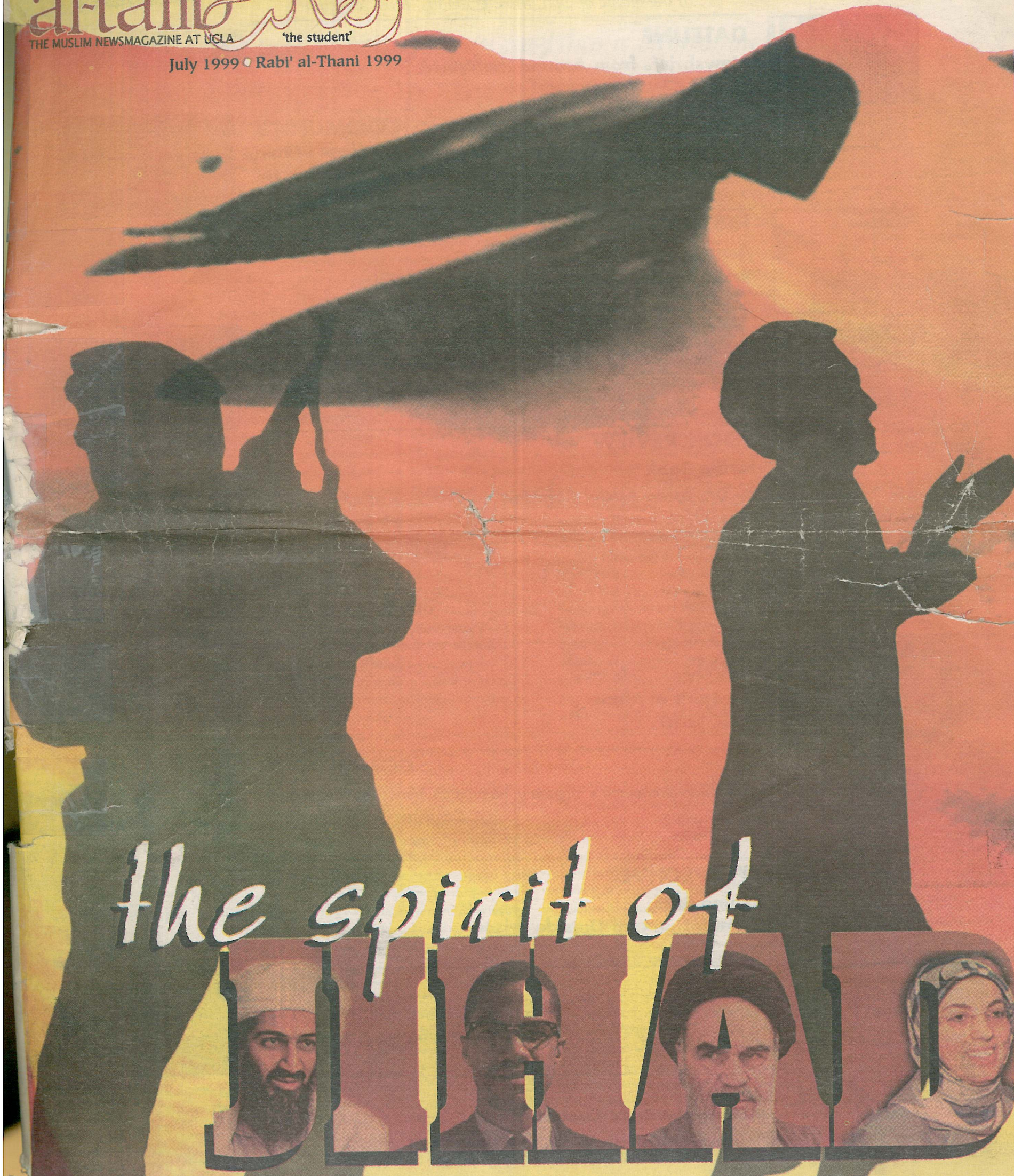
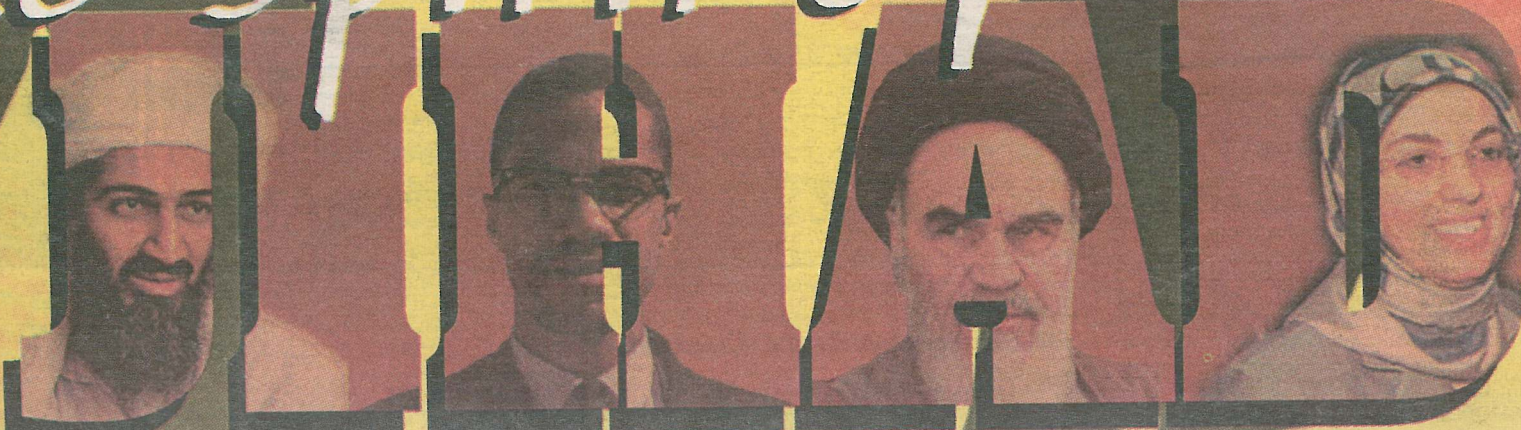


al-talib *التاليب*
THE MUSLIM NEWSMAGAZINE AT UCLA 'the student'

July 1999 • Rabi' al-Thani 1999



the spirit of



Jihad in America

maintaining an Islamic identity in an un-Islamic environment

“And those who strive in Our (Cause), - We will certainly guide them to our paths:

For verily Allah is with those who do right.”

-Surat al-'Ankabut, verse 69

Allah has given Muslims the precious gift of the *Din al-Haqq*, the religion of truth. It is the way of life of our beloved Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as well as the way of life of all the Prophets that came before him (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon all of them). As Muslims today, it is our responsibility to carry on the 'izzah (dignity) of this great religion by conducting ourselves in the manner which Allah has prescribed for us. While we will not be able to do this as perfectly as the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) did; this is not a reason to lose hope.

The mere fact that Allah has given us Islam is reason enough to carry on this responsibility with all our beings. Islam should be the measuring stick, the reference point for all our actions. We should not step outside our homes without first remembering why it is that we are going to work, or school. We should not eat without first remembering who provided for us. We should not sleep without first reflecting upon who gave us life, and who can take it away in a heartbeat.

Islam has never been about complacency or ease. Since the time of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), Islam has always been defined by struggling, and striving. Great men and women fought and continue to fight many battles to establish and maintain Islam. This battle, however, does not occur solely on battlefields. Often times, this battle is most ferociously fought from within.

Muslims everywhere are struggling to maintain an Islamic identity, but this struggle is particularly fierce for those living in non-Muslim environments, such as here in the United States. This Din al-Haqq is all-encompassing, yet we have found it so easy to sacrifice important elements of our Din to comply with and act according to our surroundings - no matter how un-Islamic they may be. How many times have we been at school or at work to have our ears sieged by harsh profanity in the speech of those around us? Upon hearing vulgar language, the ear of the Muslim should feel pain and angst. How can the ear of a Believer become accustomed to hearing such things that are displeasing to the Creator? How many times have we had to interact with people whose clothing does not properly cover them? Our eyes should not be able to handle seeing things Allah has made forbidden. How many times have we been ashamed to explain

our Islamic actions, neglecting to tell people the real reason we act "differently?" - as when making the *wudu'* (mandatory ablution before prayer), or refusing to shake hands with the opposite gender. Unfortunately, this neglect is common in our everyday routine. How many Muslims do you know who mask their beautiful Muslim name, instead opting to go by a Western one? Such is not the practice of the Muslim. The Muslim needs to take the utmost pride in his Din, and never be ashamed of what is right.

Unfortunately, we are at a stage where we have become desensitized to acts which go against the very basic beliefs of Islam. This is a very dangerous trend. We can never forget the struggle. We should never sacrifice the precious gifts that Allah has given us simply to please people, or to make us more accepted in the *dunya* (this world). If un-Islamic practices occur around us, we should never hesitate to speak out, even if our non-Muslim environment dictates otherwise. If we find ourselves in a gathering where alcohol is being served, we should not simply leave, but we should let people know why it is that we are leaving. If someone uses profanity around us, we should gently stop them, and explain why Islam condemns such behavior.

We may not gain many friends in this non-Muslim land by taking stances such as supporting Merve Kavakci in her struggle to wear the *hijab* (headscarf) or denouncing the Israeli occupation of Palestine, but this is why we need to continue struggling. When we hear someone refer to the great *Mujahid* (someone who struggles in Allah's cause) Osama bin Laden as a "terrorist," we should defend our brother and refer to him as a freedom fighter; someone who has forsaken wealth and power to fight in Allah's cause and speak out against oppressors. We take these stances only to please Allah.

It is important that we constantly take the Islamic perspective with the utmost pride and dignity. We need to be so certain in our beliefs that our tone is convincing enough to change the hearts of the most stringent of the un-Believers. Acting as a Muslim to the fullest in every situation is in itself a form of *da'wah* (invitation to Islam), a position we should all take advantage of. Allah has put us here, in a non-Muslim environment, for a reason. When it is time for prayer, we should not delay it - not for a second, even if we happen to be in

public. And, while we are praying, it is our *jihad* (striving in the way of Allah) to make sure pleasing Allah is our sole intention. And why not occasionally don the *kufi* (traditional cap for males) and other traditional Muslim clothing? We should express our Islamic identity in any way we can. The goal is not to flaunt our Islam, but to train ourselves to be proud of our Din not only in the comfort of the masjid, but in all settings. We are the representatives of Islam in this country; and we need to do our best to show people around us the beauty of our Din. Therefore, it is important that we act not according to the watered-down, twentieth-century version of Islam in the West, but to the Islam that was revealed by Allah and taught by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) - the Islam people took pride in, and didn't sacrifice any part of.

This is our jihad. It is only the "lesser jihad," to engage in warfare in order to establish the Din. The "greater jihad" is spiritual warfare against the lower self (the *nafsi*). This was exemplified by the Prophet (pbuh) in a *hadith* (saying of Prophet Muhammad, pbuh) when he said upon returning from battle, "We have returned from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad." Both these forms of jihad are relevant to Muslims today. As our people and our way of life are being attacked in every part of the globe (Kosova, Palestine, Kashmir, Algeria, Indonesia, and so on) we must prepare for our turn to fight in the cause of Allah by educating ourselves about this lesser jihad.

And even now, as Muslims living in this un-Islamic land, we must actively engage in the greater jihad by maintaining our Muslim identity, that is living Islam without compromising its integrity. We would all like to change the world; to bring justice to a seemingly unjust world. Let us begin by changing ourselves; by molding our character into that which would please Allah and His Messenger (pbuh). May Allah give us the strength and the courage to spread the true way of life, and may He not ever, for any reason, let us sacrifice any part of this Din to please those who do not follow it. May He instill us with the spirit of jihad in all its forms, allow us to uphold the 'izzah of Islam, and make our way of life victorious in every land in which His name is praised. Amin. •

Jazakum Allahu khayran,
-The Al-Talib Staff

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ON THE COVER:

(From Right to Left)

1. Merve Kavakci, dismissed from Turkish parliament and stripped of her Turkish citizenship due to her insistence upon wearing the *hijab* (headscarf).
2. Ayatollah Khomeini, leader of Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979.
3. Malik al-Shabazz, first American Muslim spokesman, martyred in 1965.
4. Osama bin Laden, freedom fighter and philanthropist.

This magazine contains
the name of Allah.
Please treat it with respect.
Jazakum Allahu khayran.

Al-Talib welcomes and
encourages letters from our
readers.

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Al-Talib is devoted to expressing the views, concerns and ideas of the American Muslim. It seeks to promote and achieve community empowerment and the worldwide success of Muslims by instilling the Ummah with the spirit of Jihad, the love of the Qur'an and the example of Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. It also serves to correct the mainstream media's misinformation about Islam and Muslims, and seeks to provide non-Muslims with accurate information about Islam. Furthermore, Al-Talib is committed to remaining an independent forum for a diverse spectrum of views and concerns.

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