

Jihad Organization's Methods of Operation on the Internet Exposed on Saudi Television

Jihadi Website Monitoring Group – September 7, 2008

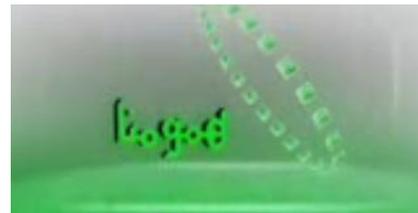
Preface

Saudi Arabia's first TV channel began transmitting a new 30-minute host show on July 1st, 2008, called "Our Worries". The show, which is broadcast every week, is produced by the Saudi Ministry of Interior and is broadcast at 21:00 p.m. on prime time.

The show deals with the most sensitive issues pertaining to Saudi society, and hosts Saudi citizens in their 20's, experts and professionals.

**The opening of the show
"Our Worries"**

The show has so far garnered a lot of response, and all the Saudi papers publish large segments, including complete transcripts of the show.



All the episodes of the show dealt, thus far, with the dangerous influence the Internet has on youth, the Internet surf patterns of teenagers in Saudi Arabia, and with the recruitment methods of the young population employed by Jihad organizations.

The introduction to the first show, stated that extreme Internet web-sites have increased over the past dramatically – in 1998 there were about 12 extreme web-sites and today, current studies talk about over 5,000 web-sites containing radical content.

The show tries to find out how five million young Saudi surfers can be protected from those web-sites, while in the background, stories of family members whose children went on Jihad outside the country are shown. The youth, who through the Internet became acquainted with the idea of Al-Qaeda's terrorism and ideology, relate their experiences on the Internet, which has become a tool serving Al-Qaeda – and the groups ideologically identified with it – for the spreading of its ideas and for recruitment of activists.

It should be pointed out, that the youth appearing on the show, express regret for their actions. They attribute their "blunder" to rashness, over excitement and a social-religious vacuum. They claim they were convinced of the righteousness of the idea of Jihad, even though they now understand that it was not based on Islamic rulings, but on unfounded stories and unreliable information.

Surfing Patterns of Saudi Youth

The show participants explained that they surf the net for many reasons, inter alia for obtaining information, since the Saudi media is not open, unlike the Internet that has no boundaries. They claim that in addition to surfing the Internet web sites, they also visit Islamic forums and chat rooms out of curiosity, with an average surfing time of about four hours a day.

Abu Saud, who has experience in surfing extreme web sites, explains that these web-sites use the Islamic religion and motifs of heaven, in order to influence the youth. In addition, he states that people are offered money to blow themselves up, and are promised that the suicide bomber's family will be given a monthly payment. According to him, these sites use photographs, photo editing programs such as Photoshop, video clips and various Islamic narratives and inciting sermons, to recruit young people for suicide missions. He adds that there are also lectures on the Internet, given by preachers dealing with Jihad in Iraq and Afghanistan, some of whom are known religious scholars in Saudi Arabia.

From the discussions on the show, one learns that alongside those surfing the web, with the clear objective of interacting with the extreme sites, there is a group of Saudi surfers who accidentally access those sites and forums, which are ideologically identified with Al-Qaeda, and are thus sucked into that world. Some of the people interviewed, belonging to this group, said that intense arguments ensue in the various forums. They claim that the various forums contain inciting material siding with Al-Qaeda's ideology, which undermines the surfers' outlook on life. The interviewees testified that from here, the road to an addiction of sitting for lengthy periods, including ongoing updates on what is happening in the forums, is very short. They also stated that they actively participated in the forums, and expressed their devotion to the idea of Jihad.

The show's guests related that many sites preaching for Jihad, base themselves on Koran verses and Islamic traditions, which state that Jihad is the obligation of all. One learns from their accounts, that when web sites and forums are shut down, communication between the surfers is carried out through emails, which become a platform for passing information and gathering data.

These youngsters relate how they deliberately ignore web sites belonging to religious scholars who are identified with the Saudi establishment, and that they blindly follow the extreme ideas, which surface in other web sites and forums, until their execution. That is, the extreme web sites incite against the religious scholars "appointed" by the Saudi establishment, and try to show that their religious perception is wrong and present an alternative in the form of Jihad.

It is evident from the show that the Saudi's are looking for a way to cope with this phenomenon, including physically blocking the web sites. However, professionals who appeared on the show, clarified that web sites cannot be hermetically blocked in Saudi Arabia, as there are ways of circumventing site blockings through programs and other tools. However, they claim the problem is not the technology, but the way in which society operates – security services and other authorities encounter problems because various elements of society (the home, the mosque, the neighborhood) do not fulfill their duty, and have in fact lost their role. In this manner, uneducated people take charge of spreading radical perceptions.

The Internet as a Tool for Spreading Jihad Perceptions

The online magazine identified with the ideas of the Al-Qaeda organization “Sada Al-Jihad”, was presented on the show as an example of the use of the Internet as a platform for spreading radical ideology. One of the show's episodes dealt with the development of the magazine, which allocated a special page for women in the Al-Qaeda organization called “Al-Khansa”, which has become a magazine itself, managed by Umm Osama, who has also appeared on the show.



**Umm Osama being
Interviewed on the show**

It can be seen from the show that alongside these online magazines, which appear regularly, publications, which include radical content, also began appearing in various forums. Based on these seasonal publications, written by anonymous writers, ideological discussions are held between the forums' participants.

In addition, many sites operate, as mentioned above, to dismiss the opinions of religious scholars identified with the Saudi establishment. The guests on the show stated that these sites curse the religious scholars, give them derogatory names, dismiss their positions out of hand and classify them as heretics. This point illustrates that a pivotal strata of the activity of the radical web sites is attacking the Saudi establishment and neutralizing the influence of religious scholars identified with the establishment.

The religious scholars appearing on the show complain that the web site and forum operators take advantage of the youth and their ignorance on matters of Islam and create an alternative reality for them. This way they recruit them for their own goals and not for the goal of raising Islam's prestige and liberating lands that are not under Muslim control, which is the essence of true Jihad, as opposed to performing terrorist attacks and injuring civilians in Islamic countries and in Saudi Arabia.

The professionals explained on the show that the surfers on radical web sites encounter a shattering of political and religious symbols and are exposed to new symbols, that is, to Islamic law-rulings and publications received from surfers whom

they do not know. This way, the youth begin the process of disengagement, and the new materials are their exclusive sources to the concept of Jihad. An entire system of beliefs is developed, leading to the disengagement of the youth from the ideas the Saudi establishment endeavors to instill within the population. Those exposed to radical publications and to religious anti-establishment authority sources, may become involved in violent verbal or physical activities.

Recruitment Methods of Global Jihad Organizations

From the issues presented on the show, one learns that Al-Qaeda leaders abuse the vacuum in Saudi society and the lack of religious guidance, the enthusiasm and passion of the youth and their limited exposure – whether by choice or by lack of knowledge – to religious scholars dependent on the establishment. The target audiences of the radical groups are the youth groups in Islamic societies. In Saudi Arabia, for instance, this comprises a group of about four million young people between the ages of 15 to 25 (69% of Saudi Arabia's population are young people up to the age of 25). The youth participating in the show, testified they were easily influenced, and that they can be easily enthused, even if they are not adventurous by nature.

From the various shows one can learn that global Jihad organizations do not deal with the recruitment of young people for suicide missions, but mold them in their own way. From the Saudi point of view, a young person recruited through these web sites, is a victim of seduction and sedition. That is, Jihad organizations do not directly order the performing of terrorist attacks, but they lead the young person, in a devious manner, to the conclusion that this is the right way. Special emphasis is placed on young people without religious education and from lower social classes. From the information stated above, it can be understood that the young person surfing the Internet goes through a process of indoctrination, during which he formulates for himself a more and more radical pattern of action.

The young people who were interviewed for the show, testified that they were adventurous and eager to help Muslims suffering from oppression. Most of them said they do not ask permission from their parents and just disappear. Some of them even claimed that certain intelligence services encouraged them to organize themselves and leave to perform Jihad in other countries, and promised to help them with information and money.

From data published on the show, it is learned that 45% of the Mujahedeen in Iraq are Saudis. Experts, who were guests on the show, claimed that Saudi Arabia, who views itself as a leader of the Muslim world in terms of religion and economics, is targeted by radical organizations, recruiting young Saudis to their ranks through the tools detailed above. These experts believe there is no connection between social problems and terrorism, as these problems exist all over the world, but not everyone turns to terrorism. According to them, young Saudis turn to terror, because they are

imbued with a misguided sense of responsibility over what is happening all over the world.

The show exposes that young people from the desert and mountain areas are a preferred target for recruitment. They have the appropriate characteristics for performing terrorist attacks, including: toughness, strength, ability to withstand difficult conditions and obedience. In addition, this population who is relatively ignorant in matters of religion, is easily influenced by sermons and inciting material. To demonstrate the issue of recruitment, three stories of young Saudis who were recruited to Jihad missions outside of Saudi Arabia were presented:

Abu Faysal said that he has met many Saudis who left to perform Jihad, and explained that the recruitment is first and foremost a recruitment of the spirit, when they are tempted by the promise of reaching heaven and meeting 72 virgins. He added that sometimes the person recruited is asked to pay between 15 to 20 thousand Saudi riyals in exchange for a passport and cellular phone that will accompany him wherever he is sent. Abu Faysal said that the person responsible for all this coordination is not in Saudi Arabia, has a silver tongue, markets Jihad and brainwashes people.

Abu Obeid, who left to perform Jihad in Iraq, explained that he arrived there without difficulty. He related that he left Saudi Arabia for Bahrain, left Bahrain for Syria and from there to Iraq over land, where he met more people from other countries who came for Jihad missions. Later on, he told that upon his arrival in Iraq, he was filled with feelings of remorse, and decided to return to Saudi Arabia, together with many other Saudis who wished to return.

Zahir Al-Matiri, appeared on one of the shows whose son, a student at the Sharia Faculty at the Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, has been detained in Iraq for several years. The father related that his son disappeared from the house one day, and that only two weeks later he discovered that he had left to perform Jihad in Iraq.

The experts on the show recommended that parents safeguard their children, from becoming easy prey to these radical organizations. They claimed that the political situation in the Middle-East is such that parents have to supervise their children and ensure that they do not follow the Jihad movements and that they are not recruited to fight in the conflict areas. They added that these organizations distort reality and describe it on their Internet sites in a way that promotes their objectives.

Summary and Insights

The show “Our Worries”, broadcast on the Saudi establishment television, exposes what is already known – that global Jihad organizations are using the Internet for seduction, recruitment and indoctrination, in order to integrate young people into the global Jihad front. Furthermore, the success of seducing young people through the Internet is happening inside Muslim societies as well, such as Saudi Arabia, and the stories of young Saudis, regarding the recruitment process in to Jihad arenas through the Internet, points to the relative ease with which Jihad organizations harness young people to radical ideas.

The mere production of the show proves that Muslim countries recognize this activity as a threat and are trying to cope with it. Furthermore, even a country like Saudi Arabia which knows the cultural base of radical Islam, is having trouble dealing with it. This point illustrates the need to formulate strategies for dealing with the indoctrination processes and brainwashing on the Internet. The fight against radicalization on the Internet should be only one aspect of the battle with this phenomenon amongst Islamic communities in the west, as it should be emphasized, that the use of the Internet as a tool for recruitment, funding and training of young people is not limited to Saudi Arabia, but is prevalent all over the world.

In conclusion, the show “Our Worries” garners much response in the Saudi media and from surfers responding in Saudi papers. The responses vary between calls for protecting family members from the Internet, to demands for education based on Islamic ruling beginning at a young age, handling the matter of the disintegration of the family and being aware of the children’s activities. Other surfers called for the distribution of tapes and religious rulings of religious scholars amongst young people attending the mosques. Alongside, surfers tell of their experience and demand that the Ministry of Islamic Affairs oversee teachers in religious institutions and religious scholars that incite and publish rulings against respecting other religions. Some point out that there are still many surfers who hold extreme ideas, while certain surfers complained about the lack of professionalism of the show’s host, but the majority emphasized its importance.

The above review is based on the show's transcripts, published in the Saudi daily Al-Jazirah. Below is a list of links to transcripts of ten shows:

Transcript of first episode: <http://search.suhuf.net.sa/2008jaz/jul/2/ln67.htm>
Transcript of second episode: <http://search.suhuf.net.sa/2008jaz/jul/8/fe13.htm>
Transcript of third episode: <http://search.al-jazirah.com.sa/2008jaz/jul/15/ln1.htm>
Transcript of fourth episode: <http://search.suhuf.net.sa/2008jaz/jul/22/fe7.htm>
Transcript of fifth episode: <http://search.suhuf.net.sa/2008jaz/jul/29/ln22.htm>
Transcript of sixth episode: <http://search.suhuf.net.sa/2008jaz/aug/5/ln8.htm>
Transcript of seventh episode: <http://search.suhuf.net.sa/2008jaz/aug/12/ln1.htm>
Transcript of eighth episode: <http://search.suhuf.net.sa/2008jaz/aug/19/ln1.htm>
Transcript of ninth episode: <http://search.suhuf.net.sa/2008jaz/aug/26/ln2.htm>
Transcript of tenth episode: <http://search.suhuf.net.sa/2008jaz/sep/2/fe21.htm>

It should be pointed out that the Internet site www.murajaat.com/humomnaa.php enables the viewing of all the show's episodes.