

THE

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So many

Action Speak Louder Than Words

By Ama F. Shabazz

O ye who believe! When you meet an enemy force, take a firm stand against them and remember the Name of Allah much, so that you may be successful. (Qur'an 8:45)

The Qur'an urges Muslims to seek knowledge and then to act on the knowledge they acquire. It also says that the person who merely obtains knowledge without taking action is like a donkey carrying books, i.e., such knowledge becomes a burden that benefits no one. For one young man, knowledge became a source of inspiration that led him to take action that can benefit everyone.

Born in Atlanta, Georgia on 12 October 1977, Lawrence Nicholas Thomas always sought knowledge and took action that would make him excel because his goal in life, as he often stated, was "to be the best." As a teenager, this soft-spoken young man never took part in the street-wise activities of his peers but remained very attached to his family and excelled in academics as well as sports. He even took skydiving classes, and at age 16, performed a free fall jump at 10,000 feet from an airplane. His religious studies first led him to join Ebenezer Baptist Church where he acquired important character traits from the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., including compassion for the suffering of humanity and commitment to help the oppressed.

However, his zeal for knowledge and his hunger to resolve religious questions prompted him to study other religions including Judaism, Buddhism, and Islam. *Alhamdulillah*, by age 17, the knowledge he had acquired convinced him that Islam was his religion of choice, and he changed his name to Jibril Abu-Adam. Yet his quest for knowledge was not complete.

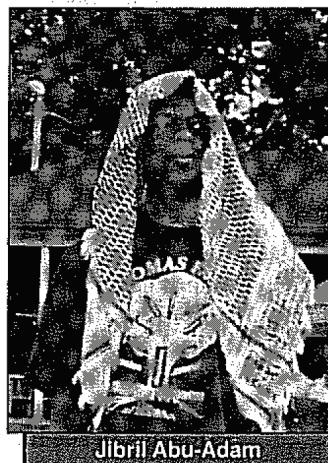
Jibril left Atlanta to begin his college studies at North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina where he also joined a Muslim community, performed congregational *salaat* regularly and actively studied Qur'an. However, for Jibril, this was not sufficient. He also sought to increase his awareness of the social and political situation of Muslims around the world. He was particularly interested in reports and accounts of events in Kashmir. He discovered many facts about Kashmir that are not widely circulated by the American media.

The state of Jammu and Kashmir, in its present form dates back from March 1846 when the British sold Kashmir to Gulab Singh for 7,500,000 rupees under the Treaties of Lahore and Amritsar after the Anglo-Sikh War. As Prem Nath Bazaz's *History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir* describes: "Two million people in the Valley of Gilgit were sold like sheep and cattle to an alien adventurer and the whole transaction was made behind their backs." The British plan was to have the Sikh-controlled state as a buffer zone between their Indian empire

and the empires of Russia and China to the north. Gulab Singh founded a dynasty (the Dogra dynasty) that ruled until the sub-continent partition in 1947. During that time, Kashmiri resistance increased, so in exchange for Indian military protection, the British imposed a maharajah to rule over Kashmir. A series of political moves by the British, Indian, Pakistani, and Kashmiri leadership contributed to the crisis. All efforts aimed at resolution of the conflict by United Nations involvement, negotiations between India and Pakistan, two Indo-Pakistani wars (one in 1947 and one in 1965) as well as third party mediation have all failed to settle the issue of Kashmir's right to self-determination. Resistance to India has continued forcefully throughout Indian occupation, but the Indian army thwarted major uprisings that were held in 1953, 1964, and 1988.

In 1996, the Humanitarian Law Project, an international association of humanitarian lawyers, conducted extensive research in Kashmir and reported its findings of grave breaches of humanitarian law. The report cited civilian casualties with more than 250,000 killed since January of 1990, including women, children (from infants to young boys and girls). These deaths are "incidental civilian casualties" and must be viewed

as violations of the right to life under humanitarian law. If the Indian army captures a so-called militant, that person will never be seen again alive but may be found later as a mutilated body along a roadside. The Humanitarian Law Project verified more than 200 rapes of Kashmiri women in Doda and the valley in January 1994 alone. The vast majority of casualties in the Kashmiri war were civilians caught up in "crackdowns," "sweeps" or just gunned down or tortured to death. Moreover, the lawyers



Jibril Abu-Adam

discovered poor conditions in hospitals and clinics due to raids by Indian troops into medical facilities. Bullet holes were found in hospital walls and medical personnel have been threatened, beaten, and detained. The International Federation of Human Rights has been meticulous in investigating the torture used by Indian forces in Kashmir interrogation centers. Extensive documentation of excruciating torture has been verified by the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture and the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims.

These and other facts profoundly touched and disturbed Jibril Abu Adam. By age 19, he decided to dedicate himself to jihad. Then he informed his family and friends of his intentions. Everyone he knew tried to warn Jibril that he was not required to take such a drastic step because there are many ways to serve Allah (SWT). His friends tried to convince him to go overseas to pursue studies of Islam as a form of service to Allah, but his consistent reply was, "I want Kashmir."

To those ends, Jibril began an intensive program of personal training in which he acquired practical knowledge and

tips for the battlefield from Muslims who had once served in the military. Translating his knowledge into action, Jibril began a rigorous physical exercise program. A Muslim soldier would later remark about Jibril's training, "He was ready to go. He had all the military training that he could get. He wore long heavy boots all day and reduced his meals to condition his body for all situations. He was pure and did not want anything but to serve Allah in Kashmir."

At the same time, he continued his studies of Arabic and Qur'an, and intensified his prayers. In an interview to determine his spiritual preparedness for jihad, Jibril cited a hadith stating that jihad would free two groups in the Ummah of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) from the hellfire. One group would be those who fight in the region of India, and the other would be those who assist Prophet 'Isa (as) against the Dajjal (anti-Christ). Questioned about the perils of jihad, Jibril asserted that "A shaheed (martyr) is the best, and I want to be the best." In November 1996, a loving and lengthy family discussion concluded that he must be permitted to pursue his dream.

He left his home and flew to the other side of the world to undergo further military training and engage in intensive language lessons in order to be able to communicate with his comrades in jihad. Reports indicate that even throughout the training, Jibril challenged himself to excel. While most soldiers prefer to train in the spring when the weather is milder, Jibril opted for the immediate winter training and endured frostbite which left his fingertips and toetips permanently numbed. At times when it was necessary to carry equipment by foot for long distances, though slight in frame, Jibril consistently carried much heavier backpacks than most of his fellow soldiers.

It is quite evident that Jibril's struggles were motivated by devotion to Allah (SWT). Clear signs that the conflict in Kashmir is jihad are numerous. For example, at one point, it was necessary for the mujahideen to climb a mountain with such a steep slope that it seemed almost like a vertical crawl on hands and knees while enemy soldiers shot heavy artillery at their backs. Each Muslim felt a warm

sensation on his back, almost like a palm repeatedly rubbing across the shoulders. When they reached the pinnacle of the mountain, the mujahideen asked one another, "What was that on my back?" Looking at each other's backs, they discovered their jackets had been pierced with multiple bullet holes but not a single bullet had actually penetrated their clothes or their skin. Apparently Allah (SWT) had sent angels to deflect the bullets. The mujahideen also noticed that whenever Muslims were killed on the battlefield, they lay peacefully where they fell and took on the appearance of one asleep, whereas the corpses of the fallen enemy began to decompose and became contorted, disfigured.

Of course while Jibril was training, his family was quite anxious about him and made several attempts to contact him by phone, but he never replied. It was later revealed that though he loved his family dearly, Jibril consciously made a choice to avoid returning phone calls because he did not want to weaken his focus and his psychological resolve for his mission. Frustrated by unanswered phone calls, Jibril's mother sent a letter to him through friends. A courier who personally delivered the letter to Jibril on a mountainside at the border between Pakistan and Kashmir would later recount the incident. He watched Jibril read the letter and congratulated Jibril for having completed his training. He urged him to travel back to America to see his family again before actually engaging in the jihad, and gently reminded him that duties to one's family are important in Islam. Jibril thanked the courier for his advice and assured him that he loved his family dearly and planned to visit them, Insha'Allah. "However," Jibril asserted, "the duties to my family are on a personal level while the duty to my Ummah (Muslim community) is the top priority." Pointing in the direction of Kashmir, he said, "I have to help these people. I am just waiting for the snow on this mountain to melt. Then I will cross over into Kashmir, Insha'Allah." The snow melted. On 26 October 1997, at the village of Doda in Kashmir, there was a skirmish. Thirty-four Indian soldiers were killed, and four Muslims became shaheed (martyrs). Allahu Akbar! Among those who became shaheed was Jibril, Insha' Allah. (It is reported from reliable sources that

Jibril was responsible for killing 17 of the 34 Hindu fighters.)

The news spread quickly because Jibril was the first known American to make this sacrifice on behalf of Muslims in Kashmir. Alhamdulillah, the numbers are consistent with the ratio of the jihad there — typically Muslim casualties number about one for every ten to twenty enemy losses. One mujahid who had trained with Jibril reported being amazed at his own initial response when he learned about what had happened at Doda. He honestly felt thoroughly delighted because Jibril had attained his goal of shaheed — the highest honor — and it was only later that he felt sadness as he thought about how much he would miss seeing his friend in this life.

But the story does not end there. It was a great honor for a small delegation of Muslims to visit the home of Jibril's parents in Atlanta to offer condolences and explain the implications of jihad and martyrdom in Islam. At the conclusion of a very loving and tender exchange of thoughts and reflections about Jibril, his sister, Lisa, announced her desire to become a Muslim immediately. As soon as Lisa had pronounced the *shahadah* (declaration of faith), her parents and extended family embraced and congratulated her. When a Muslim informed Lisa that her declaration of faith may have provided her the opportunity to see her brother some day in paradise, Lisa replied, "But I'm not doing this for him, I'm doing it for Allah." Obviously, she has taken on her brother's devotion, and though he is separated from her right now, she has just acquired millions of brothers and sisters in Islam. It is recounted in authentic hadith that on the Day of Judgment, each shaheed can intercede with Allah for seventy of his family members.

On 29 November 1997, a plaque was presented to Jibril's family during the ICNA Southeastern Regional Convention in Atlanta. The inscription reads: Think not of those who are killed in Allah's Cause as dead. Nay they are alive with their Lord and have their provision. (Qur'an 3:169) In recognition of Jibril Abu-Adam (also known as Lawrence Nicolas Thomas) for his devotion to His Creator and his ultimate sacrifice on behalf of his fellow Muslims in Kashmir. ■