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**Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center  
THE PROJECT FOR THE RESEARCH OF ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS (PRISM)  
OCCASIONAL PAPERS  
Volume 4 (2006), Number 5 (September 2006)**

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**Abstract:** This is a series of papers that translate and analyze articles, reports, religious decrees, and other documents, written primarily in Arabic by Islamist scholars, clerics, operatives, or intellectuals.

**Qa` idat al-Jihad: Moving Forward or Backward?  
The Algerian GSPC Joins Al-Qaeda**

**By Reuven Paz**

**Introduction – Al-Qaeda since 9/11**

Five years after the September 11 attacks—the turning point of global terrorism—TV channels, newspapers and journals, are inundated with reports, articles, op-eds, analyses, speeches, and other forms of assessments, on the current status of Al-Qaeda. Their various authors provide their opinions whether Al-Qaeda is declining, is increasing its power, is on the eve of its demise, or is unabatedly promoting its threatening capabilities on a global scale. The conclusions of these assessments are oftentimes contradictory, leaving the Western public confused as to how it should regard the last five years of global Jihadi terrorism.

Naturally, Western leading elements in the fight against Jihadi terrorism are interested in portraying the threat and image of al-Qaeda and global Jihad as one in decline. They point at various successes such as the thwarting of terrorist plots and other operations; the killing and capturing of several senior Al-Qaeda operatives; improved cooperation in the field of global counter-terrorism; and a growing awareness among the society in many countries to the needs of tighter security measures. Western leaders also tend to belittle the role of the Jihadi insurgency in Iraq, Afghanistan, or Somalia, in affecting Western security. Some underestimate and misjudge the adaptive capability and dynamism of global Jihad, arguing that the targets of global Jihad are static and independent of developments in certain regions.

Furthermore, some Western leaders tend to point at the slow but positive advance of the democratic process in Middle Eastern countries, referring to general elections in Iraq, Egypt,



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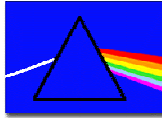
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and the Palestinian Authority (PA), municipal elections in Saudi Arabia, as well as to changes in the status of women in the Gulf States, and the “white revolution” that helped oust Syria out of Lebanon. They tend, however, to keep silent as to the implications of the victory of the Islamic Hamas in the January 2006 elections in the PA, the growth of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, whose possible triumph was blocked only through governmental oppression during the run-up to the elections in November 2005; or the increasingly anarchic situation following the democratic process in Iraq. Only recently, in the attempt to separate Iraqi Kurdistan from the rest of the country, whose president is a fellow nationalist Kurd, the Kurdish autonomous government abolished the Iraqi flag in its territories.

Reality since 9/11 suggests that in the past five years Al-Qaeda has managed to either initiate or inspire fatal terrorist attacks throughout the world. These attacks included several hundreds of suicide operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Sinai, Jordan, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Tunisia, Morocco, and Europe. Western counter-terrorism successes notwithstanding these attacks, as well as a multitude of foiled attempts are clear evidence that Al-Qaeda and its affiliates, as well as more loosely affiliated local Jihadist initiatives, are still capable of planning and executing major attacks. Moreover, the recently uncovered plot in the United Kingdom involving attacks on international aviation, shows that some of the planned operations are at least as, if not more sophisticated than the September 11 attacks. As a result of these ongoing threats, issues and terms such as immigration, “home-growing Jihadists,” “profiling,” “red alerts,” suicide bombings, charities, money-laundering, or “clash of civilizations and religions,” have firmly penetrated Western life and the vocabulary of Western discourse.

Moreover, global Jihad has clearly won the battle over the Internet. As a means of indoctrination, Al-Qaeda and its affiliates dominate this medium, while the West and the Muslim world have so far failed to devise and affect a serious “counter-Jihadi” response. On a daily basis the entire Western media community is swimming in the sea of Jihadi web sites. The Jihadi response is swift, technologically advanced, highly adaptive to changing situations, and consumed by the Western media as a serious source of information. The most significant role of the Jihadi Internet is that of “the open university for Jihad studies,” the most effective means of Jihadi indoctrination and inspiration.

Adding to these setbacks is the failure by the United States and its allies to apprehend the genuine leadership of Al-Qaeda, which in the fall of 2006, not only remains at large, but also manages to hotwire the apocalyptic senses of their followers by means of frequent airing of audio and video cassettes. The distribution of these tapes has helped Al-Qaeda gain the popularity of a rock band, revered both by its supporters as well as by the Western media. Between July and mid-September 2006 alone, Ayman Zawahiri himself has “posted” four tapes out of a total of 27 tapes posted since September 2001. This means of communication with both the supporters of global Jihad and Western publics and governments, provides Al-Qaeda and especially its two leaders, with a wealth of power, exercised with what seems to



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be a soaring level of self confidence. A close examination and analysis of all the tapes released by Osama bin Laden and Ayman Zawahiri in the past five years, strongly suggests that their self confidence has developed tremendously in that period. In the past three years these two al-Qaeda leaders, and especially Zawahiri, have portrayed themselves as respected scholars who talk to their “citizens” like pseudo Prime Ministers. An additional example of al-Qaeda’s domination of the realm of the media were the large number of tapes featuring Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi in the period of 2003-mid-2006, and the thousands of video clips from Iraq, Chechnya, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, documenting almost every terrorist operation. These releases indicate that the propaganda and indoctrination machinery of Al-Qaeda, which is initiated by a very small number of people, is well-oiled and highly effective.

The vast body of assessments on the state of al-Qaeda also features some experts who attempt to find the “golden path,” claiming that five years since 9-11; Al-Qaeda has mutated and is weaker as an organization or terrorist group, but much stronger as a source of inspiration and as an ideology. Jihadis traveling to Iraq to explode themselves, “home-grown immigrants” carrying out terrorist operations in Europe, or activists of Jihadi political subversion active in the Arab and Muslim world, have not been recruited by Al-Qaeda. They “recruited” themselves to the service of global Jihadi ideology. The vast majority of them undergo virtual mental, indoctrinational, and practical training through the Internet, not in training camps in Afghanistan or madrassas in Pakistan.

Furthermore, the ideological and doctrinal developments, which affect a growing number of youngsters, are not necessarily inspired merely by religious interpretations, but are also influenced by socio-political developments, taking place primarily within the Arab world. On the other end—among Western societies—there is a growing sense that a clash with Muslim communities is inevitable, which results among other things in stronger support for harsher means of security, even at the price of certain limitations on civil liberties.

Generally speaking, during the past five years, Al-Qaeda seems to have slowly expanded as source of support and appeal from among larger segments of Islamic, primarily Arab, societies. Its organizational power, meanwhile, has not declined significantly.

On April 23, 2006, Al-Jazeera and Jihadi forums circulated an audiotape in which Osama bin Laden called "on Mujahidin and their supporters, especially in Sudan and the Arabian Peninsula, to prepare for a long war against the Crusader plunderers in Western Sudan". He further stated that "our goal is not defending the Khartoum government but to defend Islam,



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its land and its people."<sup>1</sup> Bin Laden's aim was to convince the Mujahidin to go to Darfur, where they would launch a fight against a future United Nations peacekeeping mission.

On September 13, 2006, a previously unknown group called Al-Qaeda in Sudan and Africa claimed responsibility for kidnapping and beheading the chief editor of *Al-Wifaq*, a Sudanese independent daily eight days earlier. The statement said that "thanks to God's grace...execution was carried out against a dog of the dogs of the ruling party, the atheist journalist Mohammed Taha, who defamed our prophet Muhammad". The statement further said that he was "slaughtered" by three members of the group, who allegedly had fled Khartoum on September 7. The statement was signed by "Abu Hafs al-Sudani", identified as the group's leader. This statement was circulated in the Jihadi forums and newsgroups as well as in the global press.<sup>2</sup>

The murder of Muhammad Ahmad Taha Jankal, a man who had many rivals and a variety of enemies, was the fourth attempt on his life.<sup>3</sup> It involved—for the first time in the history of terrorism in the Sudan—the beheading of a person in the “Jihadi Iraqi” style. Jankal was regarded a pro-Iranian Islamist, who was influenced by the Islamic revolution in Iran (he named his son Khomeini). Whether this statement was real or false, the murder was a terrorist attack carried out under the influence of Al-Qaeda’s strategy, and was presented as the first operation of Al-Qaeda in Sudan. The incident underlines Al-Qaeda’s keen efforts in recent years to widen its influence in the Horn of Africa, and to enter new arenas such as Somalia and Sudan, in addition to the traditional stronghold in Kenya.<sup>4</sup>

On the background of al-Qaeda’s increased interest to spread Jihadism in Africa, Ayman al-Zawahiri made a highly important declaration in his long video-taped “interview” recently aired on Jihadi web sites on the fifth anniversary of the 9-11 attacks.<sup>5</sup> The declaration said that the Algerian Groupe Salafiste pour la Predication et le Combat (GSPC) has joined Al-

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<sup>1</sup> See on-line in:

<http://www.tajdeed.org.uk/forums/showthread.php?s=dcdace1092a583be056eaaba6338d391&threadid=40743>.

<sup>2</sup> See on-line in:

<http://www.tajdeed.org.uk/forums/showthread.php?s=8014a639c44b14993a078e99a5a38ab9&threadid=45375>;  
<http://www.sudaneseonline.org/forum/viewtopic.php?t=9852&sid=c4aa7f801ead34dbba9ffc71d0d3b626>;  
[http://newsinfo.inq7.net/breakingnews/world/view\\_article.php?article\\_id=20747](http://newsinfo.inq7.net/breakingnews/world/view_article.php?article_id=20747).

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed Islamist analysis of the murder, see – <http://www.al-hesbah.org/v/showthread.php?t=84918>

<sup>4</sup> See *Africa – the Gold Mine of Al-Qaeda*, PRISM Occasional Papers vol. 4 No. 2 (June 2006) --  
[http://www.e-prism.org/images/PRISM\\_no\\_2\\_vol\\_4\\_-\\_AQ\\_and\\_Africa.pdf](http://www.e-prism.org/images/PRISM_no_2_vol_4_-_AQ_and_Africa.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> The video-tape was circulated in 10 September 2006, in all the Jihadi forums. A full transcript of the tape in Arabic was posted in 11 September. See on-line in:

<http://www.al-hesbah.org/v/showthread.php?t=84735> For the transcript of the part about the GSPC see on-line in the web site of the group: <http://www.moonnight9876.com/pages/bushra.html>



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Qaeda. The declaration did not attract much attention since it was a short paragraph in a long interview. It should, however, be noted and it is as important as other parts of the “interview.” On 13 September 2006, the declaration was accompanied by an official statement of the GSPC on its web site, signed by Abu Mus`ab Abd al-Wadoud, the present Amir of the group.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, the GSPC’s declaration came about a month after a statement by certain segments of the Egyptian Gama`at Islamiyyah (Islamic Groups) who announced that it joined Al-Qaeda. In the Egyptian case the declaration came after a long debate and followed several splits within the remains of the small group. The declaration by this offshoot of the Islamic Group may not mark a significant change, because the group is generally weakened and powerless. Moreover, the main Egyptian supporters of Al-Qaeda are outside of Egypt and organized under Zawahiri’s Egyptian Islamic Jihad not the Gama`at. The leader of the Gama`at—Rifa`i Ahmad Taha, who signed the founding charter of the Al-Qaeda’s “Front against the Jews and the Crusaders” in 1998—was arrested in Syria in 2002 and extradited to Egypt in 2004, after which time no information about him was available.

#### **Algerian GSPC and Al-Qaeda or Global Jihad**

The Algerian case is entirely different from that of the Gama`at Islamiyyah, not least due to the fact that the GSPC has arms in other parts of North Africa, primarily Morocco, as well as among the large community of North African immigrants living in Western Europe.

In the past 15 years, the Algerian Islamists in general, and the Groupe Islamique Arme (GIA) and later on the GSPC in particular, have undergone a long period of disputes, debates, splits, and internal rivalries and clashes. All this in the midst of bloody waves of the most murderous terrorism against innocent Muslims in the entire modern Muslim world, and harsh oppression by the government. The various Algerian Islamist factions have also maintained close contacts with significant Jihadi scholars, mainly in London, among them the Palestinian Omar abu Omar (“Abu Qutadah”), and the Syrians Abd al-Mun`im abu Halimah (“Abu Basir al-Tartousi”) and Mustafa Sit Maryam Nassar (“Abu Mus`ab al-Suri”). The three are among the most important and effective Jihadi-Salafi scholars, and were also, involved in many of the debates, with and within the Algerian Jihadi factions. In the early 1990s, Abu Mus`ab al-Suri has circulated at least eight audio-taped lectures on the disputes with Algerian Jihadi factions, and published two booklets on the issue. One of them—his testimony on the Algerian Jihad in 1988-1996—has garnered many responses on the Internet in recent years.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See on-line in: [http://www.moonlight9876.com/pages/join\\_qaeda.html](http://www.moonlight9876.com/pages/join_qaeda.html)

<sup>7</sup> Abu Mus`ab al-Suri, *Mukhtasar Shahadati ala al-Jihad fi al-Jazaer 1988-1996* (Summary of my testimony on the Algerian Jihad 1988-1996). The booklet was circulated on the Internet until 2005, when his web site was blocked. A downloaded copy is found with the author.



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The past two years have witnessed a significant rise in the participation of members of the present GSPC, which was founded in 1999, in Jihadi forums. A growing number of Jihadi materials written by Saudi or other Jihadi-Salafi scholars, were posted on the group's web site.<sup>8</sup> The most prominent of these are the Saudis Yousef al-Uyeri and Abd al-Aziz al-Jarbou`. Several Algerian members of the group volunteered to the Jihadi insurgency in Iraq, where they were killed. During the past 20 years many reports suggested about a relationship between the GIA and Saddam Hussein, and later the GSPC and Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi. The present declaration of the Algerian GSPC should not come as a surprise, but the Iraqi connection might be particularly significant.

It is interesting to note that Zawahiri's announcement came from Al-Zawahiri on behalf of Bin Laden, and it might indicate that the linkage between the GSPC and Al-Qaeda may not necessarily go through Iraq but through Al-Qaeda operations in Europe. The paragraph in the declaration by Ayman Zawahiri referring to the GSPC follows:<sup>9</sup>

Q. - There were other great news, which we talked about before the interview.

A. – Yes, these are great news by the grace of Allah. Sheikh Osama bin Laden, the Lion of Islam, asked me to inform the entire Muslims and my brothers the Mujahidin everywhere, that the GSPC has joined Qa`idat al-Jihad, under the blessing and mercy of Allah. We pray to Allah that this event would be a thorn in the neck of the American and French Crusaders and their allies, and an arrow in the heart of the French traitors and apostates. We ask Allah to help our brothers of the GSPC to hit the foundations of the Crusader alliance, primarily their old leader the infidel United States, praise be on Allah.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind all my brothers who act in the service of Islam, who help the Muslims to resist the Zionist-Crusader campaign, and myself, of the need for unity, which is the door to victory. This unity is a religious duty upon the Muslims while confronting their enemies... [Qur'anic verse]

An important element in this declaration is the direct threat against **France**, which thus far had been excluded from any previous statements of threats by Al-Qaeda, probably as a result of the French objection to the occupation of Iraq, and its traditional disputes with the United States over other international issues. This step by the GSPC appears to have automatically made France an integral part of the Crusader enemy, due to the patronage of Al-Qaeda over the Algerian group. This step has far more important implication in three fields, far beyond the immediate threat against France:

- First, the GSPC is no longer only a local group focusing on violent struggle against the Algerian government, as emphasized in its most recent official definition of just

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.moonnight9876.com/index.html>

<sup>9</sup> See the text in Arabic on-line in: <http://www.moonnight9876.com/pages/bushra.html>



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last year—2005.<sup>10</sup> The issue of whether to wage a local struggle limited against the Algerian government or a broader one in the framework of global Jihad, was one of the topics that was debated within the group. The beginning of this transformation from a local to more global focus was evident from the official covenant of the group, which was written in 1999 by who was then one of the group's commanders, and who since October 2003 became the Amir of GSPC—Abu Ibrahim Mustafa. The change in strategy was also reflected in the revised version of the covenant published in 2002.<sup>11</sup>

In an official declaration following the 9/11 attacks, which was published by the group on September 19, 2001, the GSPC went as far as to deny the involvement of Al-Qaeda in the attacks. The group published an official statement, signed by its then Amir, Hasan Hattab Abu Hamzah, in which it claimed that “This attack could not have been carried out by Islamists, not on the operational level nor the kind of target. On the operational level, “this was the biggest attack in history since the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We do not believe that brother Osama bin Laden was capable of carrying out such a huge attack... We do not think either that it is religiously right to attack such a target.”<sup>12</sup> In a declaration of the group signed by Abu Ibrahim Mustafa from March 2005, the GSPC declared a Jihad against all foreigners in Algeria, in addition to the Algerian government. At the same time, however, the group has also taken steps toward supporting Al-Qaeda, by pledging allegiance to Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda.

In only five years, the GSPC has come a long way, from its denial of Al-Qaeda's ability to perpetrate the 9/11 attacks, through its internal problems and leadership disputes, to eventually joining the global organization.

- Second, the contribution of the element of *Takfir*, so typical to the Algerian Jihadis, which gave the GIA the legitimacy to carry out indiscriminate terrorism against Muslims. This element has implications on the Jihadi terrorism in Iraq, Jordan, Egypt/Sinai, Morocco, Arabia, and other arenas where global Jihad or Al-Qaeda inspired groups wage a Jihad against Muslims, including against innocent civilians. The growing terrorism in Iraq against Shi'is but also against Sunni Muslims, who fall under the dynamic definitions of infidels, is not different from the traditional Algerian terrorism against civilian Muslims in their country. Despite criticism by Jihadi-Salafi scholars over this *Takfiri* policy of Zarqawi in Iraq, Osama bin Laden reaffirmed it in the speech in which he mourned Zarqawi in July 2006.

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<sup>10</sup> See on-line in: <http://www.moonnight9876.com/pages/01.html>

<sup>11</sup> For the original Covenant see on-line in: <http://www.e-prism.org/images/Mithaq%20al-Jamaah%20al-Salafiyyah%20il-Dawah%20wal-Qital.pdf> For the second revised version see in: <http://www.moonnight9876.com/pages/letters.html>

<sup>12</sup> *Bayan hawla Taffirat Washington wa-New York*, Diwan no. 22/04, 2 Rajab 1422 (19 September 2001).



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- A third implication is the fact that despite “charges” of a “weakness” and “decline” of Al-Qaeda on the organizational level, the group is still a magnet for other Jihadi-Salafi groups seeking not only Al-Qaeda’s ideological or strategic umbrella but also the organizational and strategic links. The Algerian GSPC is the most powerful group that has joined Al-Qaeda thus far, but it is not the first to do so in the past year. Besides the weak Egyptian Gama`at Islamiyyah, whose “membership” of Al-Qaeda is more symbolic than practical, two smaller yet important groups also joined Al-Qaeda in the past year. The first was the Palestinian-Lebanese Usbat al-Ansar, roughly 20 of whose members so far have already been killed in Iraq. The other one is the Syrian-Lebanese Jund al-Sham, whose members might have been involved in the attack near the U.S. embassy in Damascus of September 12, 2006. Other groups sympathetic to al-Qaeda, such as the various forms of Bay`at al-Imam, have existed for a decade in Jordan, and there are still question marks as to the group or groups that carried out several highly lethal terrorist attacks in Sinai in 2005-2006. Question marks also remain about the relations of the Sinai groups to Palestinian elements in Gaza. One should also bear in mind the close relations between the Algerian and Moroccan GSPC, their impressive infrastructure in part of Western Europe—above all France—as well as the group’s links in Mauritania, Tunisia, and Libya.

During the year before the killing in June 2006 of Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi in Iraq—who himself joined Al-Qaeda in 2004, as commander of the Saudi-Jordanian group of Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, but also managed to unite under his authority and in the name of Al-Qaeda six other small Iraqi groups of Jihadi insurgents—Zarqawi’s followers began referring to him as the Amir of Al-Qaeda in the Middle East and North Africa. Zarqawi was a Jihadi symbol but was probably also involved in establishing connections outside of Iraq through the hundreds of Arab volunteers in Iraq. In July 2005 his group abducted and murdered two Algerian diplomats in Iraq—an attack that was praised by the GSPC.<sup>13</sup> Zarqawi’s killing may have placed some obstacles on the way to the further unification of Jihadi groups under the leadership of Al-Qaeda, but it did not bring the process to a halt.

In the official declaration of the GSPC from September 13, 2006, which followed Al-Zawahiri’s tape, several elements are of note:

- The discussions that led to this step lasted for nearly a year, which means that they began at the end of 2005. This period marked a tighter control of Al-Qaeda over the insurgency in Iraq, including the support of a strict *Takfiri* anti-Shi’i policy. On another note, it was a period when the GSPC had a new leader—Abu Mus`ab Abd al-

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<sup>13</sup> See the GSPC declaration on-line in: <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=3898>



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- Wadoud—who replaced Abu Ibrahim Mustafa, who had been killed. The death of the latter might bring about the change in the group’s policy.
- There is no way to fight the United States and the growing unity of the anti-Islamic camp but through “the Islamist United States.” There is no victory over the enemies without unity that would put an end to all the internal conflicts and disputes. There is no other group capable of leading the Jihad other than Al-Qaeda.
  - The decision was made after discussions and has not been unintelligible.
  - There is a need for a transnational Jihad. The Jihadi experience in Algeria is a model for resistance against the attempt by the “Zionist-Crusader campaign” to tear every part of the Muslim nation. Unlike Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, or Lebanon, the Jihadi fight in Algeria kept the Jihad comprehensive and thwarted any attempt to shred it to pieces.
  - The declaration also included an oath to Bin Laden and the recognition of his supreme authority and leadership.

The declaration did not include any threat or commitment to act against either Western countries or the Algerian government, which was not mentioned there.

### **Conclusion**

It is probable that the timing of Zawahiri’s declaration and that of the Algerian GSPC was deliberate to coincide with the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks—an occasion “celebrated” this year according to the Western calendar, not the Hijri-Islamic one. It was likely intended to take advantage of the heavy global media coverage of the event. Zawahiri’s “interview” was much longer than on previous occasions, and a small part of it was aired this time on CNN before it was circulated on the Jihadi web sites.

It is important to note that Zawahiri mentioned France twice in a tiny paragraph of his long speech, and in connection with the GSPC, but did not mention at all the Algerian government. It is a possible hint to the important role assigned to the GSPC in Europe rather than to Algerian soil. The GSPC is the more “senior” and experienced North African group, when compared to its Moroccan colleague, and has a better infrastructure in Europe and possibly in Canada. Furthermore, many of the Algerians arrested in Europe thus far, have been part of an organized group with strong ties to organized crime, and not self-radicalized immigrants like many of the Moroccan terrorists in Europe. It might be a new policy of Al-Qaeda to unite the efforts of the Jihadis in Europe and not to rely on sporadic groupings of North African groups of immigrants.

The Jihadi literature of the GSPC should be watched closely. In the absence of serious young Algerian Jihadi ideologues the main source of new Jihadi literature is Saudi Jihadi-Salafi literature, in which the globalization of Jihad is the main focus, as opposed to Jihad within a certain country. The ideological and doctrinal equator between the GSPC and Al-Qaeda is not balanced, and the global Jihadi-Salafi global doctrines are much more effective. Since



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Abd al-Wadoud became the Amir of the GSPC in 2005, the group also increased its public solidarity with other segments of global Jihad. In 14 December 2005, for example, the GSPC published a declaration in which it mourned the death of the Jordanian Sheikh Abu Omar Seyf, the senior religious authority of the Arab volunteers in Chechnya.<sup>14</sup> Abu Omar Seyf has also been one of the architects of the Jihadi strategy in Iraq.

In sum, it appears that five years after the September 11 attacks, the organizational structure and capabilities of Al-Qaeda, rather than merely its ideological and inspirational capabilities, are far from being significantly weakened. The group has lost several important operatives, suffered a number of serious hits, and failed to carry out several operations that have been foiled by Western or Arab security services. It did not, however, lose any of its appeal to Muslim and primarily Arab youngsters. Furthermore, it seems that in the past year there is a growing trend of small Jihadi “national” or local groups to join the mother group and unite under its wings.

This does not necessarily mean that Al-Qaeda took command over these groups, especially a stronger one like the GSPC. It does mean, however, that those groups will change their priorities in accordance with the changing strategy of the hard-core Al-Qaeda leadership, primarily Ayman al-Zawahiri. As to the GSPC, Western European countries should be the most cautious, given the presence of large communities of North African Muslims in countries like France, Spain, Belgium, and Italy, and the experience and past involvement of Algerians in terrorism in Europe. If Al-Qaeda has thus far given the impression that its operations in Europe were mainly the consequence of developments in the Iraqi scene, in the near future the justification for violent operations might be to the situation of Muslim communities in Europe, the sense of a pending clash of cosmic proportions with the West, or events occurring in Europe, such as the riots in France, the cartoons in Denmark, the claims that led to the murder of Van Gough in the Netherlands, or just few days ago, the declaration of Pope Benedict the 16<sup>th</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> See on-line in: <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=3700>