



Exclusive: An Interview with Al-Rashideen Army

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[In May 2008, the prominent Iraqi insurgent organization known as the "Al-Rashideen Army" agreed to an exclusive English-language interview with NEFA Senior Investigator Evan Kohlmann. For more information on the Al-Rashideen Army, the Islamic Army of Iraq (IAI), the Reform and Jihad Front (RJF), and other Sunni insurgent groups cited in this interview, see "State of the Sunni Insurgency in Iraq: August 2007" (<http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/iraqreport0807.pdf>.)]

Q.) What is the Al-Rashideen Army? It is a political movement, a military movement, or both? Who was responsible for founding the Al-Rashideen Army? When was it founded?

A.) "The Al-Rashideen Army is a military group resisting the occupation forces. It was founded a few days after occupation of Baghdad. Its initial start was just small groups consisting of brave Iraqis of all sects and disciplines, including previous Iraqi Army [soldiers]. All these people pledged to fight the occupation forces. They all raised the flag of jihad for the sake of Almighty God to liberate their country."

Q.) How many fighters does the Al-Rashideen Army consist of? What impact generally have fighters from the Al-Rashideen Army had on the insurgency? Why should those who are unfamiliar with the Al-Rashideen Army recognize its critical importance within the Iraqi insurgency?

A.) "In general, armies are not evaluated by how much they count; they are rather evaluated by their effect on enemy. It is very well known that the fast infantry German forces which is very well known all over the world counts only 120 troops. The most important inspiring drive is the faith of the army as well as the absolute believes in the rightness of their case and the legitimacy of their objectives.

Believing in God and depending on him because victory is from Allah and Allah alone. However, there are means and methods to increase the ability of the fighters like the training, best use of ammunition, increasing job numbers for every fighter and ability to have the initiative and fitness. Al-Rashideen Army function all over Iraqi land. Every square foot of Iraqi land is the real place for Al-Rashideen Army. And for sure there must be presence for them everywhere and any where all over Iraq. That is for high flexibility they enjoy as well as immediate response they trained for. Each and every individual of Al-Rashideen Army stick firmly to combat rule and do respect all principles of jihad. Of these principles and rules are of being cautious not to hurt any innocent person and for that matter absolutely forbidden any type of punishment on the basis of allegation and accusation. Furthermore, Al-Rashideen Army strongly believes and supports the unity of all resistance groups and always to adapt quiet negotiation to solve any issue may develop among fighters. Commanders and directors are always with their troops in the battlefield, without losing order. The noble terms and conditions organizing this group of fighters make it the most respectful group."

Q.) What are the political principles of the Al-Rashideen Army? What is the role of the fighters from the Al-Rashideen Army after the end of the occupation?



A.) "Al-Rashideen Army has a political program coincided completely with political framework of Jihad and Change Front and the political views of all other resistance groups. The program is focusing on the liberation of Iraq and contributes to build free independent country in which the law will be preserved and none has the power or Authority to challenge the law. All Iraqis are equal and there must be no one privileged over the other because of race, religion or sect. The treaty which was signed fourteen hundred years ago between our prophet peace upon him from one side and Jewish and other groups from the other side in Al-Medina is the treaty that will inspiring us to build the state of freedom and justice."

Q.) Some have referred to you as part of the Muslim Brotherhood movement, while others allege that you are followers of the Salafi-Jihad movement, what is your response?

A.) "These claims and allegation are totally baseless and they are old ones. We depend on holy Quran and prophet tradition and all applications, practices and methods of governing and rolling adapted by the companion and followers of the prophet. Salafy is the connecting ring in the chain which cannot be overlooked or ignored. Salafy in fact were successful to establish and put the term and conditions as well as the best understanding of Sharia (Muslim Canon) in real world. That is not to say that we do not make use of experiences of others to support our conductance."

Q.) What religious leaders does the Al-Rashideen Army follow? What is your opinion on Dr. Yusef al-Qaradawi, or the Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq?

A.) "Our case in Iraq is clear cut; we fight to defend our country in a holy war imposed upon us. Fighting against invaders is a must to each individual adult (men or women, single or married). Under this condition our case does not need religious leader to explain its compliances with Sharia. However, we have a committee with each group of fighters to watch acts of each and every one of them. That is for insuring better implementation of Islamic Law. This committee is also administered the religion education and to secure that every fighter always fully aware of his religious practices. Concerning our stand toward Dr. Al-Qardawy we do respect him as well as other religious leaders and clergymen. We for sure always maintain equal respect and trust to all."

Q.) Were the fighters from the Al-Rashideen Army part of the Saddam Hussein regime or the Baath party? According to Shariah law, was Saddam a criminal or a hero?

A.) "No we do not have any relationship with Saddam government and for that matter we do not have any relation with Al-Baath Party. Concerning Saddam himself now he is dead and at the hands of Allah, the most merciful, and it would not change this fact the way we look to him."

Q.) Where were the mujahideen of the Al-Rashideen Army during the U.S. invasion of Iraq? Were they part of the fighters then? Or did they join the fight later?

A.) "We consider that the war had never come to an end as invaders claimed. It is rather continued over all these past 5 years? The invaders have not withdrawn yet; we are part of the Iraqi people resisting the occupation and we are dealing with the language he understands."

Q.) During the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the U.S. government claimed that Al-Qaida had worked in partnership with Saddam Hussein. What is your view of these allegations and do you have any evidence to prove them?

A.) "Did the American Intelligence Agency (CIA) or other security offices confirm these allegations? The answer is NO according to Director of CIA Declaration. The fact you know before all others."

Q.) In your opinion, what are the most important events and battles in the history of the Iraqi insurgency? What was the importance of the battle for Fallujah in 2004? What were the major turning points for the Iraqi insurgency?

A.) "We, [as] an army, have our own analysis for that period. We think that Iraqi resistance passed through several stages. It started the first stage in formulation and capacity building. Then [came the] stage of fortification and putting the fighters against the invaders. Followed by the stage of liberation fighting. We are now very close to the fourth and last stage. We prepare its need and conditions. Concerning the main battle, we think that all our battles and military

combat are import irrespective to its impact on the enemy. Simply because they represent the highest degree of planning and performing. They are the same because we are facing the strongest Army on Earth. An army equipped with all sophisticated intelligence, most powerful ammunition, and super technology. Therefore stand before such troops and cause them considerable losses means we are real brave and successful to handle excellent battle with excellent planning and organization.”

Q.) Everyone knows who [Al-Qaida in Iraq commanders] Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamza al-Muhajir are, but would you like to share with Americans the names of some mujahideen leaders who are not from the Al-Qaida organization? Is it possible for you to mention something about the most prominent mujahideen from the Al-Rashideen Army, or from your allies, over the history of the insurgency?

A.) “Through the entire history, have you ever seen that mujahdeen commanders are after a fame or name? Leaders of resistance in general are in a dynamic change and continuous formulation. No one single resistance group had a fixed leader. Leaders always change. Leader of various ranking are under continues change. All those who have been killed we said without any hesitation are real heroic mujahideen in the sake of Allah.”

Q.) In the past, the Al-Rashideen Army has claimed joint military operations with the Islamic Army of Iraq (IAI) and the Reform and Jihad Front (RJF). Do you still have a relationship with the IAI or RJF?

A.) “We are the main component of the RJF and we are with all groups. We think existing of numerous groups is a healthy situation, as long as, we all have the same objective. One objective is enough to gather us all. Therefore we in the battle support effort of each other to inflict the highest losses against the enemy.”

Q.) Many Americans do not wish to stay in Iraq, but at the same time, are worried about the consequences of an outbreak of civil war between Sunnis and Shiites, and the return of the influence of Al-Qaida if there were to be an abrupt withdrawal of our troops. What is your opinion on this, and on the future of the sectarian militias and Al-Qaida in Iraq? What would you say to those Americans?

A.) “Were Iraqis before the American invasion fighting each other for sectarian differences or, for that matter, was Iraq a yard of fighting amongst its component? This is absolutely American cheap speculations [which] keep telling it to legitimize their staying in Iraq; also they want to fool the American people to vote for longer stay of their troops in Iraq. I want to ask simple question to prove my point here—for a period of six months after occupation, there was not even on police man in the street, cities, or neighborhoods to observe the order and law. However, there was not even one single incident of sectarian conflict had been reported? Is not that clear evidence of the great coherence of the Iraqis and [that] the sectarian conflict has just arisen under the occupation? I believe if that had happened in any other country, it [would have] resulted in a real chaos. Therefore, Americans need not to be worry of what will happen to Iraqis after their withdrawal from Iraq. Law will prevail and master the life after the invasion. For sure, those came with the invaders will not be able to stay in Iraq. They have to leave with their masters.”

Q.) What is your position regarding the Awakening Councils? Does the Al-Rashideen Army participate in any way with these Councils?

A.) “The Awakening Councils are American made, designed and produc[ed] in RAND institutions and others. They are simple groups of local paid people fulfilling the orders of America.

Q.) During his most recent speech, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi introduced a truce agreement offered to other insurgent groups which were harmed by the Al-Qaida organization. What is the result of this offer? Did the Al-Rashideen Army receive such an invitation?

A.) “We have never heard of it, and we do not credit any audio recordings, our intelligence rather does not recognize audio recordings, [in order] to take action or make decisions.”

Q.) Also, recently, during a question and answer session, Al-Qaida's Deputy Commander indicated that the establishment of Al-Qaida's Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) was a step towards the re-establishment of a greater Islamic empire—and therefore—Al-Qaida superceded all other jihad movements in Iraq, and accordingly, it is the duty of other mujahideen groups to acknowledge their superiority (and not the reverse). Regarding suicide bombing attacks on markets and mosques, Zawahiri said this was merely American and Saudi media propaganda. Was al-Zawahiri correct or incorrect?

A.) "There is a problem in Tibet for China—is it possible for me to prescribe the solutions for their problem? We are a people in this region for 6000 year before Christ, end[ing] with Islam, and we are fully capable of rolling and managing our own affairs. We do not need others to tell us what to do."

Q.) Which voices from the Iraqi insurgency should Americans pay attention to?

A.) "I do not believe that Americans are willing to listen to Iraqi resistance groups. If they are serious about it, then they need to know that Iraqi resistance is one and asks them to leave our country."

Q.) Have you been paying attention to the U.S. elections? What do you think of them?

A.) "We know that the U.S. is a greatly institutionalized country with firm management and high level of bureaucracy, accordingly a U.S. president doesn't have much freedom for personal decision. Policy and decision-making is hard to do. Strong lobbies who financed the election campaigning will have the advantage in directing the policy for their benefit. Under this situation, do you think it is worthy to pay any attention to that who wins the White House? It is well known that policy in the U.S. is like a moving train, never to let go out of the railway. Presidents have no power to change direction, he is rather just the driver of the train."