

Saudi influences in the Netherlands. Links between the Salafist mission, radicalisation processes and Islamic terrorism

Introduction

The past few years have given cause to questions about the involvement of Saudi citizens, non-governmental organisations and persons in authority in the propagation among Muslims of strong anti-Western ideas, which could incite to radicalisation and perhaps even to terrorism. This issue has become topical since the attacks of 11 September 2001. Fifteen of the nineteen hijackers were found to have the Saudi nationality. In particular in the United States these attacks focused much attention on a possible, direct or indirect, responsibility of inspirators or sponsors from Saudi Arabia for Islamic radicalism and terrorism. In the US, but also in other Western countries the question was also raised whether certain persons and organisations, based in Saudi Arabia and combining aid with the propagation of a highly orthodox and at the same time anti-Western view of the Islam, might be linked to certain radicalisation processes within Muslim communities and the promotion or even support of terrorist violence.

For the AIVD this question was cause for a profound investigation into the other side of the religious-ideological manipulative activities and financing flows from Saudi Arabia. At issue in this context are in particular the role that these possibly play in the Netherlands in the propagation of anti-integration views, the increase of sentiments aimed at a confrontation with Dutch society among small segments of the Muslim communities in our country, and in the long term even the development of endogenous, violent tendencies (which, for example, may lead to terrorism) among some groups of Muslims in the Netherlands.

This report describes the state of affairs regarding the investigation at this moment. It is clear from the text that this concerns an issue which is still developing. On the one hand, this is a consequence of the noticeable willingness of the Saudi government, partly influenced by increasing terrorist threats in Saudi Arabia itself, to take strong action against individual extremists and networks that until recently, for the benefit of their own radical Islamic agenda, were able to misuse Saudi government institutions or semi-governmental organisations. On the other hand, we also notice shifts in those segments of Muslim communities in the Netherlands that have shown to be susceptible to manipulative activities deployed from Saudi Arabia.

This memorandum will first elaborate on the nature of Salafism in Saudi Arabia and in the Netherlands. Subsequently it will discuss the Salafist mission and the relationship with radicalisation processes in the Muslim communities in our country. Finally, recent developments in both Saudi Arabia and the Netherlands are described.

Salafism in Saudi Arabia

From way back Saudi Arabia has practiced a conservative and puritan form of Islam which is professed by a large part of the population and is considered by the Saudi government as the official doctrine. This orthodox form of Islam builds on the views of the eighteenth century religious scholar Mohammed-ibn Abd al-Wahhab. In the Western world this specific form of Islam is therefore often referred to as 'wahhabism'. However, its followers reject this designation because it suggests that a person (Al Wahhab) is followed, which is considered un-Islamic. They prefer referring to themselves as 'true Muslims' or 'Salafists'.

Salafism is a worldwide movement within Islam which also has ancient roots. It also has non-Saudi antecedents, but in the past century Salafism has increasingly been determined by the Saudi variety and to a large extent has become identified by it. Salafism is a puritan form of Islam and pursues a return to the 'pure Islam': the religious persuasion that dates from the time of the prophet Mohammed and his immediate successors. In Salafism as it is practiced today this call for purity often, but not always, coincides with a strong rejection of everything that is considered as contravening the pure Islam, which involves both movements within Islam (for example Shi'ism or Sufism) and outside Islam (Jewry, Christianity, the Western democratic model of society, et cetera).

In today's Salafism two main trends can be distinguished. On the one hand there is the *salafiyya ilmiyya*, a broad movement that recognises the power of the ulema (theological mullahs) related to the Saudi Royal Family. On the other hand there is the *salafiyya jihadiyya*, which does not recognise this power and propagates the worldwide jihad against both the Western world and the Saudi Royal Family. The rejection of violence by the Salafism that is loyal to the Saudi Royal Family, however, does not mean that this movement is in general less vehement in its repudiation of the Western world. Several spiritual leaders in this pro-government form of Salafism state that the way in which society is given shape in the Western world (in, for example, democracy, equal rights for men and women, freedom of expression, et cetera) is un-Islamic and they question the desirability of integration of Muslims in Western society.

Influencing and financing

As guardian of the to Muslims most religious places Mecca and Medina, and as a rich oil producing state, the Saudi government in the past decades has aspired to a leading role in the Islamic world. The country in particular attempted to secure influence by financially supporting Muslim communities across the world, by building mosques, setting up educational projects, hiring imams, fitting out socio-cultural training centres, et cetera. It is likely that over the past few decades the Saudi government also has considered this financial support as a means to bring Muslims abroad to the, in Saudi eyes, 'true' form of Islam. Naturally, a preference existed for the Salafist movement dominant in the own country, but it is not correct to say that the Saudi aid was exclusively aimed at Salafist Muslims or was

exclusively aimed at converting foreign Muslims to the own religious persuasion. It is clear that often the charitable and humanitarian aid often also had a missionary purpose.

The combination of charity and missionary activities for a long time marked the financing activities of the Saudi government. Within the Saudi government an important role was played by the Ministry for Islamic Affairs that via the Saudi diplomatic representations abroad made funds available to the Muslim communities residing in these countries. Often even more important in volume was the financial support from prominent Saudi private benefactors and large organisations, which since the 1960s and 1970s have undertaken worldwide charity and missionary activities (in itself, incidentally, a legitimate combination which also applies to many Western religiously inspired aid organisations). These institutions, such as the *Muslim World League* (also known as *Rabita Trust*), *Al-Haramain*, *World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY)* and *International Islamic Relief Organisation (IIRO)*, are officially known as 'non-governmental organisations (NGOs)', but in fact maintain close ties with parts of the Saudi establishment. Although to the outside world they strongly emphasise their strong humanitarian aims, these organisations are primarily focused on propagating the Salafist interpretation of Islam. They concentrate on setting up and supporting mosque centres with an orthodox persuasion, hiring, training and subsidising imams with a like persuasion, publishing and disseminating Salafist literature, et cetera.

In the course of time problems arose on two fronts with respect to these NGOs. First, for years the headquarters of these organisations pursued a policy of uncontrolled financing of funds. It used to be customary for charitable and missionary projects abroad to look for local partners and, once sufficient confidence had been gained, to make available considerable amounts of money without setting too many conditions beforehand. Until recently, there was hardly any supervision on the way in which these funds were spent. As a result of this lack of control several groups abroad, in particular in 'failed states' or conflict areas, were able to use this money for non-humanitarian purposes, in particular on financing armed conflict.

A second problem relating to a large number of Saudi NGOs is associated with this lack of supervision of the headquarters. In several cases individual extremists and networks have been able to take over the control of some of the foreign departments of the NGOs, especially in a number of conflict areas, only to steer their own radical Islamic course (sometimes even with the tacit approval of radical elements within the NGOs or the spiritual leaders in Saudi Arabia itself). This was especially the case at the divisions of Al Haramain in Bosnia Herzegovina and Somalia, which were closed down in 2002 after these had been placed on the UN-list of persons and organisations linked to Al Qaeda and/or the Taliban. These measures were supported by the Saudi government. For the first time it became explicitly clear that, under external and internal pressure, it had seriously considered the negative effects of the many years' combination of charitable and missionary activities.

Salafism in the Netherlands

The Netherlands has several mosque foundations of a straight Salafist persuasion. These are the result of missionary and funding activities carried out from Saudi Arabia. These foundations are the *El Tawheed Foundation* in Amsterdam, the *As Soennah Foundation – Centre Sheikh Al Islam ibn Taymia* in The Hague, the *Islamic Centre Al Fourkaan Foundation* in Eindhoven, the *Mosque Al Mouahidine Foundation (Omar ibn Khattab Mosque)* in Helmond, the *Foundation for Islamic Youth* in Breda and the *Islamic Foundation for Education and Transfer of Knowledge* in Tilburg. The involvement of large Saudi missionary organisations can most clearly be seen with four of these mosques. At the Tawheed mosque in Amsterdam there is a financial, organisational and personal intertwinement with the organisation referred to above, Al Haramain, whereas in case of the Fourkaan mosque in Eindhoven, the Al Mouahidine mosque in Helmond and the Foundation for Islamic Youth in Breda there is a clear intertwinement with the private (but, also, closely associated to persons within the Saudi establishment) missionary organisation *Al Waqf Al Islami Foundation*. Besides these mosques which can be characterised as explicitly Salafist, there are several others (probably up to several dozen) that are less easy to typify as such, but which also receive financial support from Saudi charities, private benefactors or government bodies. Although not explicitly Salafist, as a result of the very orthodox message propagated these mosques attract certain groups of Muslims that can be characterised as Salafist, a designation which they often use themselves. This was for example the case with the *Foundation Mosque Annas* in Rotterdam, to which Salafists are drawn because of the sermons and personality of the imam preaching there. As regards the financial support for these mosques from Saudi Arabia it should be noted that it is not necessarily a matter of formal financing of mosque foundations, but rather allowances to specific persons (in particular imams).

Especially the large Saudi NGOs Muslim World League and Al-Haramain have 'branches' in the Netherlands. These are the *Muslim World League Foundation* the Netherlands and the *Al Haramain Humanitarian Aid Foundation* in Amsterdam. The former head of the parent office of Al-Haramain in Saudi Arabia, Aqeel al Aqeel and his assistant Mansour al-Kadi, in the past also acquired board positions in the El Tawheed Foundation and the Al Haramain Humanitarian Aid Foundation in Amsterdam, in exchange for financing to build the Tawheed mosque in Amsterdam. The AIVD does not have any indications that the two board members actually used their influence to become involved in the daily running of the Tawheed mosque. In practice, the involvement of the two was restricted to formal yearly inspections.

Especially in the years 1997-2001 the Al Haramain Humanitarian Aid Foundation played a role in checking the applicants of various requests for financial support that were addressed to Al Haramain by persons or organisations within the Muslim communities in the Netherlands. However these requests always had to be submitted directly to the head office in Saudi Arabia. Also when the eventual outcome was positive, the applicants had to travel to Saudi Arabia to collect the money. From this we learned that the management of Al Haramain's financing projects was not conducted via its Dutch office. For the rest the Al Haramain Humanitarian Aid Foundation existed mainly on paper. To maintain contact with Salafist and other mosques in the Netherlands the head office preferred using

travelling liaisons who when visiting the Netherlands often made an effort to operate very discreetly (sometimes even secretly). The AIVD does not rule out that ties were maintained in this context with the more radical segments of Muslim communities in the Netherlands.

The AIVD conducts investigations into said foundations of mosques and foundations of a Salafist persuasion. In general, these are not very transparent with regard to the origin and allocation of their financial means. It is often unclear how they are able to make substantial payments on the maintenance of mosque buildings, energy, the imams' salaries, library facilities, the organisation of conferences with foreign speakers and guests, and so on. Besides, there are frequent cash withdrawals and deposits in addition to a systematic so-called joint use of bank accounts.

Furthermore, since the 1990s the AIVD has incidentally received information that a small number of imams who propagate Salafist ideas, received support from the Saudi embassy. This concerns modest (but periodical) allowances that are in no relation to the capital circulating in the foundations with a Salafist persuasion.

Salafist mission and radicalisation in the Netherlands

The sermons of the Salafist mosques referred to above generally followed the line of ulema in Saudi Arabia, who are loyal to the Saudi government or are tolerated by it. The AIVD does not have any information that the movement salafiyya jihadiyya referred to above is or has been openly proclaimed in a Dutch mosque. It should be noted, however, that the line between the form of Salafism that is loyal to the Saudi Royal Family and its jihad counterpart, is not always easy to draw. As already mentioned, also the 'royalist' Salafism may show strong anti-Western sentiments. Also the Salafist mosques in the Netherlands with leaders or imams who follow the ulema and that are loyal to the Saudi government, for a long time were ambivalent with regard to condemning the jihad Salafism and banning it from its own circles. Possibly the leaders of these mosques were dominated by feelings of ideological affinity with their more radical 'brothers' and feared losing part of their followers. Conversely, some of the visitors of the mosques who tended more towards the jihadist Salafism apparently still found sufficient inspiration in what was preached by the more moderate leaders of these mosques. Although the more radical Salafists brought up the armed jihad rather obliquely and would never approve of it openly, they still appreciated the general message that was propagated, about the need to defend anything that threatened to deprave Islam.

Present-day Salafism works like a magnet on some sections of the Muslim communities in Western countries, in particular on some groups of Muslim youngsters, the main reason being that it offers seemingly simple solutions to the problem of identity that many of them struggle with. As said before, basically Salafism seeks to restore 'pure Islam', i.e. Islam as it was practiced by the Prophet Mohammed and his first followers. Present-day Salafism provides these Muslims with a kind of new identity as a 'pure Muslim', propagating a simple formula for this purpose. It contends that it is possible

to become a 'pure Muslim' by banning, sometimes even combating, anything that is considered 'un-Islamic'. The interpretation of this doctrine may lead to radical views in some followers, namely when 'un-Islamic' is equated with other religious convictions and social views. Exceptions apart, present-day Salafism, in its two manifestations discussed, is to a large extent determined by this intolerant position.

A direct link can therefore be made between present-day Salafism and the radicalisation processes within some sections of the Muslim communities in the Netherlands. A distinction should however be made between, on the one hand, radicalisation in an anti-integration sense (which advocates an extreme and hostile isolationism with tendencies to reject government authority and propagate taking the law into one's own hands within the own group) and, on the other hand, radicalisation as a prelude to an active combat against the environment, resulting in a direct or indirect involvement with radical Islamic violent activities. Although different, both forms of radicalisation involve security risks to the democratic legal order.

For a long time the Salafist and a number of other ultra-orthodox mosques in the Netherlands actively propagated unrestrained radical, extreme and isolationist views. Very plain messages were propagated, such as sermons in which "seculars, socialists or democrats" were compared with the "allies of Satan" or which claimed that each law that goes against an Islamic law should not be complied with. The congregation were also told that lapidation was a justified remedy against adultery. Also obtainable in these mosques was (and is, as was recently shown) literature which fulminates against homosexuality or incites to female circumcision.

The majority of the imams involved originally come from other Islamic countries than Saudi Arabia, such as Egypt, Syria, Sudan or Somalia. Many went to universities in Saudi Arabia. Even a long stay in the Netherlands in practice did not prevent them from propagating Islam in precisely the same radical way as they had been taught in their country of origin. In particular the Salafist aspiration to purity, together with a rejection of anybody holding different views, probably has contributed to the fact that imams showed little inclination to ask themselves how the way of life they propagated relates to the standards and values of Western society. Salafist mosques, incidentally, did and still do invite travelling preachers to be guest speakers in the Netherlands. The Al Waqf Al Islami Foundation referred to above even arranges annual conferences. Here, too, some of the sermons are conducted by imams who originate mainly from Islamic countries and who hold radical-Islamic views which they propagated actively during their guest performances in the Netherlands.

The same applies mutatis mutandis to the books which incidentally are available not only from several mosques but also from the internet and regular bookshops. These are largely older books (which have however recently been translated into Dutch) that were originally written in countries in which Islam is the dominating religion and which focus primarily on these Muslims. Although it would be too simplistic to argue that the fact that these books are sold in Salafist and other radical mosques implies that imams and the leaders of these mosques have the intention to actively propagate the views expressed

in these books, they appear hardly able to assess the reactions that these views may evoke across broad sections of Dutch society.

The imams' ignorance of the Dutch relations described above does not alter the fact that the contents of the sermons they delivered for a protracted period are at odds with the values and standards that are adhered to in a democratic society. This also applies to some passages of the literature that can still be obtained from said mosques, and which recently received press coverage. Actions that incite to hate are at odds with the rights and liberties laid down in the constitution. However, the effects on the radicalisation process are difficult to quantify or to otherwise express in precise terms. It should be pointed out in this context that part of the visitors of these mosques are relatively indifferent towards the political message proclaimed in these mosques and consider the mosque purely as a place for prayer. In general we can say however that the propagation of intolerant views as proclaimed in these mosques, has a harmful effect on the integration of Muslim minorities in the Netherlands. Even if for the time being the ideas proclaimed have no truly radicalising effects, this danger needs to be taken seriously.

Earlier on we stated that there are no clear signs that jihadism is openly preached in radical mosques in the Netherlands. On the other hand, there have been sermons and prayers that showed overt jihadist features, in which for example Allah was asked to "deal with the enemies of Islam", namely Bush, Sharon and the "enemies of Islam in Kashmir and Chechnya". Also, sermons were held which in the perception of the audience could raise the impression that Islam is being oppressed, threatened or attacked. As said before, there is an undercurrent in the Salafist mosques that is more radical than its leaders. In some persons belonging to these more radical circles that sympathise with jihadism, the *Leitmotiv* of suppressed, threatened and attacked Islam may become the 'contrived' and 'polite' justification for an actual involvement with the jihad.

We have not found any particular sermon of an imam that can be pinpointed as a direct catalyst in the development towards jihadism. In jihadist circles, the sermons of imams are usually taken out of context. Radical literature is also read selectively and interpreted in particular ways. Furthermore, autonomous developments towards jihadism have been witnessed outside of the Salafist mosques, in which youngsters were fed and educated by internet sites, discussions with kindred spirits or interference by recruiters outside the mosques.

Repeatedly, the AIVD has come across activities displayed by these recruiters. Also in and around (but not restricted to) Salafist mosques. The two young men who in 2002 were killed in Kashmir after they had been recruited for the jihad, had ties with the Fourkaan mosque in Eindhoven. For a long time the leaders and imams of these and other mosques adopted a certain degree of indifference and ambivalence (from feelings of ideological affinity) towards recruiters within or in the margins of the mosque community. This while these recruiters presented themselves, also within this community, as very radical Muslims. In the recruitment cases in and around these mosques investigated by the AIVD,

time and again it was observed that the recruiters had removed their recruits from the mosque at some time for the very reason of avoiding that these recruitment attempts were recognised as such within this community and would be met with resistance. Isolating the recruits from the community often turned out to be an effective means for the recruiters to have the recruits develop into adherents of jihadism.

It should be emphasised that the Salafist mission in the Netherlands not only takes place via imams in the Salafist mosques referred to. Preachers from abroad (not only from Saudi Arabia) who frequently visit the Netherlands at the initiative of Salafist mosques or the Saudi missionary organisations active in the Netherlands, play an important role. Also study trips to Saudi Arabia for youngsters, organised by missionary organisations, contribute to the dissemination of Salafist ideas.

Furthermore, the 'virtual' Salafist mission is not to be ignored. Especially youngsters have found their way to the websites of more or less radical Salafist mullahs. Rather disconcerting in this respect is that some of these mullahs in Saudi Arabia render advice to young Dutch Muslims via the internet on subjects such as the jihad and martyrdom, and that these masters in some cases fail to mitigate the fanaticism of their students. It is also known that some radical Muslims in the Netherlands, including a number of recruiters arrested in the Netherlands, maintain close connections with spiritual leaders in Saudi Arabia. These contacts act amongst other things as a source of inspiration and as an oracle. An important part of the issues dealt with concern the function and content of the jihad, the obligation to take part in the jihad and the allowability of terrorist actions and activities that support terrorism. This way these Saudi 'advisors' who propagate Salafism, have influence on the debate on jihad and martyrdom among persons being watched by the AIVD.

To date radical Islamic terrorism in the Netherlands has not resulted in any acts of violence in our own country but does facilitate the international jihad, such as recruiting fighters to be deployed elsewhere in the world, giving shelter to Islamic fighters from abroad and providing false identity documents. In some cases there is an actual participation in the jihad abroad. Although no radical Islamic terrorist attacks have as yet taken place in the Netherlands, there are networks we know of that support terrorist actions abroad. No Saudis were found among these foreigners in the Netherlands. At this moment it should also be noted that no direct links whatsoever can be established between the Salafist mission and the financing activities from Saudi Arabia on the one hand, and terrorism related activities in the Netherlands on the other hand.

Measures in Saudi Arabia

Before Al Qaeda's suicide attacks in Riyadh on 12 May 2003 (and a subsequent series of attacks in November 2003) the Saudi government had distinct trouble acknowledging the gravity and extent of terrorism and the strength of the radical Islam opposition in its own country. Riyadh sometimes associated the incidents of violence that in reality had a political background, with the activities of

foreign criminals. The Saudi government itself, too, did not operate very effectively in combating terrorism. The involvement of fifteen Saudis in the attacks of '9/11' may have caused a shock effect with the Saudi rulers, but the first reaction was one of denial and not a recognition of the need to seriously tackle extremism in Saudi Arabia. This awareness, however, did materialise following the terrorist attacks of 12 May 2003. The message Al Qaeda issued here – despite the tacit support in parts of the Saudi community for its activities, that it will not abstain from terrorist activities within the boundaries of the kingdom - was unmistakably understood by the Saudi authorities. They now recognise the existence of a domestic violent extremism and appear determined to find a solution for this problem.

The new course Riyadh now follows in combating terrorism not only manifests itself in the use of repression against violent extremists, the dismantling of terrorist cells and the arrest of financiers of terrorism, but also in a cautious willingness to deal with the elements that make up the breeding ground for Islamic extremism. From some – but certainly not all – Saudi school textbooks objected to in the Western media, passages were removed that preached intolerance towards Jews and Christians. Mosques were brought under tighter control of the state. Radical imams were dismissed or forced to take religious retraining courses.

Since '12 May' a start has been made with curbing the activities of individuals and charities that – often not deliberately, but because of negligence in verifying the expenditure of their gifts – support violent groups abroad. The kingdom has issued a formal ban on donating money to benefactors abroad, also to prevent collection money of the mosques from ending up with terrorists. A High Committee has been set up within the Saudi government that is to supervise the relief funds of charitable organisations. These organisations had to consolidate their accounts into one account for all their expenses. In addition, Saudi Arabia has introduced new legislation that is to combat money laundering. The authorities now exercise more supervision over informal transfer systems for money and other valuables. Recently, the Saudi authorities announced a new guideline that states that requests for finance from imams, foundations and mosques can no longer be addressed to charitable NGOs, but are to run via the Saudi embassies. According to this new guideline, the embassies will first have to consult with the relevant guest country on the proposal to provide financing.

The Saudi government has in particular intervened in the missionary organisation Al Haramain, which received negative coverage because of its support to terrorism. In January 2004 the Saudi minister of Religious Affairs, who is also the chairman of the Board of Al-Haramain, announced that the head of Al-Haramain, Sheikh Aqeel al-Aqeel, had been removed from his position. In addition to Aqeel al-Aqeel, three other board members were removed from the Board of Al-Haramain: Mansour Abdulrahman Hammed al-Kadi, Abdur-Rahman ibn Hasan Al-Husaini and Sheikh Abdul-Malik ibn Al-Qaasim. The reason for their departure not known.

Also, early 2004 Saudi Arabia, together with the United States, placed four foreign branches of Al-Haramain on the UN list of persons and organisations related to Al Qaeda and/or the Taliban. These are the offices in Pakistan, Indonesia, Kenya and Tanzania. Earlier on the offices of Al-Haramain in Bosnia and Somalia had been placed on the list. Early June 2004 the United States proposed to extend the list still further, namely with the former head of Al-Haramain (Al Aqeel) and five Al-Haramain branches. These five branches are located in Afghanistan, Albania, Bangladesh, Ethiopia and the Netherlands. With the exception of the Dutch branch, Al-Haramain Humanitarian Aid in Amsterdam, these branches were included in this UN list because of their involvement in providing (financial) aid to Al Qaeda. With respect to the Dutch foundation Al-Haramain Humanitarian Aid in Amsterdam there are no indications that this branch is or has been involved in any form of support to Al Qaeda. Al-Haramain Humanitarian Aid Amsterdam was placed on the list because it maintained Al Aqeel in his position of chairman of this foundation.

Saudi Arabia is displaying an increased willingness to cooperate with the United States in combating the financing of terrorism. In the past year US delegates made repeated suggestions for improvement of the supervision of the deployment of money to these organisations and these suggestions seem to have been acted on. Saudi Arabia is also a party to various treaties that seek to combat terrorism. A work group has been formed that is to combat the funding of terrorism from Saudi Arabia. The US and Saudi investigation and intelligence services collaborate on this and Saudi Arabia has committed itself to implement the forty recommendations made by the Financial Action Task Forces (FATF) to prevent money laundering practices and the eight special FATF recommendations against the financing of terrorism.

It is of great importance for the Dutch government to closely watch whether the authorities in Riyadh will actually put into effect their intentions and what the effect will be of the measures already taken. The Saudi government has taken promising steps, but will need support to continue this course. It should be considered that Saudi Arabia should now be given the time to actually implement the measures in the field of combating the financing of terrorism. It is too early yet to assess the effectiveness of these measures, in particular because at this moment only the existence and the quality of the legislation has been verified and assessed by the FATF (and not the effectiveness; the acts have not yet been in existence long enough to do so). This, incidentally, to the satisfaction of the FATF countries.

Shifts witnessed in the Netherlands

The measures in Saudi Arabia unmistakably also have an effect on the Salafist mission in the Netherlands. For example the Saudi government has stated to seek to establish a greater transparency with respect to the financing by Saudi government bodies to Islamic institutions and imams in the Netherlands. As stated earlier on, within the context of the Salafist mission worldwide (including the Netherlands) the Saudi government finances imams who wish to preach the Saudi view

of Islam. In connection with the interview with the former Saudi embassy employee al-Mutiry in *De Telegraaf* in January 2004 and the subsequent questions raised by the Second Chamber the Saudi ambassador in the Netherlands in talks with the Dutch government has promised that with regard to the financing of imams, mosques and Islamic organisations he wishes to show complete transparency. In this context the ambassador has provided five names of imams active in the Netherlands who receive, via the Saudi embassy, an (as it turned out, relatively modest) allowance from Saudi Arabia. Although in the past the AIVD received indications that apart from these five imams, also mosques and Islamic organisations in the Netherlands received financial support via the Saudi embassy, the Saudi ambassador stated that at this moment the Saudi embassy no longer provides any financing to mosques or Islamic organisations. The ambassador also, in accordance with new Saudi legislation, announced that the embassy will be open about any new incidences of financing of imams, mosques, and Islamic organisations. Also, he has offered the Dutch government his cooperation in combating extremism and terrorism.

Besides this the staff changes in the leadership of the head office of Al Haramain in the Netherlands also have had an effect. For some time now the travelling liaisons of these missionary organisations who frequently visited the Netherlands in the past few years, have not manifested themselves in that capacity. Also Aqeel al Aqeel and Al-Kadi, after their removal from the board of the head office of Al Haramain in Saudi Arabia, have also been removed from the board of the El Tawheed Foundation.

However, this latter measure should not only be considered against the background of the changed course of the Saudi authorities in the own country, due to which it appears that Salafist and other highly orthodox mosques in the Netherlands can no longer count on generous financial support without any firm conditions beforehand or a check afterwards. Earlier on the imams of these mosques already showed a growing willingness to adjust to the Dutch relations and adopt a milder tone in their sermons. It should be emphasised that this was not so much due to a realisation coming from their own beliefs, but to increasing pressure from outside. Several factors have contributed to the circumstance that, since the past two years the Salafist mission from Saudi Arabia wishes to present itself to the outside world in a more moderate way.

The on-going media coverage and the national politics relating to what is happening in the mosques in the Netherlands has not gone unnoticed by imams and the mosques' leaders. Also confronting was the fact that a number of imams were addressed by local administrators (such as the mayors of Amsterdam, The Hague and Tilburg) in connection with their sermons in which they propagated radical views. Also the arrests of the persons involved in the recruitment made it apparent to a number of mosques that they, too, were being closely watched by the police and AIVD.

The gradually changing attitude of the Salafist mosques not only manifests itself in a more moderate content of the public sermons. Increasingly, imams and the leaders of these mosques state that they wish to conform to Dutch mores and legislation. The AIVD has also observed that recruiters were

banned from the mosques because of fear that continuing to tolerate them would bring these mosques into discredit. Several mosques have also tried to brush up their tarnished image by organising open days for local administrators or the public at large. Two critical remarks should however be placed with this observation.

First, the adjustments made in these mosques are not carried through at equal speed and it is too early as yet to conclude that this is an irreversible process. The books and records of the Salafist foundations are still not very transparent. Some mosques, for example the Fourkaan mosque in Eindhoven, are still a closed bastion. In other mosques it is still unclear to what extent the more moderate tone in the public sermons of the imams is based on tactical considerations, or has to do with new insights into Dutch relations. That these insights are still hardly developed, was again manifested in the complete lack of understanding shown in the reactions in circles of the Tawheed mosque in Amsterdam to the commotion in the media regarding, among other things, the book "The Path of the Muslim". Also the arrival of new imams from abroad, travelling radical preachers or the falling away of the pressure of the media and politics presently experienced in the Salafist mosques, may still lead to a relapse to the uninhibited propagating of radical views. The different attitudes of the imams and leaders of the mosques therefore do not necessarily mean a fundamental change in their personal interpretation of the Salafist doctrine.

Second, the AIVD has direct indications that groups of radical Muslims, as a result of the more moderate attitude adopted by the imams involved, prefer private meetings to the Salafist mosques to seek nourishment for their ideas. The recruiters, too, have transferred their activities to less visible locations. This is a drawback of the momentarily reticent attitude of the Salafist centres in the Netherlands. The radicalisation process increasingly appears to have shifted to small mosques and living rooms, where impetus to these processes that can be seen as a prelude to jihadism, is provided by internet sites and discussions with kindred spirits. Effectively this development makes it even more difficult to observe and check these processes. We should therefore not infer from the foregoing that the security risks regarding the nature and extent of Islamic radicalism and jihadism in the Netherlands have in any way been reduced.