

## Islamic Extremism: A Viable Threat to U.S. National Security



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Transcript of a presentation by Shaykh Muhammad Hisham Kabbani

*As salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh.* It is a greeting in the Arabic language which means peace be upon you all. I was very happy to see that my name was written double "shaykh." Because you know that shaykh might mean oil shaykh, or a fundamentalist, extremist. So two opposites make a positive -- two negatives multiplied by each other become a positive. So those who wrote that were very clever... thank you very much.

It was a delightful opportunity to hear from Dr. Fairbanks and the honorable Congressman Dana Rohrabacher because I think such kinds of events will lead to more understanding about Islam, what Islam believes and what Islam rejects. I think that many, many people in the United States and in western countries, in Europe, are afraid of a monster called Islam. And as the honorable Congressman Dana Rohrabacher said, it is an insult to consider the whole of Muslims, to take them into one side, and make them extremists. Really it is not correct. It is a little bit insulting.

I don't want to say too much, in order to make it easy on our children. Our children are living here, they are American, and they are born here. All these American Muslims, from parents who migrated here from Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century or the 19<sup>th</sup> century or the 20<sup>th</sup> century, are really good Muslims, and they have a friendship with all different faiths. So really they feel shy when Islam is being focused on as a religion of terrorism and extremism -- which is completely wrong.

On behalf of the Islamic Supreme Council of America, and many, many Muslims -- because I cannot speak on behalf of *all* Muslims, as many non-profit organizations in America do. Immediately when something happens in the Middle East or that region they send media alerts saying they are speaking on behalf of the whole Muslim community, which is completely incorrect. So on behalf of many Muslims, I will say that it is an opportunity to address you and to give you the authentic, traditional voice of Islam. It is a voice of traditional Islam, which is moderation and tolerance and love -- loving and to be loved -- and living in peace with all other faiths and religions.

As in the time of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, when he established his first state after having received the message for 13 years. He established a state in a city called Medina, located in Saudi Arabia now. First it had Jews, it had Christians, it had people of all kinds of different faiths, and never he fought with anyone. He never killed anyone, but was always educating and giving the message of God, as Moses, as Jesus. We do not go into all these details because people, I think, like to hear more about comparative Islam nowadays, and what is going on in the Muslim ideas, and in the world today.

I would like to emphasize that even a thief who steals something, cannot have his hand cut for stealing -- as is practiced in some countries nowadays -- under the name of Islam, when the rest of what that country is doing is against the name of Islam. The leaders of some of these countries try to label themselves as pioneers of Islam when they practice extremist ideology and in fact do not observe Islamic practices in their homes. In their homes you will find all kinds of un-Islamic materials or un-Islamic works. Islam never cuts anyone's hand unless certain principles have been followed. Not only that: in the whole history of Prophet's time, only one or two people had their hands cut. Before that time they were killing people; they were killing the thief. It was a cultural matter supported by a message that reduced the penalty from killing to cutting the hand. And it was not practiced too much in the time of the Prophet unless it was a very severe case. Even throwing stones; never in the Qur'an, never in the Holy Qur'an can you find one verse that says that you have to throw stones at someone who committed adultery and stone them until death. Anyone can read the Qur'an and we will not find one verse that sentenced anyone who committed adultery to death.

These things have to be clarified before we begin, because extremists are using these kinds of ideology in order to benefit their own positions, to successfully brainwash the minds of Muslims and other people who will then support them.

What is the definition of extremism? We can see in all of history: even when the first settlers came to the United States they were from different countries; Spain, England, France, European Countries. They were fighting on this land and fighting with the Indians. Do we call this extremism? A fight for a better living, which you understand you are doing not for a religious motive, is not extremism. Extremism in Islam, or in religion, is when you use religion to label intolerance, to turn from religion and take ideas that you can extract for yourself, or deduce for yourself, and use to make a militant movement and disturb the peace in your country or around the world. That is called "extremism," and "Islamic Extremism." But a movement for better living, that is not extremism.

For example, they are fighting in Ireland and in Poland, as Dr. Fairbanks mentioned. They were fighting the Soviet Union, communism. Can you say this is extremism? It is not extremism. They are trying to escape from the oppression they have suffered for many, many years. Even in Israel, we see that there are peace treaties that have been accepted by not all of the Muslim countries, but the majority of the Muslim countries -- including Egypt, Syria, Jordan, including the PLO, including Lebanon, including Saudi Arabia, including Qatar, including Morocco. Many Muslim countries have agreed on the peace treaties. Now we see that fighting is no longer a legitimate action that people can commit since they oppose the peace treaty that has been signed by the democratic leadership that they have elected.

In Palestine, we see what happened with Yasser Arafat. He was elected. I am not saying if Yasser Arafat is good or bad, we are not going to discuss that subject, but since democracy plays a big role in the Muslim world now, we have to trust in the fact that he has been elected. He signed a treaty, it means they have to go along with it. If they don't go along, it means they have the right to complain and criticize like any opposition, but without using the name of Islam and creating confusion in the West and in other countries. [It is confusing] to say that it is under the name of Islam that we are conducting a militant movement against a certain country or against anywhere in the world. So that is one of the main problems that we are facing nowadays.

When we come back to what is threatening the security of Russia and the security of the United States, here at home, we see a threat that will grow if the leadership of this country

does not quickly stop the kind of extremist ideology that is filtering in -- the same extremist ideology that is being spread all over, in many places around the United States. I will come soon to that.

But I would like to say that Prophet (sallī allāhu alayhi wa sallam) Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) gave us many examples in his holy traditions. For 18 months God asked Prophet, in Holy Qur'an, to direct his face when he prayed -- when we pray we direct our face to Mecca which is the Ka'aba of the Muslims, the House of God in Mecca, so God asked him to face that. After some time Prophet directed himself toward al-Aqsa, Jerusalem, which we know as the Bayt ul-Maqdis, Jerusalem of today. For 18 months he directed his faith to worship God toward the place of Jesus and the place of Moses, where they were born and where they brought their message, in order to show that there is a completion, and a connection between Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This was also to earn the respect of the Jews and the Christians in order to educate them about the message of Islam and show them that it is not hostile to Judaism and Christianity. It was one of the main themes in Islamic history that Prophet tried many times to make peace treaties and to extend his hand to the Jews and to the Christians in his area, wherever he was living. Later, when the religion was well established, he turned his face towards Mecca while Jews and Christians were living in the same town.

Islam, in general, is a religion that calls for respecting everyone and living together with everyone. Now we are seeing that something is going astray from Islam, as has happened in every religion, as Dr. Fairbanks said. Between Catholicism and Protestantism you can see there is a difference. Modernity came, and new thinkers came into Islam. In their countries, where they didn't have any relationship with the outside world, they began to think that they could bring something new into the Islamic way, in their own tribes. They made sure the way Islam had traditional evolved over 1200 years could be modified and changed to a way that suits the Bedouins and tribes in the desert, because that's where it evolved, this kind of mentality and ideology.

It began in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, when this ideology was supported by the tribes. The man who brought it to the tribes was a Muslim scholar by the name of Muhammad ibn Abd-al Wahhab. This was in the Eastern part of what we call Saudi Arabia during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. These ideas were going forth and back, forth and back. Sometimes they were put down and other times they were supported. There was a struggle with the Muslims trying to keep them down with the support of the Ottoman Empire. They were successful until the Ottoman Empire dissolved and finished in the middle of 1920 and the new regime came -- it was the secular regime of Mustafa Kemal [Ataturk]. They then found an opportunity in the tribes, which no longer had the support of the Ottoman Empire in that area. They had freedom to go and change the ideas and brainwash the minds of Muslims in this area. Slowly, slowly in the many years from 1920 until today they were very successful in establishing a new ideology in Islam that is very extremist in its point of view. It was not so militant, however; it didn't take the form of militancy, but it took the form of revival or renewal of Islamic tradition.

They were completely against Sufism because they think that you can go directly to God without the intercession of any saint, friend of God, or any person who can help you. The traditional Muslim believed, over 1300 or 1400 years of Islam -- until today -- that there can be an intermediary between you and God. This ideology prevented and prohibited that, but it was not militant until recently, when it took a militant standpoint and enforced itself in many regions around the world. Unfortunately, it has evolved in many Muslim countries like Lebanon, Syria a little bit, Egypt too much, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and many countries like Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco a little bit, now in Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia too much now, China a little bit, and now it is coming to the Caucasus. Their way of thinking is that Islam has to be reformed, and with a sword. They think they cannot reform Islam except with the mentality of a sword and the mentality of a gun. Unfortunately, extremism appeared in Islam, but not because of Islam. Islam always presented -- and I say it many times that Prophet Muhammad used to act this way with his neighbors or his friends that are not Muslims -- gifts, flowers, and love, not ever holding a sword against them, or ever starting a struggle or a fight against them. There are many events in Muslim history where the Prophet made peace treaties with non-Muslims.

These people nowadays are developing two ways of understanding the situation of Islam. From one side they think that they have to reform it; it is a duty on them, they have been brainwashed to think that they have to cleanse the world of devils and demons and of countries that suppress them, oppress them, and try to shut them down. We always see that. I am speaking openly to give advice to the government and the US officials in order to open their minds because this is a big danger that may result in a struggle within the United States.

Recently there was an article in a Saudi gazette called *al-Majalla*. They interviewed me and they asked me how I think Muslims should be involved in the political system. And I said Muslims have to be involved in the political system because they are part of this nation, they are part of this culture, and they are part of this country. So they quoted me and then they have on the other page another man who they asked the same question, and he said no. He said that we must tell America that before speaking with us they must govern in their country under the Islamic Shariah, under the Islamic law; before we will be part of the system, they have to be part of our Islamic law.

We know in Islam Prophet Muhammad, sallī allāhu alayhi wa sallam, mentioned in many places in Holy Qur'an things like there is no compulsion in religion, that people are free to take any religion they like. These extremists are not thinking with the Holy verses of Qur'an. Instead they are trying to impose their extremist ideas upon everyone, Muslim and non-Muslim. It has become a struggle for governments to reconcile or compromise. There is no way; you might compromise with a moderate Muslim, with a Muslim that is living happily around the world, but you cannot compromise, you cannot build a bridge with an extremist. He's never going to agree with you, because he thinks -- this is their thinking, there is nothing else -- that they have a duty and they have to deliver the message that either you follow us or you are under our attack. They are declaring war against anyone who will not go with them. This is why they are against their government, for example, in Saudi Arabia, they are against their government in Egypt, they are against their government in Jordan, they are against their government Syria, they are against their government in Pakistan, they are against their government in the Caucasus, and in Chechnya, and in all these countries, because they are infiltrating inside and indoctrinating people with their new ideas and new method.

As we see it from inside, from within -- because I don't want to go into too much definition and explanation of Islam -- what we are seeing as Muslims is that extremism became more of a business than a message because it involves drugs, and drugs are not allowed in Islam. Planting Opium and Cocaine and Hashish, Hash, is not allowed in Islam. Womanizing is not allowed in Islam, drinking is not allowed in Islam. We see these extremists are planting Opium, are planting Cocaine, and are selling this, justifying their acts as Muslims to reestablish and reform Islam around the world but they are committing all kinds of un-Islamic acts and un-Islamic behavior.

Recently they found in London, between London and France and all that area in Western Europe, that there is a big network of women that one of the very famous Arabic newspapers -- either *al Wasat* or *al Watan al Arabi* -- revealed in a big report two or three months ago. They found a network run by Muslim women who, during the day, are covered from top to bottom and, during the night, have dates. They are dating high officials in many countries around the world to take the information from them and to give it to the extremists. We have to ask ourselves: is this Islamic or un-Islamic? If it is Islamic we cannot see it in any verse of Holy Qur'an or any narration of Prophet. It is un-Islamic. So on what basis are they saying they are working under the name of Islam? So we see that now it is more a business and more a struggle, a fight, openly between extremism and America.

It is completely obvious to anyone who considers the matter and the situation. You will find that it is an open fight between the West and the Extremists. In the last report that we printed in our Muslim Magazine -- which is going to come in January, after one week (it went to print) -- we show how extremism evolved and how many extremist groups have formed a coalition among themselves although they differ in ideology. They differ in belief but because a coalition benefits everyone, they formed an alliance. We mention in the Magazine, and according to our sources, that bin Laden has asked Hezbollah, Hamas, and Jihad al-Islami, and Ga'amat al Islamiyyi, to form a coalition and he was able to bring them together under one network in order to work together, although each one differs from the other in his point of view.

So that's what is going on under the name of Islam, but Islam itself is innocent of such kinds of actions. As we represent Muslims, and we have on our board 157 international scholars from around the world -- they are on our advisory committee, our board of advisors -- we condemn all kinds of extremism wherever it is. We want to tell people to be careful, that something major might hit quickly because they were able to buy more than 20 atomic nuclear heads from some of the mafia in the ex-Soviet Union, in the republics of

the ex-Soviet Union, and they traded it for \$30 million dollars and 2 tons of Opium that has been shipped to the Caucasus and now is being distributed through all the Caucasus and the ex-Soviet republics.

They were able to get more than 20 nuclear warheads and now they are hiring thousands of scientists from the ex-Soviet Union who have no jobs. They are giving them salaries of \$2000 a month, in order to try to build an atomic reactor in Khost, underground, and in order to break these atomic warheads into smaller partitions, like small chips, to be put in any suitcase, even in a handbag, and be shipped anywhere in the world. This might affect the whole stability of peace around the world. This has to be very well monitored, and very well looked upon, because it is a danger for all humanity.

Moreover, what we are interested in in the United States. I'd like to say that there have been many non-profit organizations established in the United States whose job is only to collect money and to send it, as you know -- most of you know -- to send it to extremists outside the United States. This is a big dilemma that is facing us here, because you don't know where the money is going, and it is more than hundreds of millions of dollars that have been sent to extremist parties in the Middle East and the Far East, as well as Afghanistan and the Caucasus now. Our sources say that many, many millions of dollars have been collected and sent. They send it under humanitarian aid, but it doesn't go to humanitarian aid. They say that it is to help the people of this country or that country, and they show on television and on their flyers that they are delivering it to help homeless people or poor people. Yes, some of it will go to homeless people and poor people but the majority, 90 per cent of it, will go into the black markets in these countries and buying weapon arsenals.

I know this from my home country of Lebanon where we used to receive a lot of aid from the United States and United Nations. As soon as the aid arrived in Lebanon, you could see a little bit go to the public and the rest would be sold in the black market. For a box that costs more than \$100, you can go and buy it in the black market for less than \$20. All this money, that came under humanitarian aid, they resell so you cannot trace it, they go back and buy weapons with it to fight and to spread extremism under the name of Islam.

The second issue that United States has to look on within, for security, is the fact that there are many Muslim organizations that claim to speak on behalf of the Muslim community but that in reality are not moderate, but extremist. They hijacked the mike, or they were elected because they are good speakers, but they give a wrong idea about Islam. Always we see them in the media criticizing and complaining and sending action alerts and media alerts and showing people that we do not accept this or we reject that.

Like, for example, with the recent issue of Iraq. The Islamic Supreme Council sent a statement that there are victims in Iraq and there is bloodshed in Iraq, but it is a matter of national security to stop Saddam Hussein from running the country, and it is not a Muslim issue. When everyone was saying from the Muslim community that it is a Muslim issue, we stood fast and we stood alone to say that it is not a Muslim issue but that it is a political issue. Saddam Hussein is a communist in his background. He is of the socialist Ba'ath party, which does not believe in religion. It is secular and does not believe in religion. Anyone who has a beard or anyone wears a turban will be put in prison within a day. This is the mentality of this kind of regime. So it is not a Muslim issue, it's a political issue. It's a Muslim issue when you are hurting the people, and you are hurting a whole community as if we were to say that we are fighting the Iraqi people. But the policy was not to fight the Iraqi people. The policy was to fight a tyranny that was running Iraq. That's a big difference. So we stood up and we said this and we have received a lot of criticism from the Muslim community. But we want to advise the American community and we want to advise our government, our congressmen, that there is something big going on and people are not understanding it.

The third major problem that is now going on is that you have many mosques around the United States and there is not an organized government or policy to look over the mosques like in Muslim countries where you cannot open a mosque by yourself, and you cannot open a charity by yourself. It has to be done according to the structure of the Islamic religion. That's why in the Muslim countries, you cannot find extremist ideology. As soon as you find the extremist ideology they kick them out and bring in traditional Islamic scholars. The extremist ideology comes from the street so the extremists don't know what they are talking about. So they form small circles in different homes or different basements or in different areas and they begin to brainwash the people. That's why we find this kind of movement is becoming big now, especially when the idea is that we have a struggle between us and the United States. "United States is not supporting us," "United States is supporting someone else," they find that United States is not supporting Afghanistan, as Congressman Rohrabacher said. The United States supported Pakistan, the United States supported Egypt, the United States supported PLO and the peace treaty, the United States supported Saudi Arabia, the United States supported Kuwait. The United States is supporting whomever they can, but sometimes it is out of reach that they can support everyone. So they cannot be blamed. The United States cannot be blamed for something that they cannot control.

The most dangerous thing that is going on now in these mosques, that has been sent upon these mosques around the United States -- like churches they were established by different organizations and that is ok -- but the problem with our communities is the extremist ideology. Because they are very active they took over the mosques; and we can say that they took over more than 80% of the mosques that have been established in the US. And there are more than 3000 mosques in the US.

So it means that the methodology or ideology of extremist has been spread to 80% of the Muslim population, but not all of them agree with it. But mostly the youth and the new generation do because they are students and they don't think except with their emotions and they are rebellious against their own leaders and government. This is the nature and psychology of human beings. When we are students in university or college we always fight the government, whether they are right or wrong, we have to attack the government. This is how they have been raised.

In this way we see that the extremist ideology, and this is the fourth danger, is beginning to spread very quickly into the universities through the national organizations, associations and clubs that they are establishing around the universities. Most of these clubs -- they are Muslim clubs and the biggest is the national one -- are being run mostly by the extremist ideology that they do not understand other than to say that America is wrong and they are right. You can find this on the Internet; you can find it everywhere on homepages and websites that they are against the United States. This is where we don't know how far it goes, and how far it is out of hand. This might affect the whole university system in the United States. Through the universities there will be the most danger. If the nuclear atomic warheads reach these universities, you don't know what these students are going to do, because their way of thinking is brainwashed, limited and narrow-minded.

This is what I want to say to you, to present to you from within the Muslim community. We want to tell you that the Muslim community as a whole is innocent from whatever extremism and extremist ideology is being spread around the world. I don't know if there is time or not, but I know that to go in detail on how extremism evolved would take a lot of time, so I've tried to summarize as much as possible. I'd like to tell you that extremism, when a person has been brainwashed, demands that a person doesn't think, even if his father or his mother or his brother tells him to stop, he has to go to do what he has been asked to do. That's why there are 5000 suicide bombers being trained by bin Laden in Afghanistan who are ready to move to any part of the world and explode themselves. They are very sophisticated, they can buy anything they need locally and then put it on and explode themselves.

The problem of extremism is a big danger, and it can be solved if the West better understands Islam and builds bridges with the moderate Muslims, the traditional Muslims. This way, the Muslim community will eliminate the extremist threat from within. Otherwise, media, television, newspapers, and the leadership will not understand that there is a difference between extremists and Muslims. They have to begin a dialogue with Muslims from around the United States, and they have to have good advisors. What I am seeing, unfortunately, are those that are advising the media, or advising the government are not the moderate Muslims. Those whose opinion the government asks are the extremists themselves. Those that have been quoted in the newspapers, in the magazines, in the television, in the media are the extremists themselves. You are not hearing the authentic voice of Muslims, of moderate Muslims, but you are hearing the extremist voice of Muslims. That's why they are getting a wrong idea, because the extremists are very well supported, are very well affiliated with outside regimes that have sponsored them with billions of dollars to be active in the United States. They have been successful in doing that so the media does not listen except to them. I am even hearing that there are advisors to many congressmen, to many senators, to many organizations that are supporters of extremism and not moderate Muslims.

Thank you very much, may God bless you.

**Moderator:** We'll take questions from the mike, and while you're making your way, you need to come to the mike so we can pick you up.

**Questioner (unidentified):** Shaykh Kabbani, extremism is always found near ignorance. Dr. Fairbanks had alluded that there were sales of information on how to practice the faith in its traditional way. But what I thought you said was that this information was for sale. Is there any endeavor, since most are impoverished and cannot afford this, to give them fundamental, correct beliefs of your faith.

**Shaykh Kabbani:** I think that there are ways to give that literature to the people, to educate them. But it is not cheap to do that, it is very expensive. The moderate Muslims never have financial support to do that. If they can find grants, and find money, then they can have leaders of these organizations, then we can easily [sell information] and educate people about traditional Islam. The extremists have already printed out the ideology of extremism, and distributed it all over the world. You'll find it in any mosque in America.

**Moderator:** Maybe that would be a good way for NGOs to spend their money instead of on something that can be sold for arms.

**Questioner (unidentified):** I have two questions for the Shaykh. First, you were talking about specific information, a specific number of warheads and a specific amount of money paid for these warheads. Have you informed our government about this information?

**Shaykh Kabbani:** When they ask me I will inform them.

**Questioner (continued):** Is our government doing something about this? This is really dangerous information that you are providing us and it is very serious. I am concerned, personally, for my safety and the safety of my family and the safety of the American people.

**Shaykh Kabbani:** I am also concerned, that is why I am speaking. For the reason I am concerned I am putting it to our government. But whether they will now take my advice or not, I cannot say.

**Questioner (continued):** My second question is: I represent one of the non-profit Muslim organizations and it strikes me that basically you are making yourself the only legitimate Muslim organization here. I am personally not an extremist but how could you deny me the right to protest my government's actions? Since we live in a democracy -- we're preaching about democracy -- so I disagree with my government's action in Iraq, how could you deny me that, and because of that call me an extremist or anything else? And you say that in your action alert that the Iraqi issue is not a Muslim issue; according to UN statistics about one million Iraqis have died from the sanctions, and about 80% of the Iraqi population is Muslim, and about 800,000 Muslims have died, is it a Muslim issue? And why can I not say that it is a Muslim issue, and what is wrong with me saying that it is a Muslim issue? As an American who is Muslim, practicing his right in a democracy, that is America.

**Shaykh Kabbani:** Thank you for clarifying this issue. First, I'll say I don't represent the whole Muslim issue, I represent our organization and some of the Muslim community. It is on videotape and you can go back and hear what I said. The second question when you say that you don't have the right, of course you have a right, anyone has the right, to say anything and to complain and to make your voice heard. But I am saying that there is no right for militancy, when we have the right in democracy to speak up and say what we want to say, and you are free. Don't use militancy in order to support your idea, and if they don't agree with your opinion, you are going to fight with them. That's where I am specifying about extremism in general. And about Iraq, you consider it a Muslim issue, I don't consider it a Muslim issue. When Iraq attacked Kuwait, what is a Muslim issue or not? They killed Muslims in Kuwait. Is this a Muslim issue or not? When Iraq killed 5,619 Egyptians in Iraq, is this a Muslim issue or not a Muslim issue? When Iraq attacked Iran and killed hundreds of thousands of Iranians with chemical weapons, is this a Muslim issue or is it not a Muslim issue? So, how can I consider that one is a Muslim issue, though we never heard anyone speaking about Iranians being killed by the Iraqi chemical weapons, or Kuwaitis being assassinated by the Iraqi fighting, and Egyptian being killed by the Iraqis. Why don't we say this is a Muslim issue, and be fair for both sides.

This is what I like to express and you have a free right to consider it Muslim or not. But for me, it is a Muslim issue to take out the sanctions, that is a Muslim issue, we have to take the sanctions out, we have to relieve the victims of Iraq. But the tyranny of the leadership, that is the problem, you know that he killed hundreds of thousands of Turks, he attacked many Muslims inside the country. So why do we say to America or to the West that you are killing the Muslims, but we cannot say to Saddam Hussein he is killing the Muslims? So I don't see that it is fair to be a Muslim issue, but I do see that it is fair to see it more as a political issue against Saddam Hussein, and to relieve sanctions and to relieve the people from being victims under the oppression of Saddam Hussein.

**(Inaudible question from the same audience member)**

**Shaykh Kabbani:** Some Muslim non-profit organizations are working with extremists. And if you want to name them we can name them, privately.

**Questioner (unidentified):** I'm just interested in knowing more about the sale of these warheads, who, what, when, why and where?

**Shaykh Kabbani:** Everyone is going to be worried about these nuclear heads. I am also worried about all the information we got from that region of the world. First I want to say that bin Laden is married to the leader of the Taliban movement, to Mullah Omar, he is married to his daughter. So bin Laden is the son-in-law of Mullah Muhammad Omar, who is the leader of Taliban. I am also worried; we get the information, from reasonable sources and from very respected sources, and through friends we have around the world, that this has happened recently. The opium was shipped through the Caucasus from Afghanistan reaching a state adjacent to Russia. And they have made a deal that Taliban will move [bin Laden] to that state and to leave Afghanistan, because the pressure that the United States is putting on Afghanistan is that they want Taliban is that they want them to move [bin Laden] out or to be assassinated. There is now some kind of networking being made in order to move bin Laden to one of the Caucasus republics and through this Caucasus republics' mafia, he was able to get these 20 plus atomic warheads, according to these sources. And not only that, they are worried also that there is now around 36,000 atomic warheads under the control of some political regime in the area and some of the mafia, and they believe some of these atomic warheads are in the hands of the extremist groups.

**Questioner (continued):** So the warheads actually belong to bin Laden?

**Shaykh Kabbani:** Yes, the 20 plus warheads actually belong to his organization. According to the sources we get our information from, and we have a good article in our magazine explaining this in our coming issue.

**Questioner (continued):** One other question that is about the mosques in this country. You say that 80% of them are run by the extremists, I wonder what you mean by that.

**Shaykh Kabbani:** 80% of them have been being run by the extremist ideology, but not acting as a militant movement. We don't know if this will lead in the future to be more in the hands of militant extremism or not. There are two kinds of extremism: there is the extremist ideology and there is the extremist militant movement. In the future some of them might be working or affiliating themselves with such kinds of militant extremism.

**Questioner (continued):** You said, on the other hand, that most American Muslims are peace loving, yet their mosques are being run by these extremists?

**Shaykh Kabbani:** Muslims, in general, are peace loving and tolerant. And a Muslim likes to go and find a place to go and make his service, make his worship and go and doesn't

interfere. So the board of trustees of these mosques is being run by these extremists.

**Questioner (unidentified):** I have a request for a clarification of something you said and then a question. You mentioned earlier in your talk that because there now is a treaty between the Israelis and the Palestinians, that fighting against the Israelis is no longer justified. But if the treaty is not carried out, and of course the present government of Israel is not carrying out the treaty, at some point would you agree that fighting is justified again?

**Shaykh Kabbani:** As long as we can make peace we must not fight. As long as we can negotiate and come into good terms, we must not fight. And this is what we are seeing in many of the Arab countries and Muslim countries that are involved in these extremist acts.

**Questioner (continued):** My question is this: if the present Israeli government is succeeded by another one like it, do think it would help the United States to disarm the Islamic fundamentalists around the world? To come out very frankly, I'm saying that the U.S. will not support Israeli extremism and denounce this as not keeping treaties that were signed in the White House. Would this help disarm the Muslim Fundamentalists in their campaign against the United States?

**Shaykh Kabbani:** Can you repeat the question?

**Questioner (continued):** Ok. I'll repeat it more briefly. If the present Israeli government is succeeded by another similar extremist Israeli government in the elections that are coming up, would it help the United States to disarm the Muslim fundamentalists, that is, would it help us with the Muslim masses in the world, to come out very clearly I'm saying and denounce Israeli Extremism? Would this be a useful thing for the United States to do for our own protection?

**Shaykh Kabbani:** We have first to define if the assumption is correct that there will be an extremist government coming or not. Or, who can define what is extremist and what is not extremist according to the Israeli people. I cannot define what is extremist or not. It is a Israeli opinion to say if their government is extremist or not. And then we can go with our assumption if they are extremist or not. But since the Arabs and the Muslims are trying to make a peaceful relationship, as it happened with Egypt, as it happened with Jordan, as it happened now with PLO, if it will go along now or not, or it will be abided by or not, we don't know yet. Also what will happen now with Syria and with Lebanon, for what is there to fight and what need to have people with arms and weapons? Because we saw this problem happening with our people in Lebanon, we saw that when people have weapons, and not government -- because these people are not government movements, these movements are personal movement organizations, they are coming from ordinary people -- they come together and make an opposition movement. It's not a government fighting another government; it's not Egypt fighting Israel, or Jordan fighting Israel. It's a movement within the country that they are opposing. So they can oppose with word of mouth. If Hamas for example, let's say Hamas, since you are referring to Israel, if Hamas is going to fight and explode everywhere in Israel, is it going to change anything? With whom is the power, is it with Hamas, or is it with the Israelis? So they can disturb the peace, but they cannot implement anything if Israel does not want to come and make peace and make a conference with the Arabs and say that they want to live in peace and live together. That's why I think that weapons must not be in the hand of movements that are not government movements, but militant movements. We saw this in Lebanon, they were killing each other from door to door, Muslim killing Muslim, Shi'ite killing Shi'ite, Christian killing Christian, Christian killing Muslim, when they had weapons in their hands. But when weapons are not in the hands, everyone can come and make peace treaties.

**Questioner (unidentified):** My question is in regard to the influence of bin Laden and these new Extremist strains and other so-called fundamentalist groups. You spoke about a recent conference where bin Laden had a number of extremist groups come together under some kind of umbrella organization. As far as I understand, in the past, groups like Islamic Jihad or Islamic Organization or Muslim Brotherhood have focused on reforming their own states, whether it be from the top, attacking the government, or from below with the people. Are we seeing a change within these organizations as well as their debate within, that you know of, Muslim Brotherhood or Islamic Jihad or Ga'amat al Islami, that you know of, that's contesting this idea of attacking these external enemies like the United States? Could you comment on this?

**Shaykh Kabbani:** What we saw recently that this umbrella organization and this network of these different organizations coming with bin Laden under one organization, with ideologies, it doesn't mean that they are like Muslim Brotherhood, that they are any more militant, like at the time of Jamal Abdul Nasser. They are a group that is trying to promote their own ideology in the country and trying to fool the government in the way they work things and what they believe. So it is not a militant movement anymore, but it is an economic movement. But, we see the other groups like al Jihad al Islami and Jama'at al Islami and the other groups in Lebanon, they are more of a militant movement because they carry weapons. Muslim Brotherhood doesn't carry weapons, they are not as the others that carry weapons. We see the others that carry weapons are coming together to network because they found they would be more powerful and support for themselves if they work together as a network. This might make a threat not only to the United States, but to the whole world. We have heard that they have come to South America, to build up a big network there, in South America, with the mafia that is existing there in order to smuggle into the United States or to smuggle more through the Caucasus.

**Questioner (unidentified):** Shaykh, I was wondering if you would talk about whether you're at all concerned that with the dismal understanding that exists in the United States of Islam and Islamic groups, are you not at all concerned that as you send out these alarm bells about extremists and militants that moderate and peace-loving Muslims will be caught up in this net of reaction?

**Shaykh Kabbani:** Can you repeat the question?

**Questioner (continued):** Are you concerned that in warning Americans, who know very little about Islam, in warning them so strongly as you have, about the militancy, that they will also turn against the moderates?

**Shaykh Kabbani:** From my point of view it is better to say something than to keep quiet. If I kept quiet, a danger might suddenly come that you are not looking for, so in preventing that danger from coming I am trying to sacrifice and give something to the Americans in order that they understand that there is something coming up slowly, we don't know where it is going to hit, it might be here, might be outside, might be any country, and might affect the interest of the United States. So that's why I said in the presentation that the United States, the media must work with the Muslims, must work with the Muslims that are everywhere and they are very moderate, and they are very well known to be moderate and traditional and denouncing extremism. How do you know a moderate Muslim from non-moderate? One who denounces extremism. So it is better to build bridges in this way you can understand Islam and the media will eliminate extremist Muslims from Islam. As I heard in a meeting yesterday, that United States government is expressing its policy; President Clinton asked to separate extremism from Islam, to show they are completely separate entities, and that Islam as a religion has nothing to do with extremism. That's how the media has to look at it. It is the duty of the media not to jump quickly and fire accusations against the whole of Muslims, to provoke the Muslims. They have to go and work with the Muslims to separate theirs from the extremist ideology.

**Moderator:** Are there any other questions? Thank you very much for joining us, it was a great pleasure to have you.