



“Al-Qa’idah in Khurasan was Completely Finished after It Planned to Betray the Islamic State.”

He made hijrah to Khurasan, seeking to wage jihad to establish the rule of Allah, only to find himself in the midst of a jungle of factions and organizations in a region controlled by jahili tribal laws until Allah blessed him to make hijrah to Dar al-Islam and join the army of the Khilafah. The security official of al-Qa’idah in Khurasan, responsible for training camps in the military committee, and a member of the advisory council of al-Qa’idah, speaks to Naba about his story with the organization, breaking down the reality of its factions and expected outcomes in light of his experience in Waziristan.

Naba: Based on your extensive knowledge of al-Qa’idah in Khurasan, how do you see the situation and future of the Syrian al-Qa’idah organization?

Abu 'Ubaydah: All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and blessings and peace be upon the one sent with the sword as a mercy to the worlds, and upon his family, all of his companions, and whoever follows their path until the Day of Judgment. To proceed:

Based on what we’ve seen of events, and what news we’ve heard, the reality of the

Syrian al-Qa’idah is, to a great extent, very similar to the situation of al-Qa’idah in Khurasan before its collapse. I am specifically referring to the Waziristan region, which was the organization’s main sanctuary. I mean this in reference to the organization’s abandonment to implement the Shari’ah, as well as its hypocrisy towards the apostates, and then its partnership with groups which do not conceal their relationship with the tawaghit. There is also their giving priority to the preservation of the organization’s name and to increasing its size, regardless of the creed of those factions who joined them. Due to their resemblance of one another, I personally think, and Allah knows best, that they will also resemble each other in their ends. The branch of al-Qa’idah in Syria will end up as al-Qa’idah Central has ended, which will mean the termination of adh-Dhawahiri’s project in Sham.

Naba: Most people know that al-Jawlani is the one who built the project for adh-Dhawahiri in Sham by announcing his bay’ah to him, after which the infamous betrayal happened, so who is overseeing the project now?

Abu 'Ubaydah: Al-Qa’idah’s project in Sham began long before al-Jawlani’s announcement of bay’ah to adh-Dhawahiri.





We could even say that the project began during the first days after the mujahidin of the Islamic State of Iraq entered Sham, launching its operations against the Nusayri regime under the name “Jabhat an-Nusrah”. Al-Qa’idah had two lines of operation. The first was with Ahrar ash-Sham, through which Abu Khalid as-Suri was working with them, communicating with adh-Dhawahiri and informing him of the situation. There was also an agreement to send one of the “shar’iyyin”,¹ Abu Maryam al-Azdi, to act as al-Qa’idah’s representative to Ahrar ash-Sham. This was based on his old relationship with Abu ‘Abdil-Malik, the “shar’i”. However, this step did not take place because al-Azdi was arrested. As for the second part of the project, it was under the direct supervision of al-Qa’idah leadership in Khurasan. At that time, al-Qa’idah assigned ‘Abdullah al-‘Adam, otherwise known as Abu ‘Ubaydah al-Maqdisi, to the case of Sham, starting by him sending cadres from al-Qa’idah in Khurasan to Sham.

Naba: Why would they send cadres to Sham, while they have such pressing needs

in Khurasan due to the continuing war being waged against them?

Abu ‘Ubaydah: Indeed. The circumstances in Waziristan were exceptionally bad. Spies were everywhere and drones would not stop bombing al-Qa’idah’s personnel. Such a situation gave the option for anyone who wished to go to Sham to do so. However, ‘Abdullah al-‘Adam made them promise to exclusively join al-Jawlani. He personally demanded that I join al-Jawlani in Sham. When I asked him for the reason to deploy me and the rest of the cadre to al-Jawlani, he answered that they wanted us to make a foothold in Sham for them.

Naba: How was the move from Khurasan to Sham accomplished?

Abu ‘Ubaydah: The matter was relatively easy. Coordinators from al-Qa’idah oversaw the entry of members to Iran. Travelers remained there in guest houses for some time until the completion of their travel arrangements to Sham. This was with the knowledge of the Rafidi government in Iran, even under the eye of its intelligence services. Simply put, once a traveler entered one of the

¹ A shar’i (pl. shar’iyyin) is a person who is supposedly learned in the Shari’ah and who is usually tasked with religious research and propagation.





guest houses, intelligence services knew of his arrival through those in charge of these guesthouses. They would meet with the Iranian intelligence services weekly. Even the phones of the guesthouses were tapped and under their control.

Although it might seem odd coming from me to say that Iran permitted the passage of fighters to Sham, despite the fact that they are going to fight its army, its militias, and its allies there, this is the reality, for Iran's biggest concern is that no operations happen on its soil. Also it has secured the loyalty of al-Qa'idah, by having the majority of its leaders on their lands, some of them traveling freely, as was the case for 'Atiyyatullah al-Libi prior to his return to Khurasan. Among them, some who were under house arrest in homes watched by the Rafidi government, as was Sayf al-'Adil and Abu Muhammad al-Misri. These leaders have not acknowledged the Rafidah as infidels, and they even eat their slaughtered meat. Moreover, some of them consider them friends or allies in the war against America, and Iran further expects to benefit from al-Qa'idah by putting pressure on America and its allies, the tyrants of the Gulf States. Perhaps we should recall, by way of example, the support which Iran provided to the 'Abdullah 'Azzam Brigades, which split

from al-Qa'idah for executing an operation that targeted an oil tanker in the Arab Gulf a few years back.

Using this route, I eventually made hijrah, but my stay in Iran was extended, until al-Qa'idah coordinators confirmed that I was not going to travel to the lands of the Islamic State. In this way, I escaped from the fist of Iranian intelligence, which had learned of my presence through the coordinators of al-Qa'idah's guesthouses. I succumbed to my own misgivings, as did they.

Naba: Did the leadership of al-Qa'idah actually know the work of al-Jawlani, and to whom was he reporting?

Abu 'Ubaydah: Indeed, I asked 'Abdullah al-'Adam this question. He answered me that they knew that Shaykh Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, may Allah preserve him, had sent him from Iraq to work in Sham, though they did not want to repeat in Sham the "Iraq Experiment", by which he meant the Islamic State of Iraq.

Naba: How did they not want to repeat the experiment of the Islamic State in Iraq, when they were pushing the factions in Iraq to pledge bay'ah to them, praising their leadership, and saying that there is divine success in its announcement?





Abu 'Ubaydah: That was only for media purposes. The reality was entirely something else, as they were screaming in their private meetings about rejecting the manhaj of the Islamic State of Iraq. I had personally heard this from one of their seniors. They were rejecting the establishment of the Islamic State and the implementation of Shari'ah rule, by alleging that all of Iraq was Dar al-Harb. Moreover, they were rejecting the manhaj of the mujahidin in Iraq even before the establishment of the State, for they had opposed the manhaj of Shaykh Abu Mus'ab az-Zarqawi رحمته الله in targeting the Rafidah, for instance.

Naba: You are saying that the beginning of the project of al-Qa'idah in Sham was roughly simultaneous with the launching of operations by the mujahidin of the Islamic State of Iraq. How did they know in advance that the Islamic State wanted to apply its own Iraqi experiment to the Shami theatre, while such work only lasted a short time?

Abu 'Ubaydah: As I mentioned previously, Abu Khalid as-Suri was in touch with al-Qa'idah leadership in Khurasan. He was conveying to them the news of what was happening in Sham. His correspondence mostly consisted of incitement against the Islamic State and its mujahidin in the Shami

theatre. He kept repeating his demand to al-Qa'idah leadership to work on expelling them from Sham and to convince them to return to Iraq, claiming that it was best for the Shami theatre.

On the other hand, al-Jawlani's own letters to them conveyed the same meaning. In the end, they had found their justification to launch their own project in Sham, to betray the Islamic State by infiltrating its effective group in Sham and taking control over it, even before they officially merged it into al-Qa'idah.

Naba: But you mentioned that the project of al-Qa'idah in Sham was headed along two routes, one of which was taking over the group, which belonged to the Islamic State of Iraq, and the second by coordinating with factions, the primary one being Ahrar ash-Sham.

Abu 'Ubaydah: Yes, adh-Dhawahiri was hoping that the work of Abu Khalid as-Suri in leading Ahrar ash-Sham would bring al-Qa'idah closer to the factions, as adh-Dhawahiri asked him in one of his letters to gather the factions and seek their promise to cooperate with al-Qa'idah. As-Suri refused, claiming that the situation did not permit it or that the time was not suitable. On the other hand, 'Abdullah al-'Adam was sending





cadres to al-Jawlani, and preparing for the movement of first tier al-Qa'idah leaders to Sham.

In my opinion, adh-Dhawahiri's plan was based on merging "Jabhat an-Nusrah", after taking control over it, into the "Ahrar ash-Sham" model. This did not take place because of the killing of Abu Khalid as-Suri, who was the leader of the project of bringing both al-Qa'idah and "Ahrar ash-Sham" together, as well as the killing of almost all first tier leaders of al-Qa'idah, especially Abu 'Ubaydah al-'Adam, who was one of the key figures in establishing the project to betray the Islamic State through controlling "Jabhat an-Nusrah". Thereafter, al-Jawlani and his group were successful in neutralizing those coming from Khurasan, freezing their activities from the first days they arrived in Sham. This was mentioned in their letters, that they were not welcomed by the leadership of "Jabhat an-Nusrah", who wanted to make for themselves a "purely Syrian" group. Moreover, they were complaining of being harassed by Abu Firas as-Suri, despite the fact that they had known him for a long time. That goes back to the time of his presence in Afghanistan. We discovered that some of these split from "Jabhat an-Nusrah" and joined other factions, of which the main one was "Jund al-Aqsa".

Naba: So why was the main project of al-Qa'idah to merge with "Ahrar ash-Sham", while this faction did not hide its meetings with and links to the taghut governments in the surrounding countries?

Abu 'Ubaydah: It is no different than the way they have pledged bay'ah to Akhtar Mansur while knowing of his relationship with the tawaghit of Pakistan and its intelligence services.

Al-Qa'idah, as you know, wants to avoid fighting the tyrants who control Muslim lands, and instead fight only those who start the conflict. They argue that they want to focus in fighting the head of global kufr, i.e. America. Thus, they attempt to gloss over the factions and groups which the tawaghit sponsor, tolerating them mixing in their own ranks. Moreover, they have no shame in making their fight limited to those whom the tawaghit picked for them to fight; in this way, they protect themselves from the might of the tawaghit. You can take Khurasan as an example, as al-Qa'idah linked up with a few factions connected to Pakistani intelligence, like the nationalist Taliban movement. When the split happened in the ranks of "Tehrik-i-Taliban" in areas of Waziristan, they quickly sided with the branch that rejected fighting the tawaghit in Pakistan, known as the





“Mehsud Circle”, which was headed by [Khan Said] Sajna. At the time, ad-Dhawahiri’s correspondent requested that I cease all communications with the branch led by Hakimullah, who insisted on fighting the Pakistani government and targeting deviant groups, like the Isma’iliyyah and the Rafidah, even in their temples.

Most importantly, the only remaining presence of al-Qa’idah in that region, known as al-Qa’idah in the Indian Subcontinent, is controlled by people opposed to fighting the Pakistani tawaghit. It is led by the so-called Ahmad Faruq, who is supported by someone close to adh-Dhawahiri and his family. He also authorized him to oversee the Urdu “as-Sahab Foundation”, which targets the Indian Subcontinent audience. By that, the trend of fighting the Pakistani tawaghit was marginalized, like with the groups of Ilyas Kashmiri and Badr Mansur. So the fight was completely steered away from the Pakistani tawaghit and directed towards whomever else they pleased, which is specifically India, the traditional enemy of Pakistan.

After Ahmad Faruq was killed in an airstrike, which also killed ‘Azzam al-Amriki and two Crusader prisoners, he was succeeded in by “Maulvi” ‘Asim ‘Umar, who was a leader in “Harakat al-Mujahidin”,

supported by Pakistani intelligence and was formerly working to fight against the kafir Indian army in Kashmir. Based on that, one could now describe al-Qa’idah’s organization in the Indian Subcontinent as being led by those linked to Pakistani intelligence. Many of them are Deobandi Sufis who do not recognize the apostasy of the Pakistani government. They follow Pakistani “scholars” instead of al-Qa’idah’s own “shar’iyyin”. Among them is the apostate “Maulana” Fazlur Rehman [Khalil], who is a member of the Pakistani parliament and was the shaykh of Ahmad Faruq and his followers.

I don’t think you have doubts that the Turkish government, which is linked to “Ahrar ash-Sham”, differs much from the Pakistani government, but there are those in al-Qa’idah’s leadership who consider the taghut Erdogan to be a Muslim, despite his ruling by other than what Allah revealed and his loyalty to the Crusaders. I’m speaking specifically about Salim al-Tarabulusi, who was the general “shar’i” for al-Qa’idah in Khurasan. Therefore, why should al-Qa’idah have a problem with aligning itself to a cell linked to the Turkish government?

Naba: How can it stand to reason that al-Qa’idah’s organization is linked to Pakistani intelligence, despite all of the Pakistani





spies being behind the killing of many al-Qa'idah leaders, as well as the Pakistani army and the Sahwat linked to them being the ones that ended the presence of al-Qa'idah in Waziristan?

Abu 'Ubaydah: To understand the situation, you must know the reality of Pakistani intelligence. It is like any other intelligence service in the world, consisting of numerous divisions, and each of these compartments is trying to implement part of the goals of the taghut government. There is, for instance, a division for waging war against India, with all the factions and movements against India in Kashmir working under its supervision. There is another division directed to administer Afghan affairs. This one oversaw the factions who previously fought against the communists; it then became responsible for overseeing the Taliban. There is yet another department operating in the service of American intelligence, and this group directed the war against al-Qa'idah in Waziristan on the ground, via the Sahwat and spies who helped the American drones, and targeting headquarters and guesthouses and tracking down leaders and other individuals. This division launched the war against al-Qa'ida at the same time that another division

helped al-Qa'idah and its allies in achieving the goals of Pakistani tawaghit.

Naba: I need to cut our conversation short at this point, though my desire to learn more from your experience with al-Qa'idah is not yet satisfied, and I think our readers will be eager to further explore your views about the outcome of its branch in Sham in light of the current negotiations between the Nusayri regime and the Sahwat.

So I would like to take more time from you in another meeting, Allah willing, so that we can discuss this further and give more to the readers about these issues, if you do not mind.

Abu 'Ubaydah: It is my pleasure! All of what I've been told or know concerning these issues will be put forth. Our goal is that the tragedy of Waziristan will not be repeated, and that the Muslims should come to realize that these factions will distance them from the Shari'ah and will not draw them nearer to it.

All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

Naba: May Allah reward you well for your patience, and peace be upon you, as well as Allah's mercy and blessings.

