



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL  
[www.e-prism.org](http://www.e-prism.org)

**Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center  
THE PROJECT FOR THE RESEARCH OF ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS  
(PRISM)**

**OCCASIONAL PAPERS**

**Volume 3 (2005), Number 7 (October 2005)**

**Director and Editor: Reuven Paz.**

The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements is part of the Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center. Site: [www.e-prism.org](http://www.e-prism.org). Email: [reupaz@netvision.net.il](mailto:reupaz@netvision.net.il). All material copyright Reuven Paz unless otherwise stated. Credit if quoting; ask permission to reprint. GLORIA is part of the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, ISRAEL

\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*

**Abstract:** This is a series of papers that translate and analyze articles, reports, religious decrees, and other documents, written primarily in Arabic by Islamist scholars, clerics, operatives, or intellectuals.

**Al-Qaeda's Search for new Fronts: Instructions for Jihadi Activity in  
Egypt and Sinai  
By Reuven Paz**

**Introduction**

On September 25, 2005, a known Al-Qaeda supporter, nicknamed Abu Muhammad al-Hilali, published a unique analysis on the Internet, combining it with instructions for Jihadi terrorist activity in Egypt, mainly the Sinai Peninsula.<sup>1</sup> The analysis is based upon the two series of terrorist attacks at the Taba Hilton hotel and two resorts in Sinai in October 2004, and the attack at the Red Sea resort Sharm al-Sheikh in July 2005. The message has gained particular significance in light of the Israeli warnings of possible terrorist attacks against Israeli tourists in Sinai in recent days. The Sinai is a popular destination season for thousands of Israeli visitors, especially during the Jewish holiday season.

---

<sup>1</sup> Abu Muhammad al-Hilali, *Risalah ila Ahl al-Thughour fi Sina'* (A message to the People of the Frontiers in Sinai). See online in: <http://www.alhesbah.org/v/showthread.php?t=33241>.



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL  
[www.e-prism.org](http://www.e-prism.org)

Al-Hilali's analysis is very detailed, yet brief. Yet, its uniqueness lies in the fact that it seems to be the first analysis of this kind to be based upon the 1601-pages long book on Jihad by Abu Mus'ab al-Suri<sup>2</sup>, published through the Internet in January 2005.<sup>3</sup> Abu Muhammad al-Hilali is not only relying on Al-Suri's book and other teachings of his, but also uses a methodological analysis identical to that of Al-Suri. He also seems to be an adherent of Al-Suri's doctrines.

If true, and this analysis reflect Al-Suri's views, we might face a new phase in Al-Qaeda's or more accurately, the Global Jihad movement's attempts at achieving two objectives. The first is to identify new fronts in the Arab world—beside Iraq—where to conduct the struggle. The other is to revive the basic principles laid out by Abdallah Azzam, the pioneer of global Jihad. Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi and the Jihadi insurgency in Iraq are accused of neglecting Azzam's principles, which may be generally summed up as follows: First to create a new generation of Jihadists following a long period of Islamist indoctrination; and second, to focus the Jihad on tourists, Arab governments, and Arab economic interests, but not on Muslims in general, Shi'is, or on fighting according to the principles of *Takfir*.

Based upon the writings of Al-Suri, Al-Hilali emphasizes the vital need for using the attacks for purposes of propaganda, incitement, and indoctrination of the new generation of Mujahidin, and not in order to threaten the West. He also follows his teacher in openly criticizing the Mujahidin, albeit "constructively."

With regard to Egypt, it is important to remember not only the attacks in Sinai, but also the suicide attacks against tourists in Cairo in April 2005, as well as those at a British school theatre in Qatar in March 2005, by the Egyptian Omar Abdallah. Attacks against tourists have always been a priority of the Egyptian Jihad groups. Furthermore, the attacks in Sinai brought about a wake of massive security drive, arrests of hundreds of Bedouins in northern Sinai, and violent clashes between them and the Egyptian security forces. At least two senior military officers were killed. The clashes between the authorities and the Bedouins, and the increased military presence in Northern Sinai also

---

<sup>2</sup> His full name is Mustafa Abd al-Qader Mustafa Hussein bin Sheikh Ahmad al-Muzayyeh al-Jakiri al-Rifa'i. The family name Sitt Maryam comes from his grandmother. The family is a respected Sufi family of the Rifa'iyyah order in Halab/Syria. He was born in Halab in 1958, and was close to the late Marwan Hadid, one of the leaders of the Syrian Islamic Jihad. Al-Suri is known also by the name Omar abd al-Hakim.

<sup>3</sup> Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, *Da'wah lil-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah al-'Alamiyyah* (A Call for the Islamic Global Resistance). See the book online in:

<http://www.fsboa.com/vw/index.php?subject=7&rec=27&tit=tit&pa=0>



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL  
[www.e-prism.org](http://www.e-prism.org)

interferes with the traditional massive criminal activity of smuggling everything possible from Sinai to Israel, Gaza, and Jordan.

Is it merely a coincidence that there has been a rise in Jihadi terrorist activity in Egypt during the past year? Or is this increase the result of new elements of Global Jihad, whose upper echelons may be influenced by the teachings of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri?

Finally, we should ask ourselves if the politically severe conflict between the Egyptian regime and the Muslim Brotherhood on the backdrop of the recent presidential elections in Egypt, may have contributed its part too to the Jihadi unrest in the country. Although, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood does not engage in political violence, as the largest Islamic opposition movement in Egypt and the Arab world, it has been second to none in creating an “Islamist atmosphere” to promote Jihad through a small but vociferous group of highly educated youngsters affected by the regime’s suppression of the Brethren. The Egyptian Islamic elements also tend to be affected by the struggle of Hamas against Israel, and by anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish sentiments in general. The latter are hardly sanctioned upon by the Egyptian government, despite its peace agreement with Israel.

### **The Egyptian Arena and the Armed Jihad**

Al-Hilali admits that he is unfamiliar with the situation in Egypt from close, but only through the media. He accuses the Egyptian government of behaving like a colony of the “Zionist-Crusader” project, both regionally and on a global scale. Egypt secures the borders with Israel, trains the Palestinian and Iraqi security forces, and supplies camps and services for interrogations of non-Egyptian detainees.

On the background of this situation, Al-Hilali suggests the following:

- A thorough study of the circumstances and the response that is in accordance with the Shari’ah and Salafi principles.
- The adoption of Salafi-Tawhidi principles in order to create radical change.
- The preparation, training, and practicing of an **armed struggle**. “Buying arms and training is a divine duty and one commanded by the Prophet. It is neglected as a result of the government’s division of society into civilians and military—a division that does not exist in Islam... The armed struggle is the basic means to consolidate around it all other Islamic means ”

There are numerous teachings of how to promote the armed Jihad, in the writings of scholars such as Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, Abu Bakr Naji, Osama bin Laden, Ayman



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL  
[www.e-prism.org](http://www.e-prism.org)

Zawahiri, and Abdallah Azzam. The main priorities and stages we can extrapolate from these writings, especially by Al-Suri, are the following:

- Attacks against the American enemy are the top priority. “Only if this enemy would be hit and would be occupied with its own problems, the Mujahidin could be free to deal with the governments of their “colonies.” In case these governments find a new alternative ally—the European countries for example—the Mujahidin should deal with them too.
- In the second phase a struggle should be waged simultaneously against the Arab governments and the Jews.

The Mujahidin, according to Al-Hilali, are currently in the phase where they attack the United States. From time to time they attack other Western allies of the United States. Whenever there is a strategic need for it, the Mujahidin also attack Arab governments, since these attacks harm American interests as well.

Al-Hilali summarizes this point by saying that the Jihad should follow the analysis of the Jihadi strategists from among the clerics and the Mujahidin. As written by Abu Mus’ab al-Suri, “the most important Jihadi target in this phase is attacks against tourists. They regard the Muslim countries as their back yard, and import with them their moral dirt.” The attacks in Sinai were, therefore, a highly successful example of this strategy, both against the Egyptian government and in terrorizing the Westerners.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Lack of Islamist Propaganda**

Al-Hilali discusses another important issue, namely how the Sinai attackers failed to utilize the bombings for purposes of propaganda and incitement of Muslim youngsters. He complains that following the attacks only few unclear or overly enthusiastic announcements were released, which in his mind may have caused more harm than good. The lack of propaganda is tantamount to a defiance of the order of Allah, who commands—“and you should incite the believers.” Incitement is an integral part of the struggle, and it is a vital element for the Mujahidin, who are looking at Jihad as the only alternative to radically change their destitute conditions. They need a starting point to hold on. The best example of such a lack, according to al-Hilali, was the attack in Al-Azhar in Cairo, in April 2005.

---

<sup>4</sup> On the importance of attacking tourists see also in one of Al-Suri’s audiotaped lectures, posted on the Internet by Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF) in 5 October 2005. The tape can be downloaded from --  
<http://z15.zupload.com/download.php?file=getfile&filepath=1233>



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL  
[www.e-prism.org](http://www.e-prism.org)

The poor propaganda allowed the Egyptian government to falsify the effect of the attacks, while presenting them as the acts of a small and marginal group. If the late issuing of statements of responsibility, and their contradictory nature, were not enough, those failures were further compounded by the lack of a strategic religious analysis of the attacks, as evidenced by the current dispute among clerics over the legitimacy of the attacks. In this regard Al-Hilali specifically mentions Abu Basir al-Tartousi, who, following the bombings in London in July 2005, and in a recent fatwa against suicide operations, published several declarations against attacking civilians.<sup>5</sup> The attacks in Egypt and Sinai, Al-Hilali charged, were not even accompanied by the public release of the wills of the bombers—an “important element serving as a model for the Islamic youth.”

Al-Hilali calls upon the Mujahidin to take an example from the numerous religious and strategic publications of the Mujahidin in Saudi Arabia. They established a large library of Jihad, in accordance with the divine order of inciting the believers, thus complementing Jihad with the ongoing thorough study of its doctrines. This project does not harm the security of the operations. He criticizes the Mujahidin in Sinai/Egypt for preparing the military operations for a long time, since 2002-2003, without taking any step in the area of Da`wah and indoctrination.

Another fault noted by Al-Hilali following the operations in Sinai is the absence of any clear message from the attackers. A message, he believed, should have been published for two audiences: the civilian tourists and the Egyptian government. Al-Hilali believes that the Mujahidin should have sent a clear message to the tourists, saying that these operations were a result of their governments’ support for the campaign against the Muslims. The tourists should therefore return to their countries and borders, and stay there. “From now on there is a curfew on their movements in the Muslim world.”

The other message should have been directed to the Arab governments, that from now on “there is a permanent state of hostility between them and us, which is going to last as long as we are alive.” These faults in the field of propaganda and information turned the otherwise brilliant operations into “an harassment” by the Egyptian authorities, which declined the attacks’ significance.

---

<sup>5</sup> On the debate raised by Abu Basir see: “Islamic Legitimacy for the London Bombings,” PRISM Occasional Papers, no. 4/3 –

[http://www.e-prism.org/images/PRISM\\_no\\_4\\_vol\\_3\\_-\\_Islamic\\_legitimacy.pdf](http://www.e-prism.org/images/PRISM_no_4_vol_3_-_Islamic_legitimacy.pdf)



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL  
[www.e-prism.org](http://www.e-prism.org)

Another criticism by Al-Hilali is about operations devoid of military value, such as against the multi-national force (MFO) in Sinai in August 2005. The MFO is not a strategic target of the Mujahidin and the attack upon it should not have been conducted, if they indeed were responsible for it. Al-Hilali also warns the Mujahidin in Egypt and Sinai from attacking the Egyptian army or from engaging in any fight with it, except for self-defense. Quoting the biggest strategists, such as Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, he says, "This kind of fight should be defensive only. It would be as foolish as to try to break the stones of the pyramids in order to destroy them." He also quotes Abu Muhammad al-Maqdesi, who warned against a situation in which "a group that obtains weapons and explosives tends to choose the easy targets to attack without a serious study and consideration of the advantages and risks."

### **The Future Strategy for the Egyptian Mujahidin**

Al-Hilali, who as he says, lives outside of Egypt, follows the approach extolled by Al-Suri in offering the future strategy of the Jihad in Egypt, which includes:

- Targeting tourists by killing them or taking hostages.
- Targeting the movement of ships and attacking the main ports in both the Mediterranean and the Red Sea.
- Targeting the transfer of oil and gas to Israel.
- Targeting any foreign presence in Egypt, such as cultural centers, companies, and embassies.

All of these steps should be taken after a period in which the focus would be on recruitment, training, and indoctrination. The last of these elements is crucial. "The Da`wah can spread only through the barrels of the cannons. One will of a martyr is much more efficient and effective than dozens of religious lessons and sermons. This is the first goal of the Jihad. Jihad is not only a military activity. It should be accompanied by a proper Salafi Da`wah and incitement."

Since Egypt, like other Arab countries, is a police state, the proposed plan for Jihad there is to recruit small cells of Mujahidin, while providing them with psychological and practical training. The cells' structure should be based upon the writings of strategists like Al-Suri. He adds that there is plenty of room for clandestine training in Sinai, its mountains and caves, where the authorities could not locate them.

### **Conclusion**

The most significant element of the above document is the direct public reference to Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and his monumental book. In recent months there has been a



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL  
[www.e-prism.org](http://www.e-prism.org)

significant rise in references to the book in Jihadi forums on the Internet. It appears that it took a rather long time for supporters of Global Jihad to read such a big book. There has been recently a growing effort of posting material written or lectured by Al-Suri by the Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF) on the Internet.

The document is also the first attempt to interpret and implement Al-Suri's doctrines, which differ from those of the old Al-Qaeda, but also from the tactics of Zarqawi in Iraq, which have already been criticized by his mentor—Abu Muhammad al-Maqdesi—who is quoted here.

Apart from the significance of Egypt apparent from Al-Hilali's document, another major implication of this text is that it seems that we are on the eve of the "Al-Suri era" in the history of Global Jihad. There is a high likelihood that henceforth we will now be facing two separate and even competing parties of Global Jihad with—Zarqawi in the Iraqi arena and Al-Suri in other parts of the Arab world, serving as the major exponents. Osama bin Laden can retire now, or focus on his alliance with the Taliban in Afghanistan, which has been much more active and successful in the past year.

The two parties of the present Global Jihad—Zarqawi and Al-Suri—are not equal. Zarqawi is charismatic, and has the strict loyalty of his supporters. The Jordanian mastermind however, uses mass killings of Muslims as a strategy, a choice that over the long run may gradually sap his insurgency of much-needed support from Sunni Iraqis. Turning Fallujah, Tel-Afar, Ramadi, and other Iraqi towns into Salafi strongholds is not the dream of the Iraqi Sunnis. His massive attacks against Shi'i civilians cannot last forever without a similar response backed by Iran. He and his people might serve as symbols of fervent anti-Americanism, but not forever. Unlike Zarqawi, Al-Suri is a real scholar and strategist. His book, which was written over the course of three years during his retirement, is a masterpiece of strategic thought.

If this document reflects the start of an attempt to create a new base for Global Jihad in the Arab world outside of Iraq, it seems that Egypt—and primarily Sinai Peninsula—might become the potential new arena of holy warfare. The Israeli withdrawal from Gaza; the Egyptian inability or unwillingness in controlling the borders between Sinai and Gaza; the rise of Hamas' power vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and the present chaos there; and attempts by Hizballah to infiltrate into the area, might turn Sinai into a dangerous arena and a greenhouse for Jihadists.



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL  
[www.e-prism.org](http://www.e-prism.org)

The whereabouts of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri since the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan in December 2001 are unknown. He managed to run away from Afghanistan via Iran to somewhere in the Middle East for about three years. He floated again in November 2004, when the U.S. Department of State declared him an international terrorist. There were some rumors about his location, in the Yemen or the Horn of Africa, but they have not been confirmed.

Al-Suri is probably the most talented combination of a scholar and operative of Global Jihad. He was one of the chief trainers of Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan on explosives, but also gave many lectures about Jihadi strategy, religion, and indoctrination. Many of his lectures from Afghanistan are posted on his web site in the form of video and audiotapes, and much of the material there appears in his monumental book. He seems also to have the patient character of the first generation of Al-Qaeda leadership, and unlike the second and third generations in Iraq and Saudi Arabia, he acts according to a well-organized plan. In his 9-pages public letter to the State Department from November 2004, as well as in his book and lectures, he presented independent critical positions and even criticized Bin Laden. His call for a "Global Islamist Resistance" could be part of Global Jihad, but also a call for a new form of Al-Qaeda, loyal to the doctrines of Abdallah Azzam, but not necessarily to the Saudi form of Jihadi Tawhid. He seems to be more pragmatic in being assisted by "infidels" such as Iran and even North Korea for acquiring WMD. He has no anti-Shia sentiments, and refrains, as much as known, from being involved in the Islamist insurgency in Iraq. His pragmatism might be connected also to his known Sufi family origins. According to his writings, he prefers terrorism to guerrilla warfare, primarily by small cells of elite units, what might explain his absence from the Iraqi arena.

Al-Suri is dangerous for another reason—his European connections. He is a Spanish citizen as a result of marriage, and lived in the 1990s in Spain and London. He is well familiar with the European arena and Muslim communities there, primarily North Africans.

On a final note, intelligence and security service, as well as experts, would be wise to translate at least the last 400 pages of Al-Suri's monumental book on Jihad and review his lectures. There lies the future strategy of Global Jihad, whether in the form of Al-Qaeda, or in the form of "Global Islamist Resistance," as al-Suri prefers to name it.

\*\*\*\*\*