

Algeria/USA:human rights organisations should not support Muslim fundamentalists

Concerned Algerians write to the Center for Constitutional Rights in the USA

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Letter to the Center for Constitutional Rights

Algiers, November 14, 2010

The Center for Constitutional Rights was the only human rights organization to support the victims of fundamentalist armed groups as it did in the case brought by Rhonda Copelon against Anouar Haddam [spokesman of the Islamic Salvation Front], while other human rights organisations ignored these victims and abandoned them, on the ground that they were not victims of the state but of non state actors.

Today, CCR is betraying these same victims by representing the interests of Anwar al-Awlaki, an important promoter and organizer of crimes against humanity and a leader of Al Qaida in the Arabic Peninsula, without even saying who he is and what positions he has taken. Awlaki is currently at liberty and continues to organize attacks and crimes, and to incite hatred and massacres. All the while his father continues to affirm, against the evidence, his complete innocence, even as the son continues to publish his statements inciting violence.

We cannot believe that you do not know that al-Awlaki supported the fundamentalist group Al Shabaab which in 2009 stoned to death a 13 year old girl who had been the victim of gang rape - stating on his web site on December 2008 that 'his heart was filled with immense joy' at their victories and accomplishments' -; that he taught at least three of the September 11 hijackers; that his telephone number was found at the home of Ramzi Bin al Shibh; that Umar Abdulmuttallab identified him as one of his Al Qaida teachers and accused him of having planned the failed attack over Detroit on December 25, 2009.

We cannot believe that you are not familiar with the writings of al-Awlaki that condemn innocent people - often Muslims - to death. Do you only defend Muslims when it is the American government that threatens them, and not when Muslim fanatics do?

In January 2009, writing in "44 Ways to Support Jihad," Awlaki gave practical advice on preparing for jihad including how to obtain arms training, how to finance and support armed groups (which he calls "combatants of the faith" or "mujahideen") and even inciting children to become jihadists. He calls for the creation of a global caliphate where the 'unbelievers' will be "eliminated". On his blog of Feb. 12, 2009, he wrote that, "If a Muslim kills each and every civilian disbeliever on the face of the earth he is still a Muslim and we cannot side with the disbelievers against him." He claims that "Hatred of the kuffar (unbelievers) is a central element of our military creed" (taken from "44 Ways to Support Jihad"). He has written also that "the kufr, tyranny, evil and claims of the kuffar that they are defending 'freedom' and 'civilization' and fighting 'terrorism', all of this will end by their death, which is very close.." ("On the road to Jihad," Dec. 2005, audio recording, published by Maktabah al

Ansaar in July 2009).

At no time did the CCR, in its unconditional defense of Anwar al-Awlaki, publicly call for and emphasize that while no one should be assassinated, it remains imperative that criminals of his like be brought to justice. At no time, did CCR indicate its intention to support the innumerable victims of al-Awlaki, with at least as many resources and as much publicity as the Center now gives to his case. The double standards you employ in these circumstances are unacceptable to us. While there may be a CIA threat against al-Awlaki, what are you doing about the threats Awlaki makes himself and that his movement in fact executes against people like us? He is still alive while many of our friends and family members are dead, thanks to him and people like him, to his incitement and to the forces that he helps to organize. Are we less threatened or less important in your eyes?

It is one thing to oppose extra-judicial killings of anyone, even the worst criminals or the Hitlers of our time. However, it is another thing to give a blank check to criminals by 1) presenting them exclusively as victims and 2) not supporting their victims. We do not approve of the extra-judicial killing of anyone, but we also do not accept that such criminals are presented only as victims and that their own victims are abandoned to their fate. Without any doubt, the CCR's all out public support will help al-Awlaki clear his name, regardless of his incitement to crime and hatred and regardless of the crimes he participates in organizing. By presenting him exclusively as a victim of the USA and the CIA, you make his victims even more invisible.

CCR is clearly putting its own positioning in internal US politics before human rights for all. This is a huge disappointment and a terrible sadness for those Algerian victims of armed fundamentalism who thought that in CCR they had a lasting supporter. This narrow politics risks painting us as "kufr" who somehow deserve to be physically eliminated even though we are Algerian women and men and some of us are practicing Muslims (though not as al-Awlaki would have us be!) ; this politics could have one believe that we are the supporters of imperialism or anti-Muslim, when we are simply feminists and democrats. Doesn't this also raise questions of human rights which CCR is supposed to defend?

Why have you abandoned us? Why is it only Awlaki, disguised as an innocent victim, who deserves your support?

Without wishing to instrumentalize the name of Rhonda Copelon, we cannot imagine her agreeing to represent those who seek to assassinate civilians labelled kufr, under the cover of human rights work.

This letter was signed by 5 prominent Algerian organisations and 18 individuals, most of them victims or families of victims of fundamentlaists