

# Middle Eastern Views on the Embassy Bombings:

## On the Record

Aug 20, 1998



Brief Analysis

U.S. military attacks on terrorist facilities in Sudan and Afghanistan highlight the continuing threat to U.S. interests from terrorists -- and their state sponsors -- around the globe. Since the Nairobi and Dar es Salaam bombings, various Middle Eastern actors have speculated on the culprits of the attack and their motives. The following is a representative compilation of quotations which offer regional views on the motives and blame for the bombings. One major theme is to blame U.S. policy toward the Arab-Israeli peace process for infuriating Middle Easterners to the point that they engage in terrorism. A lesser theme is to suggest Israel carried out the bombings. Fortunately, there are also Middle Eastern voices of reason that condemn terrorism irrespective of the cause in whose name terrorists claim to act.

### U.S. Peace Process Policy Breeds Terrorism?

"The suicide attacks launched against the two U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam last Friday were the logical results of the unjust and demeaning policies which the United States has been pursuing in the Arab region and in the Islamic world. These policies help only to encourage extremism and to promote acts of violence and terrorism and to turn U.S. embassies and interests into eternal targets. The actions perpetrated by America's enemies, who are so numerous in the Arab homeland, stem from the present state of frustration at the two-faced American policies and the joint American-Israeli objective of inflicting the maximum possible degree of harm and humiliation on the Arabs and Muslims out of all the other nations in the world." --- in Al-Quds al-'Arabi, the most strident London-based Arabic-language newspaper, London, August 10, 1998.

"We want to say clearly that Washington's foreign policy is partly responsible, one way or another, for these two terrorist attacks . . . Are we exaggerating if we say that the United States is paying the price for the mistakes of its biased and unfair foreign policy and also paying the price for stubbornness and arrogance? Are we exaggerating if we say that Washington is paying the price for not heeding the voice of reason that has been urging it to desist from the double standards policy? . . . We do not think that we are exaggerating." --- in al-Ahram al-Masa'i, an Egyptian state-owned newspaper (in Arabic), Cairo, August 8, 1998.

"One should not be surprised by the attacks and the anti-American violence. The Americans are the ones who created this violence and utilized it for a long period of time. They have no one to blame but themselves." --- Hafez al-Barghouti, editor of Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda, the official Palestinian Authority newspaper, August 14, 1998.

"We say to the United States: If you are not willing to accept a protest letter at your consulate in eastern Jerusalem and you are not willing to accept the explosions at your embassies and consulates, then how can the oppressed and the swindled make their voices heard?" --- Remarks in a sermon by Sheikh Khayam al-Adrissi at the Al-Aksa Mosque, broadcast on Voice of Palestine, the official Palestinian Authority radio station, August 14, 1998.

"[America] must try to discover why, each time somebody wants justice, they attack the Americans. It's because you yourselves support terrorists in Israel, in southern Lebanon and also the People's Mujahedeen . . . As a holy man I say

this to the White House: look for the causes in your arrogant attitude and your political double-speak about terrorism." --- Former President of Iran Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani in a speech at Tehran University, August 14, 1998.

"Like in the past, the American Administration will vainly try to put blame on the Islamic activists for yesterday's blasts. We wish if instead [of] blaming this or that person the Americans could have detected a genuine cause for the blasts. If they do so, none but their pro-Zionist policy of oppression is the cause of the disaster for their national interest." --- in Tehran Times, a pro-government English daily, August 8, 1998.

#### Israeli Culpability?

". . . The search for the motive prompts us to accuse Israel of committing this crime against the United States, which has been relatively objecting to Israel's position on peace and trying to compel it to comply with the Madrid and Oslo terms of reference and resume the negotiations with the Palestinians . . . So the Israeli motive outside Africa and the interests inside it prompted a strike against the two U.S. embassies in order to discipline the United States and compel it to submit to Israel's wishes on the international stage, and also in order to undermine the U.S. orientation inside Africa so that it can single-handedly take full control of the African states . . . The least that we are demanding is that Mossad be accused of committing the crime of bombing the two embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi so that the truth will be revealed through investigation, which will either clear or convict Israel." --- in Al-Sharq al-Awsat, a Saudi-owned Pan-Arab daily newspaper (in Arabic), London, August 12, 1998.

"It is hard to say that the timing and the high technology used in the two operations could have been the work of Egyptian groups . . . However, the second and more sensational possibility would be that the two operations were engineered by the Mossad and perpetrated by unwitting Arab or Muslim hands, hands that are exploited for ulterior motives against Arab and Islamic issues. It would be wrong to ignore or write off such a possibility." --- in al-Dustur, a major Jordanian daily of wide circulation and partially owned by the government (in Arabic), Amman, August 9, 1998.

"The Israeli haste in sending a rescue team to Africa with American approval was in order to create solidarity among the victims for Israel. What the Israelis are doing is attempting to Judaize every tragedy on the face of the earth and erase the ongoing tragedies occurring to the Palestinian people. This is a despicable act from the point of view of turning the facts on their head, exploiting emotions and directing accusations at the victim. It is giving credit to the hangmen, the murderers and the thieves who have stolen land." --- Editorial in Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda, the official Palestinian Authority newspaper, August 15, 1998.

#### By Contrast, A Voice of Reason

"Of course political frustration can spawn terrorism, but that does not make the bombers politicians or echoes of a political condition, frustrated or not. They are fanatical killers. And organized killing has a structure with its own machinery. Even if the killing is done in the name of a cause, the structure invariably breaks with it and the killing becomes an ends in itself, as the experience of many terrorist groups has shown . . . Such cold-blooded crimes must be condemned, and condemned period, with no 'buts' or 'ifs.' They cannot be semi-condemned any more than a woman can be semi-pregnant." --- Hazem Saghiyeh of al-Hayat, the premier Arabic language newspaper, Saudi-owned and London based, as quoted in the Mideast Mirror, August 13, 1998.

Compiled by Adam Frey.

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