



THE INVESTIGATIVE PROJECT ON TERRORISM

LOUAY SAFI



Louay Safi visited the White House twice. He met with Paul Monteiro, Associate Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement, during both visits on June 29, 2011 and July, 8 2011.

Biography

Safi served as the Islamic Society of North America's director of communications and leadership development until his dismissal following a military criminal investigation about lectures he gave at Fort Hood. *The Dallas Morning News* reported in February, 2010 that he had been suspended from teaching courses about Islam on the base after the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) referred its investigation to the Army.¹

After leaving ISNA, Safi became director of the political office of the Syrian National Council in August 2011², a group that provides funding to the Free Syrian Army. Safi's faction of the group – the National Bloc – is dominated by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, according to the Carnegie Middle East Center³.

Louay Safi was listed as unindicted co-conspirator number 4 in the case of Sami al-Arian, a professor of the University of South Florida and the director of the institution's World and Islam Studies Enterprise (WISE).⁴ Al-Arian pleaded guilty to crimes connected to providing support for the Palestinian Islamic Jihad [PIJ]. At the time, Safi was research director of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) in Herndon, Va., a group that provided large amounts of financial support for WISE.⁵ In a

¹ <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/20100206-U-S-torn-over-whether-9330.ece>

² <http://www.breitbart.com/Big-Peace/2012/07/25/Pentagon-Islamic-Adviser-Reappears-as-Political-Leader-for-Syrian-Muslim-Brotherhood-Dominated-Group> .

³ <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48358>.

⁴ <http://news.tbo.com/news/MGBCTN2GEBE.html>.

⁵ <http://www.investigativeproject.org/redirect/Exhibit324.pdf>.

1995 FBI wiretap entered into evidence at al-Arian's trial, he and Safi both agreed that the designation of the PIJ was empty political gesturing for the "Zionists":

Al-Arian: By God The Almighty, when he lists names like Abu Nidal and Fathi Shiqaqi and Ahmad Yassin ... Does Ahmad Yassin have accounts here? What is this nonsense?

Safi: He just wants to please them.

Al-Arian: Of course.

Safi: Nobody understands these things in America.

*Al-Arian: True, people don't understand anything. They don't understand anything.*⁶

Safi also wrote for the *Middle East Affairs Journal*,⁷ the publication of United Association for Studies and Research [UASR], a group set up by leading Hamas member Mousa Abu Marzook.⁸ The editor of the publication at the time of Safi's participation, Ahmed Yousef, went on to become Hamas' spokesman in the Gaza Strip.⁹ His name appears in an affidavit among the officers and directors of the Safa Group¹⁰, also known as the SAAR Network – a network of corporate officers and holding companies allegedly involved in the funding of terrorist groups.

Attacking U.S., Israel; Defending Terrorists

Safi has made numerous statements justifying or apologizing for terrorism:

- Speaking at the 39th Annual ISNA conference in September 2002, Safi condemned the Israeli government as terrorists and cast Palestinian terrorists as freedom fighters. He also accused the U.S. government of wrongly including "liberation movements" on "terrorist"
- lists. Safi stated:

"And so the first step I think in confronting terrorism is to be clear about who are the terrorists. When, for example, when we hold Palestinians as terrorists when they attack civilians but fail to hold the Israeli government as involved in terrorist acts when it kills through its military forces Palestinians through Apache or through assassination, through military forces, then I think we are going to make the whole issue less clear."¹¹

And:

⁶ <http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/misc/97.pdf>.

⁷ <http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/misc/204.pdf#page=2>.

⁸ <http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/misc/204.pdf>.

⁹ <http://www.investigativeproject.org/593/former-iap-president-indicted-for-naturalization-fraud>.

¹⁰ http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/890.pdf.

¹¹ Louay Safi speech to. 39th Annual ISNA Convention, Sept. 1, 2002.

“Again, let us take a concrete example. Let us take a look at the situation in the Holy Land. And it seems to me that – maybe most of us will agree – that what we call global terrorism is not completely separate from this conflict in the Holy Land.”¹²

And:

“When my government, the U.S. government, decides to use a very big definition of terrorism, and then picks on the underdog, on the victim of occupation in the Holy Land, and puts on the terrorist list every liberation movement in the world – in fact, according to current practices, any liberation in the history of humanity will be seen as terrorist. The current definition is biased toward the status quo; does not allow any reform that will recognize the right of people who have been wronged or aggrieved groups.”¹³.

And:

“You cannot close your eyes, refuse to help the people of the oppressed and then cry foul when they explode with anger because the situation has become so dire that it becomes really for them unbearable. So, what I am talking about here - we need to look at the situation and look at root causes.”¹⁴

- Safi has also used apologetics to describe Islamist attacks on America. Following the November 2009 Fort Hood attack, Safi blamed the U.S. for the violence by creating a culture of victimization:

“Radicalization often results from marginalization and a deepening sense of exclusion and unfair treatment by establish social groups and government agencies. Similarly, the extremist ideology responsible for violent outbursts is often rooted in the systematic demonization of marginalized groups.”¹⁵

- Safi has also been an apologist for Palestinian terror organizations. During another session of ISNA’s September 2002 annual conference, (entitled, “Beyond the Blame Game: Between Flawed US Foreign Policy and Distortions in Muslim Societies,”) Safi stated:

“And I think that we are in a position as the sole superpower today to change our behavior, change our foreign policy, make sure that we don’t allow those who are our allies to make atrocities and excess. And we don’t

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ <http://www.islamicity.com/articles/Articles.asp?ref=IC0911-3999>

call that [Israeli attacks] terrorism even when it's targeted against civilians. But we call any resistance to those atrocities terrorism.”¹⁶

- At the 2003 ICNA-MAS conference in Chicago, Safi again exhorted the audience to be sympathetic to Palestinian “freedom” fighters. He stated:

“We have to speak out against also when it is done by other states. I think we have to continually point out the terrorist tactics used by the Israeli government. Of course, we shouldn't be consumed all in that issue, but there are organizations specialized in looking at the violence of Palestinian community, and other communities. People who are fighting for freedom, for independence, we must be sympathetic towards them. We should be against the occupiers and oppressors.”¹⁷

- Although Safi and ISNA condemned the Fort Hood attack, Safi attacked the atmosphere of “Islamophobia” that compelled Muslim organizations to feel the need to condemn such terror assaults. , He wrote :

“There are those, both in the Muslim community and the public at large, who ask why should Muslim organizations and leaders feel compelled to condemn a crime that seems to happen repeatedly and whose perpetrators belong to all faith groups. When a person who happens to be a member of an established religion, say a Christian or a Jew, commits a crime, the media refers to him as a criminal and questions his act. When, however, the one who commits the crime happens to be a Muslim, the media refers to him as a Muslim and question his faith.”¹⁸

And:

“It sounds very logical indeed that in normal circumstances Muslim Americans should not feel that they have to issue press releases and convene press conferences every time a Muslim is involved in violence or crime. After all no other faith group do anything close to that. But Muslim Americans do not live under normal circumstances in post 9/11.”¹⁹

And:

“Distorting Islam and demonizing its followers is the most recent cottage industry that promotes Islamophobia in the United States and Canada.”²⁰

¹⁶ 39th Annual ISNA Convention, Sunday 4:30 – 6:00 p.m. September 1, 2002, Washington Convention Center Session 12B: 9-11 – Beyond the Blame Game: Between Flawed US Foreign Policy and Distortions in Muslim Societies.

¹⁷ ICNA-MAS, Chicago, IL, 12/26/03, “The U.S. and the Muslim World: Democracy, the War on Terrorism, and Our Role.”

¹⁸ http://louaysafi.com/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf=1&id=102.

¹⁹ http://louaysafi.com/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf=1&id=102.

²⁰ http://louaysafi.com/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf=1&id=102.

- Safi attacked a 2005 Freedom House report on Saudi publications and hate ideology in American mosques, writing, “Many of the sloppy statements and erroneous conclusions are the result of failing to consult with mainstream Muslim organizations, and neglecting to understand the dynamics within the American Muslim community.”²¹
- Safi has also defended other like-minded Islamist organizations, including the Council on American-Islamic Relations [CAIR]. The FBI downgraded its working relationship with CAIR in 2008, citing concerns over the group’s ties to the Hamas terrorist organization²². Safi expressed strong support for CAIR during the 2005 ISNA annual conference, where he said:

“And I really do always support the CAIR. It has been doing excellent work in the area of civil liberties. We should be supporting of them.”²³

Arguing For Islam in the West

- In a 1999 article on his website titled “Overcoming the Secular-Religious Divide,” Safi outlined an argument for the autonomy of Islamic communities in Western-style democracies. Ultimately, the article expresses strong support for Sharia rule at the societal level and for a functional Islamic state. It further downplays democracy as lacking morals.

Below are several quotes from the article, with emphasis added on those points that attack Western democracy and advocate Sharia for Muslim subsections of the population:

“My basic argument is that a political order rooted in Islamic norms shares with the modern secularist orders its desire to liberate the body politics from narrow religious and cultural interpretations. Unlike the secularist order, the Islamic political order, however, encourages the fostering of moral values in accordance with the overall scheme of moral autonomy.”²⁴ (I would take out the last part of the quote. It just doesn’t add much.)

And:

“The Islamic state, it should be emphasized, is not an institution devoted to advancing the interests of the Muslim community, but a political system based on universal principles, and one committed to maintaining peace, security and welfare for all citizens, irrespective of their doctrines, religions, nationality, race, or gender.”²⁵

²¹ Louay Safi, "Faulty Generalizations: Freedom House Cries Wolf ," INSIGHT, February 9, 2005, <http://www.aninsight.org/2005/02/faulty-generalizations-freedom-house.html> (I could not open this link).

²² <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2009/11/11/fbi-ties-cair-remain-strained-obama-administration>
ouay Safi. ISNA 42nd Annual Convention. September 2-5, 2005. ISNA. Rosemont, Ill. Session entitled “Priorities and Directions of American Muslims for the next 10 years”.

²⁴ <http://louaysafi.com/content/view/57/18>.

²⁵ <http://louaysafi.com/content/view/57/18/1/2/>.

And:

“The Islamic model should maintain the legislative and administrative independence of the followers of different religions, as the sphere of communal legislation does not fall under the governmental authority of the state. On the other hand, the majoritarian model of the democratic state deprives religious minorities of their legal independence, and insists on subjugating all citizens to a single legal system, which often reflects the doctrinal and behavioral values of the ruling majority.”²⁶

²⁶ <http://louaysafi.com/content/view/57/18/1/4/>.