious views as "moderate Islam," which seeks to balance intellect and emotion**. He has positive attitudes toward reforms in Islam, which he calls "correcting perceptions which were corrupted." He is considered one of the foremost propounders of the doctrine of the "the law of the Muslim minorities," which **provides the Muslim minorities around the globe with space in which to maneuver and compromise between their daily lives and Islamic law**. The aim of implementing his doctrine is to unite and unify Muslim minorities **to make it possible for them to live under non-Muslim regimes, until the final stage of spreading Islam to the entire world**.

19. At the same time, building a bridge between the exigencies of Muslim emigrants' daily lives and Islamic religious law also includes **regarding Europe as Islam's next target**. In 2003 al-Qaradawi issued a fatwa declaring that **"Islam will return to Europe as a victorious conqueror after having been expelled twice. This time it will not be conquest by the**

**sword, but by preaching and spreading [Islamic] ideology...**The future belongs to Islam...The spread of Islam until it conquers the entire world and includes the both East and West marks the beginning of the return of the Islamic Caliphate..."

20. **Conservative Muslims object to what they consider al-Qaradawi's excessive flexibility** and have occasionally attacked his fatwas as "too permissive." However, despite the criticism he is greatly respected and esteemed in the Muslim world and most Muslim clerics respect his fatwas. **Many people today consider him the heir of Sayyid Qutb** (Muslim Brotherhood theoretician and senior activist in Egypt) and as the movement's **highest religious and ideological authority, even if he did reject offers to officially head it.**

21. Al-Qaradawi has issued a great many fatwas and written a large number of books, the most important of which is *The Lawful and Prohibited in Islam*. It was translated into many languages and has sold millions of copies. **Today it is considered the best selling Muslim book after the Qur'an.**



Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi answers viewers' questions (Al-Jazeera TV, March 15, 2009).

### **Al-Qaradawi's attitude towards suicide bombing attacks and support for Hamas**

22. All of al-Qaradawi's opinions regarding Israel are extreme and **he is a source of supreme religious authority for Hamas**. He is an enthusiastic supporter of Palestinian terrorism, including when it is directed against civilians, claiming that it is a legitimate expression of the so-called "resistance" and that Israel is a militaristic society where every civilian is a potential soldier. **He issued fatwas calling for jihad against Israel and the Jews and authorizing suicide bombing attacks, even when they entailed killing women and children.** He also issued fatwas authorizing attacks on Jews around the world because in his view there is no essential difference between Judaism and Zionism, and therefore every Jewish target equals an Israeli target.

23. **His status as a leading Sunni Muslim cleric gives added importance to his fatwas supporting Palestinian terrorism** and make him particularly influential in shaping anti-Israeli sentiments in the Arab-Muslim world.

24. In July 2003, during the height of the suicide bombing terrorism (the second intifada), he addressed the issue of suicide bombing attack at an ECFR conference. He said that *istishhad* (death as a martyr for the sake of Allah),<sup>1</sup> carried out by the Palestinian organizations to opposed the so-called "Zionist occupation" were by no means to be defined as terrorism (Al-Sharq al-Awsat, July 19, 2003). On other occasions he also supported suicide bombing attacks, including on the BBC (February 8, 2010) and Al-Jazeera TV (January 28, 2009).<sup>2</sup>

**25. Senior Hamas figures relied on al-Qaradawi's fatwas which authorize suicide bombing attacks against Israel to justify that sort of (debatable) attack. For example:**

1) **Sheikh Hamid al-Bitawi**, senior Hamas activist in Judea and Samaria, relying on an al-Qaradawi fatwa, said that according to Islamic jurisprudence, "jihad is a collective duty..." and that if infidels occupy any bit of Muslim land – such as the occupation of Palestine by the Jews, jihad becomes the duty of every individual, thus making it permissible to carry out suicide bombing attacks.<sup>3</sup>

2) **Dr. Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi**, a senior Hamas leader who died in a targeted killing, relying on a fatwa issued by al-Qaradawi, said that "suicide depends on intention. If the person intends to kill himself because he is fed up with life, that is suicide (which is prohibited). However, if he wants to die to strike at the enemy and to receive a reward from Allah, he is considered as delivering up his soul [and not as committing suicide]."<sup>4</sup>

26. To help fund Hamas' civilian infrastructure (the *da'wah*) **al-Qaradawi established the Union of Good, which he heads today**. It is an umbrella organization which raises money for Hamas and other Islamist activities around the globe. The Union of Good was declared a terrorism-sponsoring organization and **outlawed by Israel in February 2002. In December 2002 it was designated as a terrorist organization by the United States and outlawed**.

27. **Al-Qaradawi is hostile to the Palestinian Authority**. At the beginning of 2010 he criticized Mahmoud Abbas for his vote regarding the Goldstone Report, and **issued a fatwa calling for Mahmoud Abbas to be stoned in Mecca**. Mahmoud Abbas demanded a retraction from al-Qaradawi, who denied having issued the fatwa. However, he did admit that during a sermon he said that if accusations against any person in the Palestinian Authority were proved true [i.e., that he had supported the cancellation of the vote on the Goldstone Report], that person should be stoned in Mecca as punishment for treason (IslamOnline, January 7, 2010). In response Mahmoud al-Habash, Palestinian Authority minister of religion and

---

<sup>1</sup> The suicide bomber is called *istishhadi*, the one who deliberately sacrifices himself for the sake of Allah.

<sup>2</sup> According to MEMRI, February 8, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Hayat, February 25, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Hayat, February 25, 2001.

endowments, said that his ministry had ordered all the preachers in the mosques in the Palestinian Authority to attack al-Qaradawi personally (Al-Quds Al-Arabi, January 18, 2010)

### Anti-Semitic remarks

28. Al-Qaradawi has often made anti-Semitic remarks. For example, his "Life and Islamic Law" program broadcast on March 15, 2009, discussed the topic of righteous Muslims in Islam. One of the viewers called in and asked about the role of the righteous (*al-salkhour*) in the Qur'an in the liberation of the [Islamic] holy places and the victory of the [Muslim] nation.

29. Al-Qaradawi used the opportunity to attack the Jews, basing his answer on a known *hadith* [oral tradition] calling for the **murder of Jews**. On the program he said that righteous Muslims were "the salt of the earth" who were always instrumental in liberating lands. He called them a source of hope and that he hoped that through them Jerusalem would be "liberated," as would "Palestine," the Gaza Strip, and all the lands ruled by the enemies of the Muslims. **He said that the war against the Jews was not only the war of the Palestinians but of all Muslims.** Al-Qaradawi based his answer on a well-known *hadith* about the war on Judgment Day between Muslims and Jews. He said that the prophet Muhammad said that "...therefore you will continue to fight the Jews and they will fight you until the Muslims kill them. The Jew hides behind rock and tree. The rock and the tree say, oh, slave of Allah, oh, Muslim, here is the Jew behind me, come and kill him."<sup>5</sup> He interpreted that to mean that those who fight to "liberate" the holy places are the **Muslim slaves of Allah, and not Jordanians or Palestinians or Egyptians or Iraqis.**

### Al-Qaradawi's position on Al-Qaeda and the global jihad

30. **Al-Qaradawi denounced the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and said it was the duty of every Muslim to help bring the perpetrators to trial.** As opposed to his opposition to Al-Qaeda, **he called for attacks on Americans fighting in Iraq.**

31. In August 2004 the "Pluralism in Islam" conference was held by the Egypt's journalists' union in Cairo. At the conference **al-Qaradawi issued a fatwa allowing the abduction and murder of American civilians in Iraq to exert pressure on the American army to remove its forces.** He emphasized that "all the Americans in Iraq are fighters, there is no difference between civilians and soldiers, and they have to be fought against because the American civilians come to Iraq to serve the occupation. Abducting and killing them is a [religious] duty to make [the Americans] leave [Iraq] immediately. [On the other hand] abusing their corpses is forbidden by Islam" (Al-Sharq al-Awsat, London, September 2, 2004).

---

<sup>5</sup> According to the original *hadith*, every tree and rock will give up the hiding places of the Jews except the *nitraria*, (a thorny bush which grows in desert regions). In other versions, such as that quoted by al-Qaradawi, the words of Muhammad are not related to Judgment Day but used rather in their current political contexts and as a general commandment to Muslims to kill Jews, with no mention of the bush that protects them

32. Al-Qaradawi issued the fatwa a week after public figures from various Muslim countries published an open letter calling for support for the forces fighting the coalition in Iraq. It was signed by 93 Islamic clerics and public figures, including al-Qaradawi and figures from the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah (Al-Quds Al-Arabi, London, August 23, 2004).

33. **In view of the storm caused by the fatwa permitting the abduction and murder of American civilians in Iraq, ten days later al-Qaradawi sent a fax to the London-based daily Arabic newspaper Al-Hayat denying "what the media said he said."** He said that "some of the media claimed I issued a fatwa saying it was a duty to kill American civilians in Iraq. That has no basis. I never issued a fatwa on the issue. A few days ago I was asked by Egypt's journalists' union about permission to struggle against the occupation in Iraq and I answered in the affirmative. After that I was asked about American civilians in Iraq and I answered only with a question: Are there American civilians in Iran? It is well known that I do not use the word 'kill' in a fatwa but rather 'struggle,' which is broader and does not necessarily refer to killing. In addition, in the past on a number of times I denounced abducting hostages and demanded they be released without threatening to kill them" (Al-Hayat, London, September 9, 2004).

34. **Before the denial was issued, Azzam Halima, al-Qaradawi's office manager, confirmed that al-Qaradawi had issued a fatwa stating that it was a duty to fight the American civilians in Iraq because they were invaders** (Al-Quds Al-Arabi, London, September 23, 2004).

### **Al-Qaradawi and Iran**

35. Al-Qaradawi **strenuously opposes the attempts to disseminate Shi'ite Islam and is critical of Iran's attempts to spread it to Sunni countries.** He has also criticized Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah on a number of occasions.

### **The call for Muslims to acquire nuclear weapons**

36. In the past al-Qaradawi has said that Muslims should acquire nuclear weapons "to terrify their enemies." However, he has said that nuclear weapons should not be used.<sup>6</sup>

### **Al-Qaradawi's position on the recent events in Tunisia and Libya**

37. **Regarding the recent events in Tunisia,** al-Qaradawi said that the struggle should be continued until all the members of Ben Ali's party be removed from their positions, with the exception of the interim president, who should, he said, remain in power to prevent the creation of a constitutional vacuum. He called on Tunisia to release its political prisoners, bring back political exiles and **restore the Islamic customs which were forbidden by the secular**

---

<sup>6</sup> Qatari TV, October 18, 2002, according to MEMRI.

**regime of the ousted president, such as wearing the veil (*hijab*) on university campuses.**

38. Regarding the recent events in Libya, al-Qaradawi called on Muammar Gaddafi to relinquish power and to learn the lessons of Egypt and Tunisia. **He said that a revolt against Gaddafi was an Islamic religious duty**, called on the members of the tribes in Libya to rise up against Gaddafi and join the ranks of the demonstrators. He called on the Libya army "to behave like their brothers in Egypt, to stand alongside the people **to restore to Libya its Arab Islamic character**." He said that those who had died during the violent events in Libya were shaheeds in paradise and supported the jihad fighters rising up against the Libyan regime (Egyptian TV, telephone conversation with al-Qaradawi broadcast in a special program, February 20, 2011).