

Al-Azhar decrees prohibition of joining Muslim Brotherhood

Author:

Sun, 2020-12-20 21:17

CAIRO: Al-Azhar Fatwa Global Center has said that joining the Muslim Brotherhood and other terrorist groups is forbidden according to Shariah and that God has forbidden division and disagreement.

The Egyptian newspaper Al-Watan quoted Al-Azhar as saying in its announcement that God forbids people from pursuing any path that distracts them from following the truth, explaining that keeping to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, in accordance with Shariah, was the only way to please God.

"It is clear to the public what these groups have done in distorting some texts, cutting them out of their context, and using them to achieve personal goals or interests and corrupting the land," the center said in the fatwa.

"Membership in these extremist groups is considered forbidden by Shariah."

"Joining the terrorist Brotherhood is forbidden by law [and is considered] cooperating in immorality and aggression, for that group violates the law of God and is involved in terrorism," said Abdullah Al-Najjar, a member of the Islamic Research Academy.

Hussein Al-Qadi, a researcher in religious affairs and Islamic movements, said that the fatwa is the first of its kind in the history of Al-Azhar.

"This fatwa has never been issued from Al-Azhar before. Various statements were issued by Al-Azhar describing the Brotherhood as being outdated. In fact, Imam Muhammad Mustafa Al-Maraghi, reformer and rector of Al-Azhar, demanded the dissolution of the Brotherhood," Al-Qadi said.

"Al-Azhar Al-Sharif published in 1965 a report refuting Sayed Qutb's thought and showing that it is perverse. Qutb was a leading member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s and 1960s. The fatwa issued today that prohibits joining the Muslim Brotherhood is consistent with Al-Azhar's march in this direction," he added.

"I think that this fatwa is an important step that deserves praise...and greater efforts should be based on this move," he said.



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Egypt's Al-Azhar calls on international community to criminalize 'anti-Muslim' actions
Al-Azhar grand imam threatens legal action against those who insult prophet

[No reason for delay in forming Lebanese government, says leading Christian cleric](#)

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Sun, 2020-12-20 21:00

BEIRUT: There is no reason for delaying the formation of a new Lebanese government, the country's leading Christian cleric said on Sunday. Efforts to form a new government have been blocked by political factions, with Maronite Patriarch Bechara Boutros Al-Rai making a personal intervention

to dissolve the stalemate.

Mustapha Adib quit as prime minister in September, less than a month after he was nominated to replace Hassan Diab, who took over from Saad Hariri at the end of January this year.

The cleric said that in all his communications during the past few days with President Michel Aoun, Prime Minister-designate Hariri and the head of the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) Gebran Bassil, he had found “no reason for the delay in forming the government – not for a single day.”

He stressed the need for a government that was free of quotas, counter-conditions, and obstructions that paralyzed its decisions.

“This government must be non-political and non-partisan, with ministers who are known to civil society for their competence, achievements, and expertise, provided this government is formed in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and through consultation and pure intentions between the PM-designate and the president within the framework of an agreement, partnership, and rotating portfolios.”

Al-Rai said that the job of the new government was to “devote itself to implementing reforms, receive the planned and promised international aid, and prioritize rebuilding Beirut, which was destroyed by the (Aug. 4) explosion.” On Dec. 9 Hariri suggested to Aoun a cabinet lineup of 18 ministers but, since that date, there has been no progress in forming a new government. The past 48 hours have seen increased tensions between the FPM and the Future Movement, giving the impression that the process of forming a government was becoming more complicated and that the patriarch’s mediation would not lead to a breakthrough.

The FPM issued a statement accusing Hariri of “attempting to bypass the constitutional authority of the president as an equal partner in the process of forming the government and as the head of the country, in addition to insisting on heeding the covenant, not adopting clear and unified standards for dealing with all Lebanese people, having an intention to look right through national balances, and returning to a time of marginalization and eroding rights.”

Its statement added: “This cannot be tolerated.”

Information leaked to the media said the FPM would agree to the formation of a government in exchange for three major ministries – interior, defense and justice – that would put it in charge of Lebanon’s security portfolio.

The Future Movement accused the FPM leadership of “insisting on overthrowing the constitutional standard for forming governments.”

FPM lawmaker Ibrahim Kanaan announced after his meeting with Al-Rai on Sunday that the debates should not continue and that Aoun was ready to settle the government matter in accordance with the constitution and a French initiative aimed at rebuilding the country and salvaging the economy. But he did not give details.

He expected a meeting between Aoun and Hariri early next week in light of the clarifications and communication taking place, especially since the president was “determined to resolve the government formation issue” in accordance with the constitution and the French initiative.

Mustafa Alloush, the vice president of the Future Movement, addressed Aoun and his son-in-law Bassil on social media: “If the intention is to destroy the structure over everyone, then you have succeeded. But what is the point of passing the presidency down to the president’s son-in-law on the ruins of

a homeland? All that deception of the constitution will not work. A government with a mission is the only way to stop the collapse and protect Lebanon – if you have a conscience.”

The squabbling and stalemate led Samir Geagea, who heads the Lebanese Forces party, to call for the president’s resignation.

After a meeting of his parliamentary bloc he said: “The ruling group is not fit to rule. It is corrupt, and this is what brought the country to where it is. If I were the president of the republic, I would have resigned. This applies to the whole group in power.”



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Lebanon police scuffle with students protesting tuition hikes
Lebanon to get first batch of COVID-19 vaccines in two months, minister says

Palestinian foreign minister urges Israel to return to talks

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Sat, 2020-12-19 23:27

CAIRO: The Palestinian foreign minister on Saturday urged Israel to return to talks based on a two-state solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ahead of the transition to a new US administration.

Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad Al-Malki's comments came in a joint statement with Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shukry and Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi.

In a news conference after their meeting, Al-Malki said that the Palestinian Authority is ready to cooperate with US President-elect Joe Biden, on the basis of achieving a Palestinian state with east Jerusalem as its capital on territory Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war.

"We are ready for cooperation and dealing with the new US administration, and we are expecting that it would re-draw its ties with the state of Palestine," he said.

The Palestinian diplomat said coordination with Cairo and Amman is a "center point" that would establish a "starting point" in dealing with the incoming Biden administration. Egypt and Jordan are close US allies.

In September, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called for an international conference early next year to launch a "genuine peace process," based on the UN resolutions and past agreements with Israel. The Palestinians urged that the conference be multilateral, since they contend the United States is no longer an honest broker.

Palestinian negotiators have suffered numerous setbacks under the Trump administration, and complained about what they say are biased pro-Israel steps from Washington.

Trump has sidelined the Palestinian Authority, recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, moved the US Embassy from Tel Aviv, slashed financial assistance for the Palestinians, and reversed course on the illegitimacy of Israeli settlements on land claimed by the Palestinians.

Israel captured east Jerusalem and the West Bank in the 1967 war. The international community considers both areas to be occupied territory, and the Palestinians seek them as parts of a future independent state.

Israel annexed east Jerusalem and considers it part of its capital – a step that is not internationally recognized.

Israel has built a far-flung network of settlements that house nearly 700,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Jerusalem since their capture in 1967. The Palestinians want both territories for their future state and view the settlements as a violation of international law and an obstacle to peace – a position with wide international support.

Al-Malki also said they have returned to security coordination with Israel, after Israeli authorities sent a "message, for the first time, that they are

abiding to all agreements” made with the Palestinians.

In May, the Palestinian president announced that the PA would cut ties with Israel, including security coordination, following Israel’s pledge to annex large parts of the occupied West Bank.

In a statement following their meeting, the three ministers said they would work to rally international support against Israel’s “illegitimate measures” that include settlements’ expansion, demolishing dozens of Palestinian homes and seizing their land.

“These are illegitimate Israeli actions on the ground that affect all chances to reach a comprehensive peace process that can only happen by the two-state solution,” said Safadi, Jordan’s top diplomat, at the news conference.

The ministers said in their statement that Jerusalem’s status should be resolved in the negotiations, calling for Israel “as the occupying power, to stop all violations that target the Arab, Islamic and Christian identity of Jerusalem and its sanctuaries.”

President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi also met with the Jordanian and Palestinian ministers, according to the Egyptian leader’s office.

He said in a statement that Egypt has been working toward a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, “taking into account the regional and international changes.”

He was apparently referring to the election of Biden as the US president, and the normalization deals between Israel and four Arab countries including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco.

That deals, crafted by the Trump administration, dealt another heavy setback for the Palestinians.



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Armenian church leasing land to Israelis causes Palestinian worry
Israeli soldiers who kill Palestinian kids must be held accountable, say UN watchdogs

[EU welcomes formation of Yemeni government, praises role of Saudi Arabia](#)

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Sat, 2020-12-19 23:39

LONDON: The EU welcomed the formation of a Yemeni government on Saturday and praised Saudi Arabia's efforts to achieve the Riyadh Agreement.

"The announcement of a new Yemeni government within the framework of implementing the Riyadh Agreement is a positive step toward a comprehensive political solution for the country," a spokesperson for the European External Action Service said.

The new government will face difficult tasks and it will need to take important and courageous decisions for the sake of Yemen and all of its people, the spokesperson added.

The spokesperson stressed the importance of having more women in political positions and the effective participation of women in governance.

"The EU appreciates facilitation efforts made by Saudi Arabia, and encourages all actors to ensure the prompt and full implementation of all stipulations of the Riyadh Agreement," the European spokesman said.

France also praised the role played by the Kingdom to facilitate the Riyadh Agreement and implement it.

A statement issued by the foreign ministry said that the formation of a new government in the war-torn country is an important step that would contribute to preserving Yemen's unity and territorial integrity.

The ministry stressed the importance of ending the conflict in Yemen which requires a cessation of hostilities and the resumption of discussions under the auspices of the UN to reach a comprehensive political agreement.



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Implementation of Riyadh Agreement praised, raises hopes of ending Yemen conflict
Yemen will fight corruption and currency woes, says prime minister

[Armenian church leasing land to Israelis causes Palestinian worry](#)

Author:

Sat, 2020-12-19 23:21

AMMAN: A previously unknown agreement to turn sensitive land in the old city of Jerusalem into a parking lot – largely for the exclusive use of Jewish residents of the old city – is causing concern for the Palestinian leadership and members of the tiny Armenian community.

The contract, a copy of which is with Arab News, will take effect on Jan. 1, 2021.

Officials of the Armenian Patriarchate confirmed the agreement but insisted that the contract with the Israeli Jerusalem municipality and the Jewish-centric Jerusalem Development Authority (Harali) does not constitute selling or leasing land but is simply a financial operation.

The Armenian Patriarchate said that removal of all earth from the plot of land, which will cost about \$2 million, was “a financial obligation that the Patriarchate by itself doesn’t have the capacity to undertake,” according to a statement by the real estate department of the Armenian Patriarchate. The statement said that efforts to get support from “multiple governmental bodies” had run “into obstacles.” In return, the municipality and Harali will have access to 90 parking spots.

But the five-page contract notes (Article 2a) that the cost of lifting the rubble will be considered “a loan” that the church will have to pay back. The Higher Presidential Committee of Church Affairs in Palestine wrote to Armenian Patriarch Nourhan Manoogian reminding him that the Armenian quarter is part of occupied Palestinian territories where UN resolutions, including the 2017 UNSC Resolution 2334, apply. The letter also noted that the agreement between Jordanian King Abdullah and President Abbas in 2013 was set to regulate Christian and Muslim holy places in Jerusalem.

The letter, signed by Ramzi Khoury, the director of the committee, called on the Armenian Patriarchate “to abide by international law” and said that Israel has “expansionist ambitions,” especially in the area of the Omar Bin Khatab Square and the Armenian quarters” in the old city. Palestinian sources have said that President Arafat refused to concede the Armenian quarter during the 2000 negotiations at Camp David.

FASTFACT

The Higher Presidential Committee of Church Affairs in Palestine wrote to the Armenian Patriarch Nourhan Manoogian reminding him that the Armenian quarter is part of occupied Palestinian territories where UN Resolutions, including the 2017 UNSC resolution 2334, apply.

A well-respected Palestinian source from the Armenian community said that he “smells a rat,” adding that the current Armenian Patriarchate is not to be trusted. “I think that this is not the first time that the Armenian Patriarchate has tried to sell land and the people of Jerusalem to the Israelis and the people of the city stood up to him,” said the Palestinian leader, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The Palestinian/Armenian source denied claims that the church had no choice but to go to the Israelis after repeated requests for financial support from the Palestinian government and others were turned down: “This is not true. The EU was interested in fixing the parking lot in a way that would allow its parking lot income to support the church while allowing all the people of the old city to use it but the church refused the offer. A 10-point official statement issued by the real estate department of the Armenian Patriarchate states that the parking lot will remain private and that the management, ownership of the parking lot will remain in the hands of the Patriarchate.” The statement also highlights that “within the next 10 years, once the

Patriarchate has finalized and received all construction permits, in agreement with the municipality, the Patriarchate will begin a new construction that will benefit the Armenian community.” The Patriarchate is hoping to get permission to build a hotel.

Armenian clergy have frequently complained about religious Jews spitting on them. In March 2020 the Israeli police, and for the first time since 1967, fined a young Jewish man 1,500 Israeli shekel (\$463) for spitting at an Armenian bishop a year earlier.

Palestinians have boycotted the “unified” Jerusalem municipality since 1967 and consider the Jerusalem Development Authority an arm of radical Jewish groups that intend to Judaize the old city of Jerusalem at the expense of the indigenous Arab Palestinians.



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