



“The Secrets of History: Zarqawi As I Knew Him”

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“The Secrets of History: Zarqawi As I Knew Him” A Treatise Written by Shaykh Maysarat al-Gharib Shariah Committee Member of Al-Qaida’s Network in Iraq



[This document is the edited translation of Arabic-language documents obtained by NEFA investigators and translated into English on behalf of the NEFA TerrorWatch news service. This translation is provided for educational and informational purposes only. For more information on Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, and the “Islamic State of Iraq”, see “State of the Sunni Insurgency in Iraq: August 2007” (<http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/iraqreport0807.pdf>).]

“...After three years filled with memories during which I wrote nothing, I decided to pick up where I had left off. Three years ago around the month of Shaaban, I began writing down my first thoughts about ‘The Secrets of History’, which was conceived as a combination of dialogue, advice, and poetry regarding Shaykh Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. I was doubtful that I would be able to gather all the things which had been previously written during the time of the second battle for Fallujah, but I was fortunate in having secreted away a copy somewhere safe. Then, when I heard the news about the death of Abu Musab, I ran to make a copy of the material I have previously saved. Recently, I was again fortunate in revisiting these pages in order to review all the finished and unfinished pieces. I spotted an article I had written that was titled ‘Shaykh al-Zarqawi, As I Knew Him’. Therein, I wrote, ‘I hope that these lines are to be the final ones in the series ‘The Secrets of History’; however, Abu Musab forbade me to publish it [at that point]. I knew him as a man who hated being praised...”

“I wish to make this episode a collection of personal incidents and the lessons behind them that occurred during my encounters with Shaykh Abu Musab. These are personal incidents and not specifically related to jihad (although, these days, it is often difficult to distinguish). I decided to write them down without knowing when and where they might be published... Time has passed and I have witnessed the passing of Shaykh Abu Musab, and I was left behind with tears in my eyes... I found it amazing that shortly after I received the news about Abu Musab’s death, I saw him in my dreams... I could sense that he agreed with my plan. Here, with all these pages spread out in front of me, it is very difficult to recapture and remember every discussion and conversation I had with Shaykh Abu Musab... I was deliberating over the best way to tell my story, and eventually I decided to record it freestyle, writing down every memory that comes to my mind... I finally hope to have our dear Shaykh Abu Hamza al-Muhajir add his own unique stories to this because they were good friends.”

“The first time I met Shaykh Abu Musab was during a meeting with a group of brothers. When Abu Musab arrived, we all were waiting for him. He entered the room along with brother Ibn al-Jarrah, while wearing his famous black gown and a pleasant smile on his face... Each one of the brothers in attendance asked him a question. Most of the younger ones asked him about the future of Iraq. When my turn came to pose a question, I decided to ask him about the three most important individuals who had influenced his life. My question indeed caused him to think, and he responded by citing three names, the last of which was Abu Anas [al-Shami]. Abu Anas happened to be present in the room and he became quite emotional after hearing Abu Musab’s answer. Abu Anas and Abu Musab were very close and, often, Abu Anas would refer to Abu

Musab as 'Abu Ahmed'. Afterwards, Abu Musab related to me the story of how he first met Abu Anas, and I will share it with you in the future."

"One day, I met dear brother Shaykh Abu Anas al-Shami and we had good chemistry between us. He then asked me to teach some of the brothers who went on to become teachers and clerics in Iraq, and he also arranged a meeting between Abu Musab and myself—the second time we had met. I was informed before the meeting about an incident that had taken place between one brother and one of the local commanders. After meeting with Shaykh Abu Musab, we discussed the nature of Islamic work, ways to improve it, and other issues as well—and when I informed him about the incident, tears emerged in his eyes and he expressed a wish that he would have been told about it earlier, because he would have taken care of it. That was just like Abu Musab, a person who always pursued justice..."

"Afterwards, we got into a car with Abu Musab sitting in the back. He always sat in the back to stay out of sight, and carried his weapon at all times. He then asked me about my nickname [which was different back then]. I asked him what name he preferred and he said 'Maysarah', which happened to be the same name I liked. Then I asked him, 'Maysarah or Abu Maysarah' and he responded, 'Maysarat al-Gharib'. Shaykh Abu Musab loved the word 'Gharib'. He also told me that he did not like his own nickname 'Abu Musab al-Zarqawi' but that he had become famous under that name. He added that, back in Afghanistan, he had referred to himself as 'Abu Mohammed al-Gharib'. Even now, to this very day, my name 'Maysarat al-Gharib' is often confused with that of my dear brother Abu Maysarah al-Iraqi."

"Before my arrival in Iraq, there was an incident that happened that Shaykh Abu Musab and others related to me later. It was the story about a foreign reporter seeking to conduct an interview between the two Fallujah battles [i.e. mid-2004] and we were fortunate to have Abu Anas present. Abu Anas spoke English well and, during the interview, he made an accidental slip of the tongue and mentioned the presence of foreign Arab fighters in Iraq. Afterwards, the commander of Fallujah saw Abu Anas sitting outside on the street with his head in his hands, embarrassed and ashamed... When Abu Musab found out what had happened, he sent Abu Anas to one of the houses and ordered him to stay there, making sure his daily needs were met by two brothers assigned to stay with him. Eventually, when the stay of Abu Anas grew longer than he had expected... he wrote an appeal to Shaykh Abu Musab, reassuring him that he remained loyal to [Zarqawi]—using the words, 'I am a ring on your finger.' ...As a result, Abu Musab softened and allowed Abu Anas to leave the house..."

"At the beginning of Ramadan three years ago [i.e. October 2004], the Shaykh (may Allah bless his soul) was extremely impatient to announce the news about his oath of allegiance to the mighty Al-Qaida and to his beloved commander, the shaykh of the mujahideen, Usama Bin Laden. I had never before witnessed him to be that focused or engaged. I do remember when he entered wearing his beautiful white robe, asking me about the drafting of the official announcement, the highlights of which he had previously laid out for me. When I finished, we convened the Shura Council, including Abu Azzam (may Allah bless his soul) and Abu Sufyan (then the commander of operations in Baghdad), and later, couriers departed to spread the news. Our comrades in Fallujah cried out in happiness, as the news came as a total surprise to them, even though it had been on the horizon for a while. I said to myself: all of our men should be like you [Abu Musab]..."

"Our Shaykh [Abu Musab] al-Zarqawi, may Allah bless his soul, adored his Shaykh Abu Abid al-Muhajir (may Allah open his prison doors, honor him, and praise him). He was always hoping that he would come to Iraq. Every piece of evidence available indicates that if he had come to Iraq, [Zarqawi] would have appointed him in charge of the Shariah Council [of Al-Qaida in Iraq]. Our shaykh always encouraged to teach our students the book written by Shaykh al-Muhajir 'The Pioneers of Spreading the Sunnah in the Landmarks of the Victorious Sect'. We photocopied it and I began teaching it to the brothers—in addition to another book, 'The Jurisprudence of Blood'. We were awaiting the arrival of this book in Fallujah then, but it did not reach there until

the second battle for Fallujah. If I remember correctly, the Shaykh [Zarqawi] told me that he had studied it under the supervision of Shaykh al-Muhajir four years ago [i.e. 2003]... Many photocopies were made of it under the title 'The Jurisprudence of Jihad Issues'. It is a good, strong book, worthy of explaining and teaching it to the mujahideen brothers."

"[Zarqawi] was—may Allah bless him—was kind in dealing with his driver and those around him, treating them like his brothers... It was well-known that the Shaykh enjoyed a specific type of 'Kraft' cheese, but I heard one of his senior associates comment how he had once brought this cheese to [Zarqawi], but he refused to take any until his fighters could have some [first]. A few days before the second battle for Fallujah, I saw one of the commanders who looked confused and handing out a small amount of olive oil and thyme to the fighters in the Al-Shuhada neighborhood. I asked about the story behind the olive oil and thyme, and [the commander] told me that the Shaykh [Zarqawi] had refused to eat until his fighters had eaten first. Shaykh Abu Anas [al-Shami], may Allah bless him, loved this story so much that the Shaykh [Zarqawi] asked him to bring some [olive oil and thyme] from his home country of Jordan. The olive oil and thyme arrived following his death, may Allah bless him. Among various foods, olive oil and thyme took on a special significance in the hearts of our brothers from al-Shams ['Greater Syria']... Imagine, my beloved reader, this unique modesty, gestures of kindness to his brothers, whereas most people still think of our Shaykh as morose and bloodthirsty."

"I still remember when [someone] requested a fatwah from one of the unit commanders to resolve an issue they were dealing with in their zone of responsibility. It was regarding a man who was targeted for killing according to Shariah law while driving a vehicle full of goods—but also onboard was a young boy, possibly his son. If they killed the boy along with his father, the operation would be a certain success. If they [killed the father but] failed to kill the boy, he might tell the occupying enemy and lead them to their base. I raised the issue with our Shaykh [Zarqawi], and he cancelled the operation, explaining that the bounty was not worth killing the boy. I was told by his driver and companion Abdulrahman al-Basrawi about how three years ago during Ramadan [October-November 2004] the Shaykh was roaming about in a vehicle to see how his personnel were doing... At one of our own checkpoints, as the Shaykh's vehicle passed by, the person in charge stopped him without knowing who the Shaykh was. He ordered [Zarqawi] out of the car and began asking the Shaykh some questions. The Shaykh was compliant to the end. After the Shaykh left, the person in charge realized that the man he had been questioning was the Shaykh and he felt bad about it. His driver al-Basrawi told me this too... I was sitting with him once when the brothers asked for a videotape from him every now and then to help raise their spirits and tighten their ranks. He apologized and... he replied literally, 'I never imagined that the brothers would need videotapes of me!'"

"...When I first began accompanying the Shaykh [Zarqawi], may Allah bless him, there was a new arrival in Iraq from Jordan, a man known as Abu Abdullah. He was keen to accompany the Shaykh as his bodyguard. I learned that he had known the Shaykh since the days of Afghanistan—but his unique devotion caught my eyes, so I asked him about the secret behind this and why he had all this love for the Shaykh, may Allah bless him. He told me the this sensitive secret: before joining the Shaykh's movement, he was curious to examine the Shaykh's personality, so while they were outdoors he said to him: 'fill this plastic kettle by yourself.' I asked him, what was the Shaykh's response—given someone speaking to him in this provocative way, especially since he was the commander of his own movement in Afghanistan. The man replied, 'the Shaykh took the kettle, filled it with water, and with all modesty—and without making any comments. Then, the brother reflected to himself, 'this is a man who deserves to lead his movement.' Glory be to Allah, how kind the Shaykh was, and how great was his modesty in front of his brothers. That same brother [Abu Abdullah] met his maker in the battle for Abu Ghraib—at the same time as Abu Anas al-Shami was killed as well. [Abu Abdullah] had asked me if anything should happen to him to write his will and send it to his wife and family. But, Allah forgive me, [I did not] because I was so busy during the second battle for Fallujah and I lost my computer, and also because I did not have his family's address. I remember how happy he was when he heard the news about his wife being pregnant, as he was a newlywed."

“One day, while I was searching through a flash memory card, [Zarqawi’s] eyes caught sight of some articles from Shaykh Ali al-Tantawi, the well-known author... who is dead and is not the corrupt Egyptian Mufti... He asked me to download a copy to his computer, and I would not keep anything useful from him. I said to myself, ‘Glory to Allah, even given their differing ideologies, this did not stop him from benefiting from the unique style of al-Tantawi’...”

“All of the fighting units geared up and headed out for Abu Ghraib under the lead of the brave commander Abu Anas al-Shami, along with some of the finest field commanders as well. They were readying themselves to liberate the Muslim prisoners, imprisoned by the crusaders and their allies. The Islamic world and clerics had offered nothing but mere words. The Shaykh al-Zarqawi, may Allah bless him, was in a vehicle, checking in on his brothers on Thursday afternoon, when Abu Anas came to say goodbye. He put his head inside the car to greet his beloved Abu Musab—his face looked as pale as the surface of the moon and his tears of farewell came down to such a degree that it attracted my attention, whereupon I asked the driver Abdelrahman al-Basrawi, ‘Is this how Abu Anas usually says goodbye?’ I had a strange feeling that this would be our last meeting... The fighting units set off and we left with the late Shaykh [Zarqawi] to have dinner at the house of one of our supporters, whom he loved and they loved him in return. [We] engaged in discussions and conversations, we covered the pros and cons of [Shaykh Yusuf] al-Qardawi, the formal relationship between the Shaykh [Zarqawi] and the Shaykh of the Mujahideen Usama Bin Laden and the reason that he did not join him previously in Afghanistan, and the events of September [11]. It was a very informative setting—but suddenly, the commander of Fallujah burst in to tell the Shaykh the tragic news. The Americans had launched an ambush synchronized with the news broadcasts on the satellite channels—Al-Jazeera and the others. The top story was the killing of sixty fighters from the Tawheed wal-Jihad movement. We all lost our appetites and we were forced to wait patiently until the morning to confirm the news.”

“The heavy morning came and the news was contradictory about who exactly was killed. All of us were trying to find out the news and asking Allah for patience. Abu Omar and Abu Mohammed al-Lubnani had been killed, but there was no word about Abu Anas. I headed to the Al-Shuhadaa neighborhood, and I saw Abu Maysarah al-Iraqi there. The moment that he learned of the news about Abu Anas, he began to cry hysterically. I was surprised by how he was crying, because I did not expect it would be that intense. I started to clear up the facts from rumors as much as possible. Evening arrived and, under the cover of darkness, we received a disc containing photos of all of the dead [fighters]. The Shaykh and I rushed to the computer and we began reviewing the pictures one by one and our hearts beat fast in anticipation—until that pale face [Abu Anas], may Allah bless him, emerged and we knew it was for real.”

“Our late Shaykh remained steadfast upon learning this terrible news. I saw him forcing back his tears until he could be alone. He immediately dispatched me to the guesthouses, units, and neighborhoods and told me, ‘your mission is more difficult now.’ He was referring to the field of Shariah in the wake of losing Abu Anas, and he asked me to visit the various units to raise their morale and ease their pain... It was difficult to fill the void left by Abu Anas... Because of the painful incident, our Shaykh [Zarqawi] issued an order to stop using mobile phones. The brothers obeyed, as the enemy had benefited from our use of the mobile phones and it was a successful strike for them... The enemy facilitated the use of phones for a reason, and every brother who been captured makes his brothers who are safe worried about their use of the mobile phones, and this harms our work in jihad. We counted the dead and they numbered about thirty. By Allah, how the media lies and how the corrupt infidel American Army lies as well. What a difference between the two sides: the mujahideen and the crusaders. The Shaykh Abu Musab once strongly objected to publishing a statement containing more than the actual number of enemy casualties, and he explained, ‘the Muslims are watching us, and are waiting to see what we do, so we should not betray their trust by fabricating casualty counts as the enemy does.’”

“Following the confirmation of the killing of Abu Anas, our Shaykh directed the media wing to prepare a [video] publication about Abu Anas. The work began after we decided that everyone

from among the unit commanders who knew him should contribute something about him. However, the Shaykh [Zarqawi] did not contribute any words of his own. He was of the same mind as Abu Maysarah al-Iraqi, that the Shaykh should not say anything... I decided that a poem would be better to explain my feelings toward him [Abu Anas]... After finishing the draft, I asked our Shaykh [Zarqawi] to review it so he could suggest his changes before we published it. He sat down and I put the computer in front of him. He began offering his notes from the start of the movie. His facial expressions grew sad and morose until we reached the part, 'O, eyes shed... etc.' His face changed to reflect happiness and admiration. I took the chance to ask, 'Did you like it?' He replied, 'yes, and the narration is good too.' Then I asked him, 'Why don't you take it and narrate it yourself' and I kept reminding him that, as Abu Anas was his comrade, he had the right to offer some words about [Abu Anas]. The Shaykh [Zarqawi] did not want to say anything for fear of not giving his companion Abu Anas the full credit that he deserved. The sheik replied, 'No, no, these verses are from you and I am not taking them for myself...'"

"After the death of Abu Anas, may Allah bless him, I started dealing with all the brothers in the same way, regardless of their positions, sects, and age. I met a young man from al-Shams ['Greater Syria'] who had recently entered Iraq. He told me about a small incident that had occurred prior to his entry [into Iraq] at one of the guesthouses. [He was sitting alongside] a brother from the Arabian Peninsula [Saudi Arabia], and while they were eating, their host asked the brothers about their beliefs regarding Bin Baz and Bin Uthaimen. It became clear to him that the brother from the Arabian Peninsula did not judge them to be infidels. The host was very surprised and he admonished the brother, telling him that Shaykh Abu Musab had judged them to be infidels and he would not let anyone enter the land of jihad who refused to also call them infidels. Consequently, the brother from the Arabian Peninsula asked, 'so you are stopping me from entering [Iraq]?' [The host] said yes, and he really sent him back to where he came from... I raised this case with our Shaykh [Zarqawi], may Allah bless him—especially since he had entrusted me with the duty of telling him about everything happening in the field. This was because he feared that his followers were estranged from him as a result of his security arrangements. [Zarqawi] became extremely angry and he threatened to expel the host if he really did put those words in the mouth of the Shaykh. He ordered his deputy to investigate this matter and, if it proved true, to expel the host entirely from the movement. Then, the Shaykh told me, 'Even though I recognize how they have misled the Ummah with their fatwahs, I never said that they were infidels. O' Allah, even if the brother from the Arabian Peninsula did not consider [King] Fahd an infidel, I would still not prevent him from joining the jihad. Many have entered Iraq who did not necessarily consider the Saudi government to be infidels, and when I showed them the evidence, they came to believe it—as the evidence is so clear."

"Even though the Shaykh was always trying to avoid being seen by the brothers for fear that the news would be leaked and then aircraft would come to bomb the area and harm the mujahideen, he was still keen to evaluate the condition of his followers. He used to roam around until midnight, personally investigating foxholes, checkpoints, the movements of fighters, and the situation of the people. Sometimes, I would just sleep in the car while with him, or close my eyes while he was talking—and then wake up and feel embarrassed, but what could I do? Despite all of this, he still had more work to do at night—and because he was awake most of the night—he would relax for some time after the sunrise prayer and then to continue his movement in the morning."

"His followers loved him, and the public loved him too. If any of them were to sit with him, he would captivate them with his calm, balanced demeanor, and his strong words and actions. In its stupidity, America tried to recruit one of his followers [who they were holding prisoner] to conspire to assassinate him using advanced technology. He agreed in order so that they would release him, and following his liberation, he told everything to the Shaykh [Zarqawi]. Praise be to Allah that American generals think in this silly way. They think that we fight for money and prestige—and what they do not understand is that our arteries are filled with the ideology of jihad. Even if they managed to reach Zarqawi, praise be to Allah, we have a million more

Zarqawis because our Ummah is the Ummah of jihad and jihad is at the top of our religious hierarchy.”

“Many days passed and Zarqawi was eventually killed. However, the star of his successor has risen as he has demonstrated rare abilities... and I can confirm that the last statement from... Condoleeza Rice—in which she offered some odd words of admiration for Zarqawi’s capabilities—was merely an effort to diminish and weaken the position of his successor after he caused them severe losses. They have invented a new trick: elevating the status of [Zarqawi] so that perhaps his followers will have less faith in his successor—despite the lengthy experience of his successor, his firsthand knowledge of the arts of war, and his relationship with prominent jihad leaders across the Islamic world... Even in the absence of our Shaykh al-Zarqawi, we have found someone else who can close the gap, continue on this path, and direct actions that we will benefit from, based on unique ideas and notions. [Abu Hamza al-Muhajir’s] decision to unite various groups in order to form the Islamic State of Iraq, and his pledge of allegiance to Abu Omar al-Baghdadi as the Amir al-Mumineen, are more than sufficient—even should he accomplish nothing further. And I say, if you kill Abu Hamza, then our Ummah will give birth to a new Abu Hamza and the jihad will not stop...”