

## **Damascene Desecration: U.S.-backed Syrian Salafists ‘Exhume’ Hujr ibn ‘Adi**

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“Hujr ibn ‘Adi was a pious companion of the Prophet (S) and played a vital role in the correction of the Ummah.” – Abul A’ala al-Maududi.<sup>1</sup>

In a disdainful display of disrespect for the deceased, members of the U.S.-backed Salafist Free Syrian Army have claimed responsibility for desecrating the 7<sup>th</sup> century grave of Hujr ibn ‘Adi al-Kindi.<sup>2</sup> The news of the defilement of the mausoleum located in Adra, about 40 km north of Damascus, has shocked Sunni and Shi’a Muslims alike around the world since he was revered by followers from both schools of Islamic theology.<sup>3</sup>

A companion of the Prophet (S) and a staunch supporter of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.), ibn ‘Adi courageously spoke out against the injustices of the ruling Ummayyads. When Mughirah ibn Sha’bah, the governor of Kufa, Iraq, cursed Imam Ali (a.s.) and lauded Mu’awiyah, the ruling Caliph in Damascus who had ordered the utterance of these calumnies,<sup>4</sup> ibn ‘Adi bravely declared, “I bear witness that the man whom you have vilified [Ali (a.s.)], his merit is far more worthy than the one whom you have praised [Mu’awiyah].”<sup>5</sup> Following ibn Sha’bah’s death, Ziyad ibn Abih became governor and, after hearing reports of ibn ‘Adi’s continued allegiance to Imam Ali (a.s.) and Ahlul Bayt – the progeny of the Prophet Mohammed (S), had him arrested and sent to Damascus on false charges of cursing the Caliph and organizing a rebellion against the regime. Given the choice of either cursing Imam Ali (a.s.) or death, ibn ‘Adi followed the dictates of the Holy Quran and Ahlul Bayt and refused to vilify the Imam (a.s.), so Mu’awiyah had him killed in the year 660 CE<sup>6</sup> along with six others<sup>7</sup> who were supporters and companions<sup>8</sup> at a place called Marj Uzra,<sup>9</sup> which is the present-day Damascene suburb of Adra.

There is a certain irony in the above words in praise of Hujr ibn ‘Adi written by the Pakistani Sunni Muslim scholar Abul A’ala al-Maududi, who was one of the most influential Muslim thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Described as the missing link in Salafi philosophy, Maududi’s writings heavily influenced Sayyid Qutb, who was a protégé of Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna, both of whom were influential figures in the development of Salafi thought. Maududi has been credited with providing the intellectual framework by which Sayyid Qutb transformed Hassan al-Banna’s nascent concepts into a solid program of Salafi ideology,<sup>10</sup> which has been used as the basis for the ideological infrastructure of such Salafist organizations as al-Qaida, Jabhat al-Nusra and the Free Syrian Army, which desecrated Hujr ibn ‘Adi’s mausoleum.

One of Maududi’s ideas, which has influenced radical Salafi thinking was the expansion of the concept of jahiliyah (lit: ignorance), which originally referred to the conditions in pre-Islamic Arabia, to include Muslims who had distanced themselves from the original concepts of Islam as intended by the Prophet (S). By this extension in meaning, even Muslims who did not hold to Salafi interpretations of Islam could be declared as unbelievers,<sup>11</sup> and of course, the most likely targets would be the Shi’a Muslims, whose admiration and respect for the great leaders of Islam such as Imam Ali (a.s.) and the progeny of the Prophet (S) have resulted in accusations of polytheism by the Salafists. This was the justification given by the FSA for desecrating Hujr ibn ‘Adi’s grave: to prevent what they claim to be Shi’a polytheism.<sup>12</sup> In short, Maududi’s ideas

eventually influenced Salifis to desecrate the grave of the very companion of the Prophet (S) he had praised.

“The grave of Hujr ibn ‘Adi is a sacred site for Muslims and desecrating his grave is an indication of the terrorist and criminal mindset of those who have no respect for sanctities,” declared Secretary General of Hezbollah Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, adding “Where are the Syrian opposition groups who had claimed to protect sanctities?”<sup>13</sup> Apparently, Washington’s Wahhabis were busy training elsewhere, possibly to use chemical weapons, at least those who were not directly involved with defiling sacred religious sites. The New York Times recently reported that Syrian “rebels” have been training in Jordan under CIA auspices for over a year.<sup>14</sup>

Recent charges by the U.S. against the Syrian government of chemical weapons use are simply another step in the western plan to bring about regime change. It is known that Jabhat al-Nusra has large amounts of chlorine gas under their control since the only chlorine plant in Syria, which is near Aleppo, was taken over by the terrorist group in August of 2012. This would seem to substantiate reports by the Syrian government that rockets with chlorine warheads are being used against their troops.<sup>15</sup>

While the U.S. already supplies these grave-robbing insurgents with medical supplies, communications gear and food rations, the Obama administration has indicated that it is considering supplying arms after finding what it claims is “evidence” of the Syrian government’s use of sarin nerve gas. Britain has made similar noises about arming the “opposition forces.” Another factor pushing Washington in the lethal aid direction is the supposed confidence that the U.S. has in new opposition leader and defector, General Salim Idriss, who has pledged to rid the Syrian opposition forces of “extremist elements like al-Nusra.”<sup>16</sup> For his part, former Syrian National Coalition “president” Moaz al-Khatib criticized the U.S. for their apparent lukewarm support of the Syrian Salafist forces, accusing Washington of deciding who was and who was not an extremist by “the length of a beard of a fighter.”<sup>17</sup>

The accusations that President Bashar al-Asad has ordered the use of Sarin nerve gas against insurgents has striking similarities to those made by the U.S. against Saddam before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, since Sarin gas is classified as a weapon of mass destruction.<sup>18</sup> Concerning arming the “opposition” forces, Obama, who had previously suggested that evidence of chemical weapons usage by the Syrian government would be a “game changer,” waffled saying, “We want to make sure that we look before we leap and that what we’re doing is actually helpful to the situation as opposed to making it more deadly or more complex.” Perhaps Washington, having learned from the Iraq escapade, is taking more time to build a more believable “case” against its current regime-change target. Or, perhaps Obama is having a bout with his conscience.

Meanwhile, U.S. politicians continue to work feverishly to export ethnic and religious strife, apparently not satisfied with the bloody messes they have created in Syria, Iraq, Libya and elsewhere. Typical of the terrorist-supporting mindset of U.S. leaders is Republican Congressman Dana Rohrabacher of California, a fervent supporter of the “former” terrorist Mujahedin-e Khalq (MKO), who openly supports funding separatist extremists to promote ethnic tension with the objective of destabilizing Iran.<sup>19</sup> Rohrabacher, chairman of the powerful House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, justifies the funding and support

of terrorist organizations and considers the violence unleashed to be similar that used by “religious fanatics” during the American revolutionary war. “Any group that chooses to use violence to resist doesn’t make them right or wrong,” insists Rohrabacher.<sup>20</sup>

With that, I’m sure Representative Rohrabacher can understand the feelings of Shi’a Muslims who have come to Syria to protect the Shrine of Lady Zaynab, daughter of Imam Ali (a.s.) and granddaughter of the Prophet (S), in Damascus against some of the Salafi terrorists whose violence the good Congressman no doubt would support. A multi-ethnic brigade of Shi’a Muslims from Lebanon, Iraq and elsewhere has assembled into an armed force to prevent the destruction of the sacred shrine, which has already been attacked by a suicide bomber in June of 2012. Many of the Shi’a defenders of the shrine are Iraqis who were forced from their homeland by the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in March of 2003. Of the numerous Shi’a religious sites in Syria, some have already been destroyed by the western-backed insurgents such as the mosque in the northern Syrian province of Idlib that was blown up in December 2012.<sup>21</sup>

The news of the desecration of Hujr ibn ‘Adi’s mausoleum impacted me personally, for I had visited his grave in February of 2011 along with a group of pilgrims from New York. I recall the delight and surprise I experienced upon entering the mausoleum for the first time and seeing the ornate glitter of the mirror work inside and the majestic silver grille work of the sarcophagus. Now, all of it is either destroyed or in shambles thanks to the unintended side effects of misguided U.S. foreign policy, whose authors have indicated their intentions of increasing support for the perpetrators of this Salafi sacrilege.

“O you who believe! be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allah’s sake, though it may be against your own selves” – Quran 4:135.<sup>22</sup>

My prayers are with the valiant guardians of the Shrine of Lady Zaynab. May it be Allah’s will to consign the defilers of Hujr ibn ‘Adi’s mausoleum and their supporters to the hellfire.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> “Hujr ibn Adi,” *Wikipedia*, accessed 3 May 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hujr\\_ibn\\_Adi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hujr_ibn_Adi).

<sup>2</sup> “Syrian rebels ‘exhume’ grave of Islamic figure,” *Gulf News*, 3 May 2013, accessed 3 May 2013, <http://gulfnews.com/news/region/syria/syrian-rebels-exhume-grave-of-islamic-figure-1.1178665>.

<sup>3</sup> “Syrian Militiamen Exhume Tomb of Prophet Mohammad’s Companion in Adra,” *The Muslim website*, 3 May 2013, accessed 3 May 2013, <http://themuslim.org/syrian-militiamen-exhume-tomb-of-prophet-mohammads-companion-in-adra/>.

<sup>4</sup> For more on Mu’awiyah and his order of abusing Imam Ali (a.s.), see “Muawiyah and Abusing Imam Ali (a.s.) on al-Islam.org website, accessed 3 May 2013, <http://www.al-islam.org/encyclopedia/chapter5a/1.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Sheikh Abbas Qummi, *Nafasul Mahmum Relating to the heart rending tragedy of Karbala'* (Mumbai, Islamic Study Circle, 2001) chap. 13, accessed 3 May 2013, <http://www.al-islam.org/nafasul-mahmum/15.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> “Syria militants exhume grave of Prophet’s companion,” *Syrian Truth* on Facebook, accessed 3 May 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.521581237906185.1073741956.304084042989240&type=1>.

<sup>7</sup> Sheikh Abbas Qummi, *ibid*.

<sup>8</sup> A.K. Ahmad, *The Hidden Truth About Karbala* (Qom: Ansariyan, 2007), 322-323.

<sup>9</sup> Ibrahim Ayati, *A Probe into the History of Ashura* (Karachi: Islamic Seminary Publications, 1991), 197.

<sup>10</sup> Trevor Stanley, “Maulana Maududi: Radical Islam's Missing Link,” *Perspectives on World History and Current Events*, 2004, accessed 3 May 2013, <http://www.pwhce.org/maududi.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Trevor Stanley, *ibid*.

<sup>12</sup> “Syrian rebels ‘exhume’ grave of Islamic figure,” *ibid*.

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- <sup>13</sup> “Hezbollah Slams Desecration of Hujr Ibn Adi’s Grave,” *International Quran News Agency*, 3 May 2013, accessed 3 May 2013, [http://ca.igqa.ir/en/news\\_detail.php?ProdID=1221882](http://ca.igqa.ir/en/news_detail.php?ProdID=1221882).
- <sup>14</sup> Michael R. Gordon, “U.S. Steps Up Aid to Syrian Opposition, Pledging \$60 Million,” *New York Times*, 28 February 2013, accessed 3 May 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/01/world/middleeast/us-pledges-60-million-to-syrian-opposition.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>.
- <sup>15</sup> “Was the Syria Chemical Weapons Probe ‘Torpedoed’ by the West?” *Syria News*, 3 May 2013, accessed 3 May 2013, <http://www.syrianews.cc/syria-chemical-weapons-probe/>.
- <sup>16</sup> Ariel Zirulnick, “US and Britain consider arming Syrian rebels,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 3 May 2013, accessed 3 May 2013, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/terrorism-security/2013/0503/US-and-Britain-consider-arming-Syrian-rebels-video>.
- <sup>17</sup> Michael R. Gordon, “U.S. Steps Up Aid to Syrian Opposition, Pledging \$60 Million,” *ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup> Howard LaFranchi, “Chemical weapons 101: Six facts about sarin and Syria’s stockpile,” *Christian Science Monitor*, accessed 3 May 2013, [http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/DC-Decoder/2013/0426/Chemical-weapons-101-Six-facts-about-sarin-and-Syria-s-stockpile/What-is-sarin?nav=664889-csm\\_article-promoLink](http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/DC-Decoder/2013/0426/Chemical-weapons-101-Six-facts-about-sarin-and-Syria-s-stockpile/What-is-sarin?nav=664889-csm_article-promoLink).
- <sup>19</sup> Solmaz Elmi-Sarabi, “Congressman Urges U.S. to Foment Ethnic Tension in Iran,” *NAIC*, 26 April 2013, accessed 4 May 2013, [http://www.niacouncil.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=9155&security=1&news\\_iv\\_ctrl=-1](http://www.niacouncil.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=9155&security=1&news_iv_ctrl=-1).
- <sup>20</sup> “Congressional Leaders Voice Support for MEK Violence,” *NAIC*, 11 July 2011, accessed 4 May 2013, <http://www.niacouncil.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=7527>.
- <sup>21</sup> “Iraqi, Lebanese Shiites unite to ‘protect Damascus shrine from Sunni rebels’,” *Russia Today*, 4 March 2013, accessed 4 May 2013, <http://rt.com/news/syria-shrine-sunni-war-784/>.
- <sup>22</sup> M.H. Shakir, trans., *Holy Qur’an* (Qom: Ansariyan, 2003), 138.