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punishment threats towards the ones who use "the terminology established by the non-believers and the polytheists, like: 'foul', 'penalty', 'kick', 'corner kick', 'goal' and 'out of bounds'". Furthermore, one should "not set the number [of players] according to the number of players used by the non-believers", and thus, only a larger or smaller number than eleven players can play together. This *fatwa* included more rules, such as to wear normal clothing while playing, instead of the colorful pants and numbered jerseys; not to play for 45 minutes in each half; not to play two halves, but rather in one half or three rounds; etc. The most important thing written in this *fatwa*, however, is that "once you have fulfilled [these] conditions and rules; you must play the entire game with the intention of improving your physical fitness for the purpose of fighting *jihad* for Allah's sake and preparing for the time when *jihad* is needed". Moreover, "when you finish playing, be careful not to talk about the game, and not to say 'we play better than the opponent', or 'so-and-so is a good player', etc. Moreover, you should speak about your body, its strength and its muscles, and about the fact that you are playing as [a means of] training to run, attack, and retreat in preparation for [waging] *jihad* for Allah's sake".²

It should be noted that the above-mentioned *fatwa* is similar to another much more detailed *fatwa* issued in 2002, by the Saudi radical Islamist scholar 'Abdullah al-Najdi, in which he forbade Muslim youths to play soccer.³

The *fatwa* of August 2005 was published during the preparations of the Saudi national soccer team to participate in the Mondial in June 2006 in Germany. It stimulated widespread rejection and criticism among senior Saudi religious scholars, who claimed that the Shari'ah permits playing soccer according to the international rules. They even demanded the prosecution of those who issued the *fatwa*. Sheikh 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn 'Abdullah Aal-Sheikh, the Mufti of Saudi Arabia, called on the appropriate authorities to "prosecute those involved in the publishing of these *fatwas* in a Shari'ah court". Moreover, he called on the Saudi religious police—*Hay'at al-Amr bil-Ma'rouf wal-Nahy 'an al-Munkar*—to "track down those involved and prosecute them, in view of the dangers and the venom with which they were trying to influence society". He further warned Muslims around the world "not to act according to any *fatwa* until they have checked its authenticity and source, and verified that it was being issued by people who were qualified to do so... so that nobody who is not an expert in these areas will come along and issue a *fatwa* that will lead him and others astray".⁴

² See on-line in: <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=ia&ID=IA24505>;
<http://www.elaph.com/ElaphWeb/NewsPapers/2005/8/85882.htm>;
<http://www.elaph.com/ElaphWeb/Sports/2005/8/87047.htm>

³ See on-line in:
http://64.233.183.104/search?q=cache:RzffjqrpZY4J:umanas.netfirms.com/Soccer.htm+%22%D9%83%D8%B1%D8%A9+%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%AF%D9%85%22+%22%D9%81%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%89%22&hl=iw&q=il&ct=clnk&cd=9&lr=lang_enllang_iwllang_ar

⁴ See on-line in: <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=ia&ID=IA24505>;
http://www.alwatan.com.sa/daily/2005-08-26/first_page/first_page01.htm



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Sheikh 'Abd al-Muhsin al-'Ubaykan, an advisor to the Saudi Minister of Justice, said that soccer is permitted as long as various Shari'ah prohibitions are not violated. Thus, according to him, all things that come from the West but are not unique to it, such as the use of the terms 'foul', 'out', the lines surrounding the field, the referee, etc., are permitted. He also warned the youth too not to heed *fatwas* of this kind and recommended that they approach senior religious authorities and ask them to issue *fatwas* on important issues like these.⁵

The echoes of this *fatwa* crossed the red sea and reached Egypt, where soccer is most popular and where it earned a lot of criticism from Egyptian religious scholars. One of them, 'Abd al-Sabour Marzouq, secretary-general of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, said that soccer is an inappropriate topic for a *fatwa*, since it is an athletic activity about which no revelation has been given by God, and the Qur'an has not referred to it. He further attacked the anonymous Saudi religious scholars who issued the *fatwa*, and said that "only those with sick minds and weak souls focus on the players' legs".⁶

That was only the prologue for what would become a hot debate during the Soccer World Cup games (Mondial) held in June 2006 in Germany among radical Muslim scholars. This debate broke out as a result of the soccer's popularity among the Muslims. This time, under debate was the issue of watching the soccer games through the television.

Radical Islamists and the Opium of Soccer: The Debate over Watching the Mondial Games

The Soccer World Cup games, in which three Muslim soccer national teams took part -- Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Tunisia, started on June 9, 2006 and continued until July 9, 2006. Despite the participation of Muslim teams, the soccer games aroused a great controversy among radical Muslims, who found themselves, maybe in the first time ever, debating on questions, such as, is it allowed to watch the soccer games?

Overall, radical Islamist scholars denounced these games as a corrupt show of Western influence. Even before the World Cup games began, one Islamist warned his fellow Muslims

⁵ See on-line in:

<http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=ia&ID=IA24505>;
http://www.soccereconomy.com/world_sep_02.htm;
<http://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news.php?go=show&id=27225>

⁶ See on-line in:

<http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2005-10/2005-10-17-voa31.cfm?CFID=21479830&CFTOKEN=71169137>; <http://missmabrouk.blogspot.com/2005/10/soccer-fatwa.html>



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against what he called "this plot aiming to corrupt Muslim youth and distract them from *jihad*". Another called it "a cultural invasion worse than military war because it seizes the heart and soul of the Muslim". A Kuwaiti radical Jihadi-Salafi Sheikh, Hamed al-'Ali, one of the leading younger Jihadi clerics, wrote in the *fatwa* page of his website that "it is illicit to watch these matches on corrupt television channels while our nation is decimated night and day by foreign armies". This *fatwa* was circulated later in most of the Jihadi forums on the Internet.⁷

Some Islamists even called for a boycott of what they called the "Prostitution Cup", following references that several thousand prostitutes were arriving in Germany for the event. One Islamist who signed his name as Abu Haytham wrote that "while our brothers in Iraq, Palestine, and Afghanistan are being massacred in cold blood by the Crusaders and the Jews, our young people will have their eyes riveted on depraved television sets which emit the opium of soccer to the extent of overdose". The same author named "12 vices" linked to the world Cup, particularly "idolatry of infidel players" and the "distraction of Muslims from *jihad*".⁸

Abu Basir al-Tartusi, a leading radical Islamist scholar, issued on June 25, 2006 a *fatwa*, in which he stated that there is "no objection to soccer, playing sports as a means of entertainment". However it is forbidden, according to him, to watch the soccer matches, since it distracts the Muslims from the abuses of the Arabs in Iraq, the Palestinian territories, and in other places in the Arab and Muslim world. He gave an example that "in the day of the opening of "the Cup" in Germany, billions of people came to the small screen... In this day and time the Zionist Jews bombed civilians..."⁹

Moreover, radical Islamists posted a video of their own "World Cup" on the Internet. The presentation showed scenes of the September 11, 2001 attacks against the United States as well as footage of killing and torture in the Palestinian Authority; the U.S. detention center at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba, and the notorious Abu Ghurayb prison in Iraq. The introduction to the footage read "at a time when pro-Zionist Arab media are busy broadcasting the World Cup to divert Muslims away from their religion and from *jihad*...we offer you the three other cups which those media are trying to hide from our nation".¹⁰

⁷ See on-line in:

http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=275351&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news_sport/
<http://www.tajdeed.org.uk/forums/showthread.php?s=28a75f0fc6667bc7962b22201e0cdf7f&threadid=42717>

⁸ See on-line in:

http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=275351&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news_sport/

⁹ See on-line in: <http://wincoast.com/forum/archive/index.php/t-34956.html>

¹⁰ See on-line in:

http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=275351&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news_sport/
<http://www.tajdeed.org.uk/forums/showthread.php?s=28a75f0fc6667bc7962b22201e0cdf7f&threadid=42893>



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This anti-soccer campaign reached even India, where hard-line Muslims in the south tried to dissuade youths from watching too much World Cup matches, saying they had "gone mad" over soccer. Sattar Pathallur, secretary of the Sunni Students Federation in Malappuram district of Kerala State said that "wherever you go, you see [youths] wearing jerseys of various teams. It is like idol worship which our religion does not promote in any form". He further said that he "firmly believed that there was a conspiracy to divert the attention of Muslim youth to an unproductive exercise". This organization has been holding religious lessons, rallies and public meetings to dissuade youths from following the sports too keenly.¹¹ In Somalia, the Council of Islamic Courts, who controlled then Mogadishu and part of southern Somalia, banned people from watching the World Cup games.¹²

But, to no avail. This flood of warnings posted in the internet and even the bans enforced over watching the games, failed to divert all eyes from the matches, judging by the high volume of comments posted by Islamists in online Jihadi forums. One man, who signed his name Sa'ad al-Wissi, wrote "I am an extremist, but I find no problem in watching the matches. Your calls to boycott the World Cup are doomed to fail".¹³

Thus, even some radical Islamists have been able to find ways to exult in triumph over the "crusaders", "*rafidha*" (a Salafi term for Shi'ites) and "apostates". An Islamist, who signed his name as Abu Hamza, wrote a day after Iran lost to Mexico 1-3, "Praise Allah! Omar, the Sunni, has crushed the *rafidha*". He was alluding to the fact that two of Mexico's goals were scored by Omar Bravo who, despite his first name, is not of Arab origin. And John Pentsil, a Ghanaian defender who played for the Israeli team Hapoel Tel Aviv, was roundly insulted for having waved an Israeli flag as he celebrated his team's 2-0 win over the Czech Republic.¹⁴

But it was the Saudi team, which was harshly criticized since it gets huge sums of money, "instead of giving the money to those who don't have work and to the needy," following their 0-4 loss to Ukraine. Khaled al-Hani wrote "Billions of dollars spent on the 'Green Falcons' have amounted to nothing. These colossal sums should have been devoted to the many Saudis who slave away day and night for a few riyals in the world's largest oil-producing country". An Islamist named Bassel wrote that "our national team is a public disgrace". This kind of criticism was written in the Jihadi forums too.¹⁵

¹¹ See on-line in: <http://www.wwrn.org/article.php?idd=21958&con=18&sec=33>

¹² See on-line in: <http://www.tajdeed.org.uk/forums/showthread.php?s=28a75f0fc6667bc7962b22201e0cdf7f&threadid=42383>

¹³ See on-line in: http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=275351&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news_sport/

¹⁴ See on-line in: http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=275351&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news_sport/
<http://www.tajdeed.org.uk/forums/showthread.php?s=28a75f0fc6667bc7962b22201e0cdf7f&threadid=42730>

¹⁵ See on-line in: http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=275351&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news_sport/



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Indeed, there were other more moderate Islamic scholars, who allowed Muslims to watch the games. Sheikh Faisal Mawlawi, the Lebanese deputy chairman of the European Council for Fatwa and Research and a leading scholar of the Muslim Brotherhood, stated in his answer to a question concerning watching soccer games, that "according to the agreed-upon legal rule, there is nothing unlawful except what Allah has declared unlawful in the Qur'an or by his prophet. Other similar cases can be judged according to these texts. Thus, there is no text that prohibits watching sport matches, and we find no aspect to compare it to the matters that the Almighty prohibited. As for those who say that it is considered to be a waste of time, we tell them that Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, ordered us to entertain ourselves through lawful means. He, peace and blessings be upon him, said "Entertain your hearts, for hearts become blind when they are tired". Watching matches would be unlawful if they include something unlawful such as watching some players wearing immodest clothes. Also watching matches would be unlawful if one spends an inordinate amount of time doing so or neglects an obligatory religious act".¹⁶

Another Islamic scholar, Dr. Jamal al-Din 'Atiyyah, a member of the Islamic Fiqh Academy affiliated to the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), stated that "There is no harm in watching soccer matches or other sporting matches, on condition that we do not waste most of our time. Watching such matches will not benefit us; the benefit will be for the one who practices sports".¹⁷

Moreover, some moderate Muslim scholars issued *fatwas* allowing the *imams* to delay the prayers, even the Friday noon prayers, for some time, "but within the due time specified for the prayer in a way that does not make people perform it after its due time". Thus, Muslims would not miss the soccer matches, if they fell in prayer hours. Dr. 'Abd al-Sattar Fathallah Sa'id, Professor of the Exegesis of the Qur'an in al-Azhar University, stated that "basically, it is an obvious sin to delay Friday prayer or congregational prayer from its due time. However, for the sake of making it easy for people and for the sake of preserving the unity among Muslims, it is allowed for the *imam* of a mosque to delay performing Friday prayer for about one or two hours in a way that does not imply neglecting the prayer completely or performing it after its due time".¹⁸

<http://www.tajdeed.org.uk/forums/showthread.php?s=28a75f0fc6667bc7962b22201e0cdf7f&threadid=42684>;
<http://www.tajdeed.org.uk/forums/showthread.php?s=28a75f0fc6667bc7962b22201e0cdf7f&threadid=42677>

¹⁶ See on-line in: http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/FatwaE/FatwaE&cid=1148980352168

¹⁷ See on-line in: http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/FatwaE/FatwaE&cid=1148980352168

¹⁸ See on-line in: http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/FatwaE/FatwaE&cid=1119503545316



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Besides the issue of watching the Mondial games, one should remember that Muslim players led several European teams in Germany 2006 FIFA World Cup, among them was French playmaker legend and three-time FIFA World player of the year, Zinedine Zidane. His successor, Franck Ribery, has also made headlines during his country's opener against Switzerland. Ribery raised his hands and supplicated to Allah like a typical Muslim before the kickoff. There is information also on the conversion of the Senegalese attacker of Arsenal, and another player of France's national soccer team, Henry Tiery. Jihadi forums in the Internet report that he was seen praying in a mosque in London. Among the other prominent Muslim names in the Mondial were Dutch Boulahrouz Khalid and Van Persie Robin as well as Swede Ibrahimovic Zlatan.¹⁹

Zidane and Ribery played a key role in France's team games in the World Cup. Lhaj Thami Breze, chairman of the Union of French Islamic Organizations (UOIF) said "we are proud of our French soccer team and playmaker Zinedine Zidane"²⁰

The Islamic Religious Dimension of Soccer in Africa

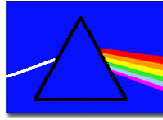
Another issue on hand is the Islamic religious dimension of soccer in Africa and soccer's important role in the conflict between Muslim women, who wish to improve their status in society, vis-à-vis radical Muslim scholars and the traditional society. This conflict has been taking place on the background of the efforts of contemporary Muslim social, religious, and political movements in Africa to develop new forms of social organizations, in particular with respect to seemingly banal features of everyday life such as sports. Thus, every major *madrassa* in Zanzibar is home today to a soccer team of its own and the soccer team of Zanzibar's biggest reformist *madrassa*, *Madrassat al-Nur*, already won Zanzibar's first league national championship in the 1990s. Soccer is also a major feature of the social organization of the Sufi reformist movement on the Kenyan coast, in particular Lamu, where the local Sufi sects have set teams of their own. The same is true for Northern Nigeria, where the Yan Izala have encouraged the formation of soccer teams and managed to gain a foothold in Kano, which until recently was controlled by the scholars of the Qadiriyyah as well as the Tijaniyyah Sufi sects, to the extent that many young people tend to take part in the activities of the soccer clubs rather than to attend the *dhikr*-groups of the Sufi sheikhs.²¹

¹⁹ See on-line in:

<http://www.islamonline.net/English/News/2006-06/24/04.shtml>;
<http://www.tajdeed.org.uk/forums/showthread.php?s=28a75f0fc6667bc7962b22201e0cdf7f&threadid=42685>

²⁰ See on-line in: <http://www.turntoislam.com/forum/showthread.php?t=220>

²¹ See on-line in: <http://www.unibas-ethno.ch/veranstaltungen/dokumente/Papers/Loimeier.pdf#search=%22%22Cheikh%20Tour%C3%A9%22%20%22islamic%20reform%22%20%22>



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The popularity of sports in Africa in general, and soccer in particular, goes back to the colonial period, when it was a major way of organizing activities in the colonial public sphere. In Zanzibar, for instance, both the local elite and British colonial administrators were enthusiasts for a number of outdoor activities such as soccer, cricket and scouting. Soccer was originally considered to be an appropriate sport for the African population. It became so popular that it was proclaimed to be Zanzibar's national sport. Moreover, soccer had rapidly become a favorite sport of the "Arab" population and, thus, all prominent families were represented in the diverse soccer clubs.²²

Soccer was never regarded in Zanzibar as a feature of "bad" popular culture by the Muslim religious scholars. However, soccer has come to acquire such a religious dimension recently, when women started to play soccer in trousers and *hijab* in Zanzibar in 1997.²³

The Zanzibari women soccer team is called the Women Fighters. Its name alone hints that the team is not only a merely soccer team, but is composed of women who are determined to challenge convention and religion. In a society where the traditional Muslim *hijab* covers women from head to foot, their soccer outfits have provoked outrage. Ansar al-Sunnah, one of the radical Islamic groups in Zanzibar, started to exploit soccer for religious and political purposes and attacked women's soccer as a reprehensible innovation.²⁴

In addition, some women players have been rebuked by their families and suffer violence. They report brothers beating them in front of their team-mates. The authorities have also been less than helpful and the women are forced to practice in rough conditions. The women are forced to train on a patch of spare ground because the men who control the practice fields exclude them, saying the pitches are always booked.²⁵

²² See on-line in:

<http://www.unibas-ethno.ch/veranstaltungen/dokumente/Papers/Loimeier.pdf#search=%22%22Cheikh%20Tour%C3%A9%22%20%22islamic%20reform%22%20%22>

²³ See on-line in:

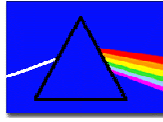
<http://www.unibas-ethno.ch/veranstaltungen/dokumente/Papers/Loimeier.pdf#search=%22%22Cheikh%20Tour%C3%A9%22%20%22islamic%20reform%22%20%22>; <http://www.ausport.gov.au/fulltext/1999/nsw/p18-25.pdf>

²⁴ See on-line in:

<http://www.unibas-ethno.ch/veranstaltungen/dokumente/Papers/Loimeier.pdf#search=%22%22Cheikh%20Tour%C3%A9%22%20%22islamic%20reform%22%20%22>;

<http://www.ausport.gov.au/fulltext/1999/nsw/p18-25.pdf>; <http://www.dep.org.uk/globalexpress/9/page2.htm>

²⁵ See on-line in: <http://www.newint.org/issue297/update.htm>



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Despite all the challenges, the Women Fighters have about 16 players ranging from 17 to 35 years old. The team even won games against male teams. Now the team has the backing of Zanzibar Soccer Association and Zanzibar's Ministry of Sport.²⁶

This women's soccer team is unusual in the Muslim world, since the only other Muslim women's soccer teams can be found in Sudan, from all places. The Sudanese foremost women team is called the "Challenge", which is among six teams of young women who have battled to break traditional values in Sudan and hope to form a national competitive team.²⁷

The Sudanese women soccer teams owe much of their existence to the religious freedom, which was a key issue in the long years of north-south civil war in Sudan. Since the peace deal that was signed between the sides in 2005, Shari'ah has been more loosely applied in the north. Thus, women in Khartoum were forced in the past to cover their heads and wear long skirts. But the women players in the Challenge team refuse to wear those clothes, since it is difficult for them to play while wearing head covering.²⁸

After years of fighting with the authorities, who blocked their work to form a competitive women's league in Sudan, the six women teams played at last in the first public women league beginning at February 17, 2006 in a friendly soccer match played at Sport's City, Sudan University Department of Sport and Science, between teams from Tahadi and Sudan University. It should be mentioned that the women fund their own activities without any support from the Sudanese Soccer Association.²⁹

The situation of women's soccer is quite different in Nigeria. In the Muslim state of Zamfara in Northern Nigeria, women's soccer has been banned in January 2000, following the implementation of Shari'ah law there. The state director of sport, Shehu Gusau, was quoted as saying that women playing soccer was "unislamic", and added that "the sport is against the teachings of Islam".³⁰

At the end of the day, however, Muslim women seem to break loose of their chains, by which they were handcuffed to the traditional Muslim society. The soccer game gives them hope for a better life and future in this society. It serves them as a tool by which to challenge the radical

²⁶ See on-line in: <http://www.newint.org/issue297/update.htm>

²⁷ See on-line in: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article14234>

²⁸ See on-line in: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article14234>

²⁹ See on-line in: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article14142>

³⁰ See on-line in:

<http://www.dinocrat.com/archives/2005/08/29/islam-and-soccer;>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/594912.stm>



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Islamists as well as their traditional society. The fact that the women's soccer team in Zanzibar succeeded to beat the men teams contributes, without any doubt, to the women's self respect and to their determination to improve their status.

Conclusion

Soccer is very popular in the Arab and Muslim world, as in the rest of the world, since people turn to it to keep their mind off the difficulties of day to day life, and an outlet for many emotions. Thus, many times and for many people a victory in the soccer field is a means to restore the "lost honor" of the country or its people, of a tribe or any kind of grouping.

Radical Islamist scholars do their best, however, to dissuade youths or people at large from playing, not to say even watching soccer. They see it as a part of the Western invasion of the Arab and Muslim world. Some of them view the surroundings of the "soccer industry" as a revival of the *Jahiliyyah*—the pre-Islamic period. Its aim, according to them, is to distract Muslims from their religious duties, such as to pray, or from the politics of the Islamic world and abuses of the Israelis and the West in the Palestinian territories or in Iraq, or elsewhere. Some of the Jihadi scholars view the "local patriotism" of Muslims to their soccer teams and their symbols—flags, colors, vulgar songs, admiration towards players, corruption in many cases, gambling, etc.—as apostasy. Soccer is also a serious cause of violence, all over the world (in 1970 there was a war between Honduras and Al-Salvador following a soccer game between the two national teams), and creates in the Muslim world a kind of *Fitnah*—prohibited conflict—within society.

However, it seems that so far, the Jihadi-Salafi clerics succeeded to win only a few people to support their cause. Overall, these radical Islamist scholars fail in their convincing campaigns, especially since more moderated Muslim scholars issued *fatwas*, in which they allowed Muslims to watch the games. Moreover, Islamic countries and governments such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, invest fortune in promoting their national teams, and manage to recruit their Islamic institutions to support it. This failure can be felt even among the radical Muslims themselves, who seem to have followed the course of the soccer matches in the World Cup, especially those in which Iran and Saudi Arabia played. It was also a good opportunity for them to attack those countries, which they hate most, through harsh criticism over their achievements in the soccer field.

Moreover, there are some Muslims, like Zinedine Zidane, who play in European teams. These Muslim players seem to be an object of identity with the country in which they play and a source of pride for the Muslim immigrants who reside there. This is the case in France, where Zidane enflames in the French Muslim population strong feelings of French identity and integration, in addition to their Muslim identity.

Unexpectedly, soccer is serving now also as a tool in the struggle of Muslim women in Africa to improve their status. It is not a wonder, then, that the only Muslim women soccer teams can be



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found in Sudan and Zanzibar, where radical Islam is ruling. One can see, however, that there is a very important difference between the teams in Sudan and the women team in Zanzibar. In Sudan, women play without a *hijab*, while in Zanzibar women must play with it. This difference shows us that radical Islam has been weakened in Sudan, while in Zanzibar it succeeds to retain its force.

Soccer is not just a sport but a social and sociological phenomenon too. It is the most popular sport in the world, which gains a growing status even in countries with other popular sports, such as the United States, where it occupies growing importance among females too. It should not surprise us that radical Islamists tend to use soccer as another tool in their struggle against the Western culture, as well as against the more moderate Muslims. However, the popularity of the soccer game among the Arab and Muslim peoples, as well as among the radical Muslims themselves, keeps it alive and beats all the Islamist attempts to dissuade Muslims from watching or playing it. The female dimension is becoming a pure social issue as part of their struggle for equality in these societies. Female athletes from Muslim countries such as Morocco and some African countries are leading the current, especially that they are taking a leading role in world athletics.

Soccer is just one element, which the Jihadi-Salafi scholars exploit in their social-cultural-political fight within the Muslim world. Their challenge is greater and more interesting as a result of the popularity of soccer. This is a significant test case for their ambitions.