

## **A MOSLEM'S RESPONSE TO BEN LADEN**

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On November 24, 2002, the "London Observer" published the full text of a letter reported to be Osama ben Laden's "Letter to the American People".

As a Persian-American Moslem, I find it my social duty and religious obligation to make a public response, which will illuminate the fallacies of Mr. ben Laden's beliefs.

In the interest of time and space, I shall try to accomplish this goal by taking each of his most significant points, one by one. To make a scholarly response would take volumes of material including appropriate references which I may attempt in the future.

*(Q1) Why are we fighting and opposing you?*

*(1) Because you attack us and continue to attack us.*

Mr. ben Laden uses the word, "us", as if there exists a united nation –Ummah-of Islam within a specific geographical boundary with common political and economic interests.

This is fantasy, not fact. In fact, recent history has demonstrated that the Islamic world is anything but unified. Examples of disunity are:

- A. The eight year war started by Islamic Iraq against Islamic Iran causing over 1 million casualties and billions of dollars of economic damage.
- B. Sunnis killing Shiites in Afghanistan during the period that Mr. Bin Laden was effectively in control.
- C. The fact that Sunnis and Shiites are presently killing each other in Islamic Pakistan.
- D. A decade ago Iraqi Moslem soldiers invaded Kuwait, killed thousands of Moslem Kuwaitis and looted Moslem Kuwait's treasures.
- E. Just a few decades ago, Moslem Egyptian soldiers under the command of Abdul Nasser, were fighting against Moslem Saudi forces in Yemen.
- F. A few hundred years ago, Moslem Ottomans and Moslem Iranians had Fatwas issued by their respective religious leaders stating that murdering the opposite side would guarantee them a place in paradise.
- G. The interests of Saudis and Iranians have frequently been in opposition to each other. Moreover, a sense of deep resentment has been in existence within all Iranians against all Arabs within a few decades ago because their "Moslem brothers" have maliciously attempted to alter the time-honored name of the Persian Gulf.

There are 55 Islamic countries in existence with diverse ethnic backgrounds as well as opposing economic and political interests. For example, Turkmenistan has no common economic or political interest with Indonesia, but they are both Islamic countries.

Even if there existed a united nation of Islam, a great majority of the people of such an imaginary nation, those Moslems who adhere to the peace message of Islam, would definitely not elect Mr. ben Laden as their leader. Therefore, in the eyes of hundreds of millions of peace-loving Moslems, Mr. ben Laden would not and does not have any legitimacy, be it legal, moral or religious, to wage war against the Western world. Even if we were to use the standards of 1,400 years ago (the beginning of Islam) for choosing a legitimate leader, that proposed leader must receive "bey'at" (handshake-vote of confidence) from all Moslems from whom he wishes to gain legitimacy. This, by itself, renders Mr. ben Laden's claim of leadership to be illegitimate be it for the population of Palestine, Sudan, Afghanistan or the entire Moslem population of the world.

Regarding Palestine, Mr. ben Laden states:

You attacked us in Palestine.... When the Muslims conquered Palestine and drove out the Romans, Palestine and Jerusalem returned to Islam

No credible source shows or proves the above claim. In fact, the last remnants of the Roman Empire fell to the Goths in 476AD, approximately 200 years before the birth of the prophet Mohammad (Peace and blessings be upon Him) and birth of Islam as a religion.

This kind of erroneous claim on behalf of all Moslems does nothing but discredit the entire Islamic Ummah.

On the question of Palestine, every fair-minded and peace-loving person aspires for and should help, through civilized means, for the establishment of a homeland for Palestinians next to the state of Israel. However, it seems so ironic that neither Mr. ben Laden, nor any Moslem, appears to care to even acknowledge the basic rights of Iraqi Moslem Kurds 200,000 of whom have mysteriously vanished and tens of thousands more have been supplanted by Saddam's regime and driven out of the area of Kirkuk. Isn't this a tacit admission by Moslems that murdering, displacing and oppressing Moslems is permissible as long as it is committed by fellow Moslems but it becomes an unforgivable crime if it is done by non-Moslems?

Mr. ben Laden continues:

You attacked us in Somalia; you supported the Russian atrocities against us in Chechnya, the Indian oppression against us in Kashmir, and the Jewish aggression against us in Lebanon.

By grouping Americans, Russians, Indians, Kashmiris and the Jews together as opponents of Moslems, Mr. ben Laden creates an ominous picture of the clash of civilizations between Islamic countries on one hand and the rest of the world on the other. This path can only lead to the ultimate destruction of civilization if such pathological, conspiratorial, unfounded propaganda is not neutralized through

effective dialogue among the peoples of the East and West. Mr. ben Laden, again, intentionally neglects the fact that only a few years ago American forces rushed to rescue Bosnian Moslems from being wiped out by the Serbs. As a matter of fact, today American and Western forces are still putting their own lives in danger in order to protect the Moslems in Bosnia.

Mr. ben Laden tells Americans:

Under your supervision, consent and orders, the governments of our countries which act as your agents, attack us on a daily basis; ...These governments prevent our people from establishing the Islamic Shariah, using violence and lies to do so.

By making the above statements, Mr. ben Laden is accusing 1.2 billion Moslems worldwide of being incapable and unable to manage their own affairs.

Secondly, he wishes to establish Islamic Shariah (controlling every human being's activity from going to the bathroom to their hobbies, occupations and their bedroom manners) worldwide; he wants to reduce the rest of the world to the miserable status of Afghanis while under his control.

He continues:

*Your forces occupy our countries... you corrupt our lands.*

Isn't he neglecting the fact that according to Quran, all human beings are creatures of Allah, therefore to be respected? Furthermore, he conveniently ignores the fact that almost all these Americans are Christians and people of the Book who should be considered clean and whose presence does not corrupt the land whether holy or otherwise.

Mr. ben Laden's accusation that Americans have caused starvation and death of Iraqi children is another unfortunate willful twisting of facts. He intentionally ignores Saddam's crimes including using chemical bombs on over 5,000 Kurds in Halabja. Neither does he speak of Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, which led to the UN sanctions. Further, he conveniently ignores the fact that in spite of the sanctions, Saddam has built eight palaces for himself with funds meant for food and medicine for the Iraqi people.

Mr. ben Laden makes yet another outrageous delusional remark when he tells America: *With your help and under your protection, the Israelis are planning to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque (in Jerusalem).*

He makes this unfounded and venomous accusation with such certainty as if he possesses hard evidence that this in fact is 'the plan'. I would like to see the evidence.

He continues with:

*The American people are the ones who pay the taxes which fund the planes that bomb us in Afghanistan the tanks that strike and destroy our homes in Palestine, the armies which occupy our lands in the Arabian Gulf, and the fleets which ensure the*

*blockade of Iraq. These tax dollars are given to Israel for it to continue to attack us and penetrate our lands. So, the American people are the ones who fund the attacks against us, and they are the ones who oversee the expenditure of these monies in the way they wish, through their elected candidates.*

This is another absurd charge. The whole world is witnessing the rebuilding of the cities, universities and schools for both boys and girls, medical facilities for all Afghans including women who heretofore were senselessly deprived under Mr. ben Laden's control.

In addition, Mr. ben Laden maliciously tries to mislead uneducated Moslems by neglecting the fact that for the last several years, since the Oslo Peace Accord, American tax dollars have annually been pouring into the Palestinian Authority in tens of millions of dollars.

He also sidesteps the fact that the Moslem country of Egypt has been the second largest recipient of American tax dollar assistance in the world, right behind the state of Israel.

In order to justify his hatred of the West and love for his inhumane brutality, Mr. ben Laden asserts:

*Allah, the Almighty, legislated the permission and the option to take revenge.*

The crux of the problem with Mr. ben Laden and the likes of him is that they tend to ignore numerous passages in the Holy Quran that advocate love for fellow human beings and compassion for differences. Instead, he chooses to focus on the passages that suit his purpose.

Regarding what he wants from us, he says:

*The first thing that we are calling you to is Islam.*

Apparently, Mr. ben Laden believes that it is his mission to convert the entire Western world, including Americans to Islam. Instead of being a good Moslem using peaceful, kind and humane ways to convert people to Islam, this self-appointed religious leader employs and supports savage, terroristic and inhumane methods.

He further proclaims:

*The second thing we call you to, is to stop your oppression, lies, immorality and debauchery that has spread among you. We call you to be a people of manners, principles, honour, and purity; to reject the immoral acts of fornication, homosexuality, intoxicants, gambling's, and trading with interest. It is saddening to tell you that you are the worst civilization witnessed by the history of mankind:*

Mr. ben Laden, I agree that things would be better for our society if we had a higher degree of morality worldwide, and you as a human being certainly have the right to express your opinion on that, however, you have no right to use force to further your wishes.

It is saddening to see how vengeance, hatred and black-heartedness can blind a human being from being able to see and acknowledge well documented, statistical data that prove that Americans, by far, are the most charitable people or nation in the history of the world. Furthermore, the technological advances in all the sciences, particularly in medicine, accomplished by the American people have saved and improved the lives of millions of people regardless of their religion, nationality or ethnic background worldwide.

Regarding separation of State and religion, he states in part:

*... you separate religion from your policies... grant them all the amenities of life, and then deny them that which they are most in need of: knowledge of the laws (or Shariah) which govern their lives?*

Mr. ben Laden, the principal reason for the scientific advances of the Western societies is precisely because they separate their religion from their politics and encourage and allow the human mind to flourish. Have you ever pondered why such momentous advances in space, medicine and communications have been accomplished in societies where religious practices are matters of personal choice and there is a separation between church and state? Have you noticed that the plane which took you from Sudan to Afghanistan, the satellite phones that you use to communicate with your fellow terrorists, the Stinger missiles and other ammunition that you have used against the Western world and most importantly the kidney dialysis machine that keeps you alive (against the wishes of Allah) were invented and developed in the societies where there is separation between church and state?

Regarding the exploitation of women, he states:

*You are a nation that exploits women like consumer products or advertising tools calling upon customers to purchase them*

Although it is true that sexual attraction is used in commercial advertising, the American woman has evolved to a place in her society where she enjoys total control over her personal and professional life. That is why she can be seen wearing everything from Islamic headgear to French bikinis. This is in total contrast to the buying and selling of women in the Islamic Republic of Sudan.

Moreover, Mr. ben Laden might better direct his concern for women to the savage practice of female genital mutilation that is still being forced on women in many Islamic countries of North Africa and the Middle East.

Regarding our so-called war crimes in Afghanistan, Mr. ben Laden opines:

*It will suffice to remind you of your latest war crimes in Afghanistan, in which densely populated innocent civilian villages were destroyed, bombs were dropped on mosques causing the roof of the mosque to come crashing down on the heads of the Muslims praying inside*

First of all, Osama, if it weren't for your satanic terroristic activities, Afghanistan would never have been attacked. Secondly, it was the moral duty of the free world to take action and liberate Afghani people, especially women, from the yoke of your

despotism. Thirdly, there is ample evidence that you and your Taliban cronies, with total disregard for Islamic tradition and sanctity of mosques, had previously attacked mosques and religious sites where innocent people had taken refuge from your barbaric persecutions. Lastly, immediately before the liberation of Afghanistan commenced, you placed your weapons stashes and fighters in densely populated areas and mosques knowing full well that this would give you a public relations advantage when or if the liberators targeted these sites.

Mr. ben Laden then advises us to:

*...stop supporting Israel, and to end your support of the Indians in Kashmir, the Russians against the Chechens and to also cease supporting the Manila Government against the Muslims in Southern Philippines.*

And let your extremists take over and slaughter hundreds of millions of the so-called "infidels"?

He further advises us:

*... to pack your luggage and get out of our lands. We desire for your goodness, guidance, and righteousness, so do not force us to send you back as cargo in coffins.*

Mr. ben Laden, are you the owner of all those lands? Has anybody elected you to be the speaker for the people of those lands? Don't millions of Afghans hate you for what you did to them and their country?

After his hateful condemnation and vow to destroy the West, Mr. ben Laden all of the sudden makes a conciliatory suggestion:

*We also call you to deal with us and interact with us on the basis of mutual interests and benefits, rather than the policies of sub dual, theft and occupation, and not to continue your policy of supporting the Jews because this will result in more disasters for you.*

Let me get it right. Do we have the permission from you to 'deal with' you and 'interact with you' before we- the entire United States of America- convert to your version of Islam?

And by 'mutual interest' you mean us letting you overrun all 55 Moslem countries plus Kashmir, Chechnya, western China and everywhere else that there may be some Moslems?!!

And now for the ultimatum, he states:

*If you fail to respond to all these conditions, then prepare for fight with the Islamic Nation.*

Mr. ben Laden, the fallacy of your megalomaniac theory of a united nation of Islam was addressed in detail in the beginning of this article. So was the illegitimacy of your leadership of this so-called nation.

His ultimatum continues with:

*If the Americans refuse to listen to our advice and the goodness, guidance and righteousness that we call them to, then be aware that you will lose this Crusade Bush began... If the Americans do not respond, then their fate will be that of the Soviets who fled from Afghanistan to deal with their military defeat, political breakup, ideological downfall, and economic bankruptcy.*

Mr. ben Laden, there you go again with your lies and misstatements of the truth! When it comes to your "goodness, guidance and righteousness", you don't have a shred of such noble qualities left in your being. Moreover, by your five plus years of planning on the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on America, you had already started your Jihad/Crusade long before President G.W. Bush was even elected to office.

A fundamental flaw in your thinking is that you believe that it was actually the Islamic Mojahedin who defeated the Soviets in Afghanistan. Had it not been for the freely provided US Stingers, money, intelligence and training the Mojahedin would never have been able to defeat the Soviets. Furthermore, the military and political breakup, ideological downfall, and economic bankruptcy of the Soviet Union were the result of the grand plan of the West.

In conclusion, Mr. Osama ben Laden, as a Moslem I call on you to heed Prophet Mohammad's advice that "one hour of thinking is better than twenty hours of praying" and invite you to stop this dangerous path of destruction that you have embarked on which will only lead to the clash of civilizations and the ultimate destruction of the world, Moslem or otherwise.

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