

“Political Islam” and Its Justification of Terrorism

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There is a great deal of soul searching among Arab writers and intellectuals as they face the grim results of Islamic terrorism. The menace has become global as it threatens the peace and stability of Muslim and non-Muslim countries. As I glance regularly at the headlines of Arabic newspapers available on the Internet, I notice that the topic of terrorism receives a good deal of attention.

In a 25 August issue of *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, a London based Arabic newspaper, a regular columnist, Saleh al-Qallab dealt with this subject by asking: “*Is ‘Political Islam’ involved in terrorism through its justification of its crimes?*” The very title of the article intimates that not only Jihadists, but those who justify their acts, or remain silent about them, are equally involved in terrorism.

What prompted the writer to ask this question was the attack on American Navy ships that were docked in the Jordanian port of Aqaba on Friday, 19 August. He commented on the background of this very disturbing event, but pointed to the politics and policies of a political party in Jordan, and its support of Islamist terrorists:

“It is quite instructive to notice the attitude of the *Islamic Action Front* [of Jordan] with respect to the terrorist attack on Aqaba. This organization happens to be the other face of *Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimeen* [Muslim Brotherhood], and represents ‘*Political Islam*,’ in the Arab and Muslim worlds, and the entire globe, through the cells and groups that gravitate in its orbit.”

“The *Islamic Action Front*, a recognized political party in Jordan, issued its communiqué even before the blood of the Jordanian soldier that was killed in the attack had dried. It claimed that the United States was responsible for the attack, because of the presence of its navy at the port of Aqaba.”

“Furthermore, the *Islamic Action Front* refrained from condemning this crime and those who had planned and executed it, blaming also the Jordanian Government ‘for offering help and facilities to the Americans, and its support of their invading forces [in Iraq]. The responsibility for the attack in Aqaba rests equally with the Zionist enemy that occupies the blessed land [of Palestine] and the American warships.’”

These are very bold words coming from a regular contributor to this online Arabic paper.

He went on to show a direct link between the terrorist acts and those behind them who work hard at justifying them:

“The position of this political party [Islamic Action Front] is in harmony with its previous standing vis-à-vis terrorism beyond Jordan, including violence, murder, and mayhem in Algeria [committed since the early 1990s by the Islamic Salvation Front], Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Yemen, and in other lands impacted by terrorism.”

“It is a well-known fact that groups and organizations that are committed to **‘Political Islam’** throughout the world, do offer a logistical-ideological support for the various terrorist organizations. This has been going on ever since they resorted to violence in Egypt during the early 1980s, followed by such actions in Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Yemen, Tunisia, and Morocco. Organizations advocating **‘Political Islam’** have been justifying terrorism by placing the responsibility for violence on the **‘Great Satan,’** or **‘The Arrogance** [of the West].’ And they have persisted in refraining, directly or indirectly, from condemning any terrorist acts.”

Writing before the shocking events in Dammam, in eastern Saudi Arabia, early in September 2005, when a group of Jihadists barricaded themselves in an apartment block, and were eventually killed by Saudi police, he referred to the seeds of Islamism with these very revealing words:

“In Saudi Arabia, for example, those associated with **‘Political Islam,’** whether bearded or clean-shaven; place the responsibility for terrorism on the American presence on Saudi soil, even after it has ended! Then they proceed to blame the Saudi authorities for the spread of terrorism because of its openness to currents of liberalism, and to democracy in its Western version.”

Long before 9/11 and the first attempt to bomb the World Trade Center in the early 1990s, a terrible war has been going on in Algeria waged by **Front Islamique du Salut** (Islamic Salvation Front) against the government. Our columnist reminded his readers, that North Africa has been suffering from this plague for a long time:

“As for Algeria, the justification for terrorism is based on the claim that the Algerian authorities had deviated from the **Right Path** [Islamic Orthodoxy,] and thus society itself had fallen into a state of unbelief. Therefore, the blood that was being shed in Algeria [by the insurgents of FIS] would eventually lead to the rise of a truly Islamic regime.”

From North Africa, the columnist returned to the Middle East, and began with Egypt, the birthplace of the ideology of Islamic terrorism, and of the Muslim Brotherhood that practiced it:

“In Egypt, justification for **Irhab** [terrorism] was already there: [it is enough to mention] the **Camp David Accord, or Peace with Israel.** Thus, groups sympathetic to **‘Political Islam’** found no reason to condemn terrorist acts since they were directed against those much-hated treaties [that normalized relations between Egypt and Israel.] Thus, terrorist acts were carried under an Islamic banner, even though their victims were [quite often] innocent people, or women, or children, as witnessed recently at Sharm el-Sheikh, Luxor, and Cairo!”

Mr. Al-Qallab proceeded to deal with the measures that must be taken by all responsible governments, referring specifically to those Arab states which tolerate the activities of organizations that provide logistical and ideological support for Islamist terrorists.

“Now that terrorism has taken deep roots in the region [Middle East], it is necessary to deprive it of this logistical-ideological support, before we deprive it of financial and military aid. It is necessary for all governments that have been impacted by acts of terrorism to make a common front vis-à-vis those organizations associated with **‘Political Islam.’** This must be achieved both through dialogue with such organizations, and by passing strict laws that explicitly prohibit any justification of terrorism. To provide pretexts for acts of terrorism is tantamount to approving them.”

Mr. Al-Qallab went on to comment on the activities of the advocates of **‘Political Islam’** and ended his op-ed column by stating:

“It is not surprising at all that parties associated with **‘Political Islam’** engage in opportunistic and pragmatic political activities under the banner of Islam. However, had they been truly honest, they ought to be defending the Islamic religion by unmasking those terrorist organizations that have given Islam an ugly face. In the final analysis, and regardless of the many names that terrorist groups use, they have only one goal, to kill for the sake of killing, and to commit crime for the sake of crime.”

“By embarking on the justification of acts of terrorism, and by offering terrorists a logistical-ideological support, groups and parties advocating **Political Islam** place themselves within the circle of **Irhab**; and betray the great Islamic mission which they claim to be their own!”

The openness of this columnist is very salutary and must be commended. However, he, as well as many other Muslim writers, sees no connection between the sacred texts of Islam (Qur’an, Hadith, and the Life of the Prophet) and the phenomenon of Islamic terrorism during the last 1400 years. What a pity!