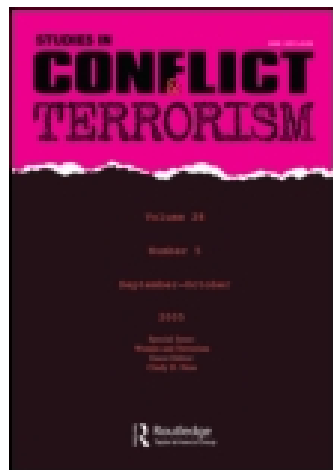


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Publisher: Routledge

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## Studies in Conflict & Terrorism

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/uter20>

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Published online: 09 Jan 2008.

To cite this article: Magnus Ranstorp (1998) Interpreting the broader context and meaning of Bin-Laden's Fatwa , Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 21:4, 321-330, DOI: [10.1080/10576109808436072](https://doi.org/10.1080/10576109808436072)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10576109808436072>

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# Interpreting the Broader Context and Meaning of Bin-Laden's *Fatwa*

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*This article analyzes the "inner logic" of the fatwa issued by Usamah Bin-Laden and a coalition of four other Islamic movements on 22 February 1998. Having first discussed the significance of the "Bin-Laden phenomenon" on terrorism in general, an analysis is made of the underlying reasons and broader context of Bin-Laden's worldview and the fatwa's appeal to his followers for violent action. It is argued that this fatwa, when combined with the content of Bin-Laden's "Declaration of War" in 1996, is neither revolutionary nor unique to broader Muslim concerns but rather is part and parcel of a broader contest over sacred authority in Saudi Arabia and over continued U.S. military presence on the Arabian peninsula. These issues are explored, coupled with the way in which the fatwa illuminates crucial factors behind the behavior of Bin-Laden and other Islamic revolutionaries.*

In many ways, the phenomenon of Sheikh Usamah Bin-Muhammad Bin-Laden embodies the new enigmatic face of terrorism in the 1990s: seemingly unpredictable in character with an almost unlimited number of tentacles through the so-called Afghan veteran network.<sup>1</sup> Unlike terrorist groups with more conventional organizational command and control features, these battle-hardened Islamic revolutionaries are highly skilled in urban guerrilla warfare tactics and are inspired as well as privately funded by Usamah Bin-Laden himself. They operate in diverse geographical contexts in efforts to "liberate" their own territories from "infidel" and corrupt control or to exact revenge from the sources of their grievances.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, these "Arab Afghans," natives of Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Yemen among others, operate in flexible and loosely defined ad hoc cellular structures when deployed on terrorist missions. This permeable "structure" makes it that much more difficult for intelligence and security authorities to monitor their movements and to unravel their connections with one another.

Despite the alleged impact of Afghan Arabs in a host of unresolved terrorist incidents and their presence in ethnopolitical conflict zones from Bosnia to Tajik-

Received 3 June 1998; accepted 21 June 1998.

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istan, there are unresolved questions about Usamah Bin-Laden and his actual role in terrorism, despite his identification by U.S. government agencies as the most wanted international terrorist at large. The mythology and mystique surrounding Bin-Laden, whose reputation among friends and enemies is at least on a par with that of the legendary Carlos "the Jackal" (who was apprehended by French authorities in Sudan in 1994), have served his image as an exceptionally outspoken and confrontational Islamic revolutionary<sup>3</sup> willing to justify and lead the holy war against the so-called Christian-Zionist conspiracy against Muslims allegedly spear-headed by the United States. Given his relentless Islamic revolutionary rhetoric, now principally directed against the U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf, combined with the aforementioned large, unidentified pool of well-trained and well-armed Islamic revolutionary soldiers, it should come as no surprise that U.S. and other Western intelligence and law enforcement agencies sit up and listen when Usamah Bin-Laden goes on the offensive and issues threats.

In response to the published *fatwa* (appended to this article) that was issued by Usamah Bin-Laden and a coalition of four other radical Islamist leaders and sent via fax to the London-based Arabic newspaper *al-Quds al-Arabi* on 22 February 1998, the U.S. State Department issued a heightened terrorist threat advisory to its diplomatic missions in the region and to U.S. military troops stationed in Saudi Arabia. These security concerns are quite understandable given the fact that U.S. military contingent in Saudi Arabia has sustained twenty-four deaths and over 100 injured in less than three years from two major terrorist incidents, in Riyadh in November 1995 and in Dhahran in June 1996. Indeed, these attacks constituted collectively the deadliest terrorist attack against U.S. interests since the 1983 marine barracks bombing in Beirut.

The precipitating factors, in terms of the timing and focus of this *fatwa*, was the renewed U.S. confrontation with Iraq over biological weapons production, and the suffering and deaths of innocent Iraqi Muslims inflicted by UN-imposed sanctions. However, it is crucial to contextualize this latest threat with previous *fatwas* issued by Bin-Laden, especially as he details at much greater length the religious justification for a holy war and the underlying dimensions of political, economic, and social reasons behind any previous and coming operations. As such, there is a remarkable degree of continuity between the content of this *fatwa* and the themes of the twelve-page document "The Declarations of War" issued by Bin-Laden in the immediate aftermath of his move from Sudan to Afghanistan in the summer of 1996, after the June bombing of the U.S. Air Force barracks in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Taken together these two documents provide an insight into the "Bin-Laden phenomenon" in terms of the radicalism of his worldview, detectable through his particular phraseology and theological sanctioning of violence, as well as the broader political context of his grievances and the likelihood of their being translated into violent action.

### Some Preliminary Observations

At the outset, it is worth making some comments on the *fatwa* simply at first glance. First, Bin-Laden's frequent use of the London-based Arabic newspaper

*al-Quds al-Arabi* is a calculated decision to maximize both the distribution of his message among broader segments of the Muslim community, as London is positioned as an unrivaled worldwide distribution node because of the presence and publishing activities of various Islamic movements. In this respect, the *fatwa* must be seen as a deliberate offensive means to wage psychological warfare against Bin-Laden enemies. This periodic distribution of the *fatwa* through faxes to the printed press is an effective means of soliciting tacit support for Bin-Laden's cause from a wide variety of Muslim sources. In some ways Bin-Laden uses London both to complement and to compete with other nonviolent Saudi opposition groups that exist and operate from there, such as the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights (CDLR), which criticizes King Fahd and his ruling regime by regularly distributing propaganda via fax and the Internet. Accordingly, Bin-Laden established in London the so-called Council for Advice and Reform (*An Nasiha wal Islah*) to coordinate the distribution of his messages.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, this latest *fatwa* is illustrative of Bin-Laden's general political astuteness and awareness of local, regional, and global issues, especially how changes in each of these environments affects the situation of Muslims in diverse political, geographical, and operational contexts. A manifestation of this awareness is the focus on the fate of the Bosnian Muslims during the Yugoslavian civil war, a conflict to which a small contingent of Afghan Arabs was dispatched but had limited impact. This political astuteness is not a unique feature of Bin-Laden but rather represents a broader trend among radical as well as mainstream Islamic movements, which in the 1990s has been accelerated by the so-called "globalization" process. What can be likened to a "cyber-*umma*," artificially linking Islamists together on a global scale through computer networks using new technologies, has emerged as a particularly attractive instrument for militants to gather and to communicate messages for nonviolent as well as violent Islamic movements worldwide.<sup>5</sup> Evidence of this can be seen in the sheer number of new websites operated by previously secretive and inaccessible terrorist groups.<sup>6</sup> This development opens new frontiers for Islamic movements, enhancing their operational efficiency in everything from encoded communication between cells to providing them with a vast propaganda platform. In the case of Bin-Laden, his previous "declaration of war" communiqué has been distributed by sympathetic Islamists via the Internet, reaching a far larger audience than its mimeographed precursors could ever have hoped to achieve.

Lastly, this latest *fatwa* demonstrates that Bin-Laden, for the first time, has forged tactical alliances with other "like-minded" mainstream as well as radical Islamic groups. At the same time, however, too much should not be read into this alliance with mainstream groups, as it may have more to do with Bin-Laden's generous financial contributions to these movements than with anything else. It may also be part of a general appeal to articulate and exploit Islamic issues with broad-based support among the Muslim communities across the Middle East and Southeast Asia rather than a sudden elevation of Bin-Laden's religious stature. It is crucial to understand that Bin-Laden's constituency stems primarily from his legendary role in fighting alongside the Mujahidin and among those 7,000–9,000 Arabs he came into contact with during his ten-year guerrilla experience in

Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup> Bin-Laden will inevitably fail to command a sizable following in the broader Muslim community, as he lacks any formal religious training or scholarship. This means that there is no binding requirement on Muslims to adhere to any *fatwa* issued by him. In particular, Bin-Laden's lack of religious stature is illustrated in the *fatwa*'s call for the killing of civilians, an act strictly prohibited by Islamic law and reinforced by scholars.

However, Bin-Laden's tactical alliance with more mainstream Islamic movements as cosignatories of this *fatwa*, particularly the inclusion of Sheikh Mir Hamzah (leader of the broad-based *Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Pakistan*), provides a broader tacit approval of Bin-Laden's call for *jihad* against Americans, extending beyond his own constituency. At the same time, it should be noted that this Pakistani movement with strong anti-American views is not renowned for using terrorism but rather promotes Islamic orthodoxy on the local political level.<sup>8</sup> On the other side of the coin, the Bin-Laden alliance with the Egyptian groups *al-Jama'ah al-Islamiya* (responsible for the targeting of tourists and government officials in Egypt) and *al-Jihad* constitute a more grave threat to U.S. interests, especially as their spiritual leader, Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, is imprisoned for life because of his role in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. This "judicial" success against terrorism is a major thorn in the side of Sheikh Rahman's Islamic revolutionary followers everywhere and will always constitute ample reason for them not only to strike American military targets in the Arab world but also to carry their retribution to the enemy's own backyard. In this respect, it is critical not to underestimate the power of the mantle of the spiritual leader, especially given Sheikh Rahman's role in the World Trade Center bombing, his own *fatwa* against Anwar Sadat, and his stature and connections, stretching from Egypt and the Sudan to Afghanistan. In addition, the fact that these Egyptian groups have lent their support to Bin-Laden's agenda is natural given that it is in Egypt that Bin-Laden's Afghan cadres have had the most visible presence in radicalizing indigenous movements, assisted by Sudan's extension of military training and major arms supply networks to the *al-Jama'ah al-Islamiya*'s terrorists currently at war with the Mubarak regime.

### **The Message of the *Fatwa*: The Essence of Bin-Laden's Worldview**

It would be convenient to dismiss Bin-Laden's *fatwa* as mere irrational anti-American revolutionary rhetoric. But doing so would ignore the inherent rationale and context of Bin-Laden's message and his clear appeal for action. In fact the themes and issues presented by Bin-Laden demonstrate a sophisticated mixture of religious legitimation for *jihad* (through selective retrieval of sacred passages from the Koran and the use of Muslim history) coupled with an astute political analysis of accumulated Muslim grievances both within a Saudi Arabian context and the wider Middle Eastern context. These issues have gathered strength, pace, and visible expression, both violent and nonviolent, in the post-Desert Storm

period, whose most visible symptoms were the 1995 Riyadh and 1996 Dharam terrorist incidents.

Like most other Islamic ideologues or spiritual leaders of Islamic movements, Bin-Laden veils and justifies the need to mobilize the Islamic community into action on the grounds of "self-defense" against aggression by forces hostile to Islam and Muslim peoples. Ironically, Bin-Laden views himself as a "peace-maker" whose vision restores Islam to its former glory as part of a violent struggle ultimately aimed toward achieving peace.<sup>9</sup> In this task, he has practically adopted Sayyid Qutb's theme of the necessity of creating a "dedicated vanguard" in the face of a state of *jahiliya* (pre-Islamic barbarity or ignorance),<sup>10</sup> based on Bin-Laden's proven track record of the defeat of evil and foreign forces in Afghanistan. In an effort to mobilize the masses to support this "self-defensive" struggle, Bin-Laden taps into the collective Muslim psyche by skillfully exploiting massacres of Muslims in Iraq, Bosnia, Chechnia, and even Qana (Lebanon), linking these to historical battles between Muslims and their enemies by then remolding them into a contemporary context. These themes naturally invoke broad Muslim grievances and frustrations, especially as the phraseology refers to "crusades" and martyrdom, which are powerful themes in Islamic history. Apart from invoking selective religious justification for action, the theme of self-defensive action is clearly evident in a Saudi context, as Bin-Laden explains that all peaceful means to expell foreign occupation and reverse the process of de-Islamization of Saudi Arabia have been exhausted by opposition movements. Bin-Laden accordingly perceives the need for action not only on the grounds of self-defense but also because the Muslim community stands at a critical juncture in history, threatened by a phased plan by the Christian-Judeo conspiracy (spearheaded by the U.S.) to gradually de-Islamize and occupy the Muslim holy places in the Arabian peninsula, as occurred when the Palestinians lost the al-Aqsa mosque and al-Quds (Jerusalem) in 1967. Indeed, it is through this prism that Bin-Laden views the Saudi-U.S. relationship and the presence of American troops in the region, the "nefarious" dimensions of internal Saudi politics, and the development of broader regional issues. Equally, it is through this prism that Bin-Laden urges his supporters on and defends his violent actions.

The U.S. military presence and the close political relationship of the U.S. with the Saudi regime are identified as the root cause of the Muslim predicament of being "under siege," according to Bin-Laden. This can be seen in the fact that he avoids calling for the overthrow of the Saudi regime but rather reminds his audience of the "captivity" of the House of Saud to a seven-year U.S. occupation, a "crusader force" bent on exploiting its riches and using "holy soil" to spearhead a campaign against Muslim peoples in neighboring countries (in this particular case, the suffering of Muslims in Iraq under sanctions and threat of U.S. unilateral punitive military action).

This lack of direct confrontation with the Saudi regime should not be read as suggesting any personal concerns for Bin-Laden's own family members, who through their construction empire have accumulated substantial wealth to become the richest non-royal family of Saudi Arabia, especially in light of the fact that

Saudi authorities stripped him of his citizenship in 1994, and that his family was forced to publicly disown him.<sup>11</sup> Instead, Bin-Laden urges unity, as internal conflict and civil war would only serve the interest of the enemy, and the consequences would be worse than the present situation. Hence, Bin-Laden focuses on presenting the Saudi regime as a “victim” whose dependent military and security relationship with the “crusader forces” has led King Fahd to act subserviently to U.S. interests and designs by arresting oppositional religious leaders and suspending Islamic law and has demonstrated an inability to protect itself by allowing American “crusader forces” to occupy its land. Bin-Laden’s efforts thus are part and parcel of a broader effort by a growing internal opposition since 1992 to challenge the Saudi regime’s claim to sacred authority.<sup>12</sup> This *fatwa*, however, illustrates that his struggle to reform and correct Saudi policy is unlikely to take on violent dimensions against the regime, at least in the short term.

Bin-Laden’s virulent anti-Americanism in the context of the Arabian peninsula, however, is clearly extended to include core and emerging issues for Muslim activists. The primary core issue for Islamists in general has been the recapture of the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem and the destruction of the artificially created state, Israel, closely supported by successive American administrations. Bin-Laden and other Islamists often refer to it as the “Zionist” entity, as referring to Israel by name would confer legitimacy and a right to existence.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, Bin-Laden continuously refers to a Judeo-Christian alliance and links the situations in Israel and Saudi Arabia to a phased plan to de-Islamicize and occupy Islam’s sacred land and places everywhere. In the face of conventionally stronger enemies, Bin-Laden urges offensive guerrilla warfare (or terrorism), for he and other Islamic activists appreciate that neither the U.S. nor Israel can politically afford high levels of military casualties, as previous events in Beirut, Somalia, and southern Lebanon have demonstrated.<sup>14</sup> The *fatwa* thus is an auxiliary tool to mobilize support among followers and sympathizers as well as to inspire and exploit fear in the enemy.

The content of Bin-Laden’s *fatwa* is neither revolutionary nor unique, as it encapsulates broad sentiments in the Muslim world, especially that of Islam’s being on the defensive against foreign secular forces and modernization. These threatening forces have grown with the continued presence of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the gradual resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is alleged to solidify the presence and permanence of Israel’s existence in the region without any prospects of Muslims’ reclaiming lost Islamic sacred sites. Despite the commonality of cause between Bin-Laden and other Islamic movements, he is different because he operates outside the constraints of a geographical or political context in contrast to more well-established groups. These latter Islamic “nationalist” groups are predictable in their behavior, as they have a clearly defined command and control structure and often operate in an environment that constrains them in the type of terrorism selected. As a “free-roaming” terrorist with a cadre of seasoned fighters, dispersed and engaged in a variety of “liberation” struggles in the Middle East and adjacent areas, Bin-Laden represents an unpredictable security threat, particularly to U.S. interests. The few inter-

views with the Western press that Bin-Laden has granted, coupled with his various communiqués, provide rare, valuable glimpses into his worldview and the underlying rationale for his actions.<sup>15</sup> These messages must be studied and understood in their broader political and social context by intelligence analysts and academics alike.<sup>16</sup> More important, although the “Bin-Laden phenomenon” can be seen as a novelty when viewed in isolation, it nonetheless arguably represents the unfolding ethnopolitical and religious forces in the greater Middle East.

## Notes

1. See Scott Macleod, “The Paladin of Jihad,” *Time*, 6 May 1996.
2. See James Bruce, “Arab Veterans of the Afghan War,” *Jane's Intelligence Review*, April 1995.
3. I would like to acknowledge Dennis Pluchinsky's role in coining the term “Islamic revolutionary.”
4. See “Osama Bin Laden The Afghan Father,” *Issues*, August 1994.
5. For an excellent discussion on the use of images and technology in competing for sacred authority, see Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).
6. The best collection of websites of “terrorist groups” can be found at <http://msanews.mynet.net/Launchpad/index.html>.
7. “Arab Veterans of Afghanistan War Lead New Islamic Holy War,” *Compass*, 28 October 1994.
8. For a full discussion of this movement, see Mumtaz Ahmad, “The Politics of War: Islamic Fundamentalisms in Pakistan,” in James Piscatori, ed., *Islamic Fundamentalisms and the Gulf Crisis* (Chicago: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1991), pp. 155–185.
9. For further discussion of this theme, see Mark Juergensmeyer, “The Worldwide Rise of Religious Nationalism,” *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 50, no. 1 (Summer 1996): 1–20.
10. For an interesting discussion of this, see *TransState Islam*, vol. 1, no. 4 (Spring 1996): 26. Also see Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi', *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996).
11. With an estimated wealth of \$5 billion, the Bin-Laden family rebuilt the two Holy Mosques in Mecca and Medina. Following the disclosure of Usamah Bin-Laden's activities, the Saudi authorities exercised severe restrictions on the rest of the Saudi-based Bin-Laden family. Interview with journalist with close connections to the “official” Bin-Laden family in Saudi Arabia, May 1997. Also see Macleod, “The Paladin of Jihad.”
12. See Andrew Rathmell, *Saudi Arabia: The Threat from Within* (Jane's Special Report, 1996); Simon Henderson, *After King Fahd: Succession in Saudi Arabia* (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy Studies, 1994); and R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Islam in Revolution* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995).
13. Bin-Laden does mention Israel by name in this *fatwa*, which is unusual in the discourse of leaders of Islamic movements.
14. For a lengthy discussion of this factor in the context of southern Lebanon, see Magnus Ranstorp, “The Strategy and Tactics of Hizballah's Current ‘Lebanonization Process’,” *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 3, no. 1 (Summer 1998): 95–126.

15. See, for example, CNN's Impact program: "Osama Bin Ladin: Holy Terror?" aired on 11 May 1997 at 9:00 P.M. EST.

16. For an example of the importance of understanding this "inner logic," see Magnus Ranstorp, "Terrorism in the Name of Religion," *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 50, no. 1 (Summer 1996): 41–62.

## Appendix

***"Text of World Islamic Front's Statement Urging Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders"—faxed to and appearing in the London-based al-Quds al-Arabi, 23 February 1998. Signed by Shaikh Usamah Bin-Muhammad Bin-Laden (the prominent Saudi oppositionist); Ayman al-Zawahiri, Amir of the Jihad Group in Egypt; Abu-Yasir Rifa'i Ahmad Taha, a leader of the (Egyptian) Islamic Group; Shaikh Mir Hamzah, Secretary of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Pakistan; and Fazlul Rahman, Amir of the Jihad Movement in Bangladesh.***

Praise be to God, who revealed the book, controls the clouds, defeats factionalism, and says in his book: "But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them, seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war)"; and peace be upon our prophet, Muhammad Bin-'Abdallah, who said: I have been sent with the sword between my hands to ensure that no one but God is worshipped, God who put my livelihood under the shadow of my spear and who inflicts humiliation and scorn on those who disobey my orders.

The Arabian peninsula has never—since God made it flat, created its desert, and encircled it with seas—been stormed by any forces like the Crusader armies spreading in it like locusts, eating its riches and wiping out its plantations. All this is happening at a time in which nations are attacking Muslims like people fighting over a plate of food. In the light of the grave situation and the lack of support, we and you are obliged to discuss current events, and we should all agree on how to settle the matter.

No one argues today about three facts that are known to everyone; we will list them, in order to remind everyone:

First, for over seven years the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest places, the Arabian peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbors, and turning its bases in the peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighboring Muslim peoples.

If some people have in the past argued about the fact of the occupation, all the people of the peninsula have now acknowledged it.

The best proof of this is the Americans' continuing aggression against the Iraqi people using the peninsula as a staging post, even though all its rulers are against their territories being used to that end, but they are helpless.

Second, despite the great devastation inflicted on the Iraqi people by the Crusader-Zionist alliance, and despite the huge number of those killed, which has

exceeded 1 million. . . . Despite all this, the Americans are once again trying to repeat the horrific massacres, as though they are not content with the protracted blockade imposed after the ferocious war or the fragmentation and devastation.

So here they come to annihilate what is left of this people and to humiliate their Muslim neighbors.

Third, if the Americans' aims behind these wars are religious and economic, the aim is also to serve the Jews' petty state and divert attention from its occupation of Jerusalem and murder of Muslims there.

The best proof of this is their eagerness to destroy Iraq, the strongest neighboring Arab state, and their endeavor to fragment all the states of the region such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Sudan into paper statelets and through their disunion and weakness to guarantee Israel's survival and the continuation of the brutal Crusade occupation of the peninsula.

All these crimes and sins committed by the Americans are a clear declaration of war on God, his messenger, and Muslims. And Ulema have throughout Islamic history unanimously agreed that the jihad is an individual duty if the enemy destroys the Muslim countries. This was revealed by Imam bin-Qadamah in "al-mughni," Imam al-Kisa'i in "al-Bada'i," al-Qurtubi in his interpretation, and the shaikh of al-Islam [not further identified] in his books, where he said: "As for the fighting to repulse [an enemy], it is aimed at defending sanctity and religion, and it is a duty as agreed [by the Ulema]. Nothing is more sacred than belief except repulsing an enemy who is attacking religion and life."

On that basis, and in compliance with God's order, we issue the following fatwa to all Muslims:

The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa mosque and the Holy Mosque [Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim. This is in accordance with the words of almighty God, "and fight the pagans all together as they fight you all together," and "fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in God."

This is in addition to the words of almighty God: "and why should ye not fight in the cause of God and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated [and oppressed]?—women and children, whose cry is: 'our Lord, rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from thee one who will help!'"

We—with God's help—call on every Muslim who believes in God and wishes to be rewarded to comply with God's order to kill the Americans and plunder their money wherever and whenever they find it. We also call on Muslim Ulema, leaders, youths, and soldiers to launch the raid on Satan's U.S. troops and the devil's supporters allying with them, and to displace those who are behind them so that they may learn a lesson.

Almighty God said: "O ye who believe, give your response to God and his apostle, when he calleth you to that which will give you life. And know that God

cometh between a man and his heart, and that it is he to whom ye shall all be gathered.”

Almighty God also says: “O ye who believe, what is the matter with you, that when ye are asked to go forth in the cause of God, ye cling so heavily to the earth! Do ye prefer the life of this world to the hereafter? But little is the comfort of this life, as compared with the hereafter. Unless ye go forth, he will punish you with a grievous penalty, and put others in your place; but him ye would not harm in the least. For God hath power over all things.”

Almighty God also says: “So lose no heart, nor fall into despair. For ye must gain mastery if ye are true in faith.”