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Dossier: Abu Anas al-Shami (Omar Yousef)



- **Abu Anas al-Shami (a.k.a. Omar Yousef) is a well known Salafist Islamic cleric from Jordan who was born in the late 1960s. Abu Anas is a student and admirer of like-minded militant clerics in the Middle East, particularly Shaykh Salman al-Awdah, Dr. Safar al-Hawali, and Shaykh Issam Barqawi (a.k.a. Abu Mohammed al-Maqdisi).**
- **In his youth, Abu Anas traveled to Saudi Arabia with his family and lived there “for a while” until his family moved again and finally settled in Kuwait. After the 1991 Arabian Gulf War, Abu Anas departed Kuwait and returned to Jordan, taking a position as the in-house cleric at the local Marad Mosque. During his time working at the mosque in Jordan, he became very active in Islamic missionary efforts and drew many young male followers.**
- **In the mid-1990s, Abu Anas traveled to Bosnia-Herzegovina in southeastern Europe, ostensibly to act as a religious missionary there and help spread the Islamic faith. In 1996, a recently declassified U.S. government report—attributed by the Wall Street Journal to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)—alleged that “nearly one third of the Islamic [missionary organizations] in the Balkans have facilitated the activities of Islamic groups that engage in terrorism, including the Egyptian Al-Gama`at Al-Islamiyya, Palestinian Hamas, and Lebanese Hizballah.”**
- **After working in Bosnia, Abu Anas al-Shami returned to his Jordanian homeland to help found a major outreach center of the fundamentalist group Jamaat al-Sunnah wal-Kitab (“Society of the Sunnah and the Book”). The radicalism of the Society caused growing tensions with the Jordanian government, which ultimately led to the forced closure of the Islamist outreach center in northern Markah run by Abu Anas.**
- **Friends and associates of Abu Anas al-Shami claim that he initially straddled the boundary between comparatively moderate Islamic reformers and more radical fundamentalist leaders. These same sources blamed internal struggles for ideological control of the Islamist trend, recent Al-Qaida terror attacks in Saudi**



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Arabia, and “American crimes” in Iraq for polarizing Abu Anas into joining Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

- ***In 2003, Abu Anas al-Shami suddenly told his friends and followers that he planned on leaving his home in Jordan again, this time to “do work” in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Shortly after departing Jordan, Abu Anas instead re-surfaced inside neighboring Iraq where he was appointed to a position on the elite Shura (“Advisory”) Council of the Al-Tawheed wal-Jihad Movement, led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.***
- ***In the spring of 2004, combat diaries purportedly written by Abu Anas al-Shami began to appear on the Internet, describing Zarqawi’s involvement in the struggle with U.S.-led military forces for control of the Iraqi city of Fallujah. Abu Anas narrated the secret history behind the dramatic April battle in the heart of the Sunni triangle:***

“...at the orders of the leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the military Shura council met in the city to review the situation and study the options at hand—the result was painful and difficult. We found out that after a year, the jihad was still not rising from the land... We [Al-Qaida] have been hiding in the daytime and sneak about like grouses... And the safehouses have been raided and the heroes have been chased. This was a dark thought, and everyone felt like a complete failure. And thus it was required to come up with a quick solution and a change of the operational plan, so we decided to make Fallujah a safe refuge and an impregnable armor of the Muslims—and a forbidden [and] destructive land to the Americans. Then they will not be able to enter it except with great fear and they do not depart from it except frightened and chased as they carry their injured and their dead...”

- ***On July 28, 2004, Al-Tawheed wal-Jihad released an audio message from Abu Anas al-Shami that appeared to have been recorded prior to the June 28 U.S. handover of power to the Iraqi interim government. In the recording, Abu Anas al-Shami explained:***

“If infidels take Muslims as protectors and Muslims do not fight them, it is allowed to kill the Muslims... If there is an interest in killing a Turk, and if it is a necessary deed (meaning that targeting the infidels is impossible as long as the Turk is in the way) then killing the Turk serves an interest to all Muslims and his killing is permitted... We say to the Shiites: We will not remain silent on the murders, looting of our mosques, raping of our women, dishonoring of us and your alliance with the infidels... The sword of Quran is between us and you.”

- ***There are widespread but as yet unconfirmed rumors in the pro-Jihadi community that Abu Anas al-Shami has since been captured by the U.S. military in Iraq and is currently being held prisoner at the infamous Abu Ghraib prison west of Baghdad.***