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Training manuals in the Grand Mosque of Brussels advocating jihad, anti-Semitism and stoning of homosexuals

Willy Fautré

HRWF (18.05.2018) - The training of imams, delivered in Arabic, within the Islamic and Cultural Centre of Belgium (known as "the CICB"), which houses the Grand Mosque of Brussels, is currently inciting followers to enter into armed jihad "for getting closer to God", "to break the neck" of Druze and Alawite religious minorities, to throw down homosexuals from the top of buildings and to despise Jews.

These conclusions emerged in a report by the Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis ("OCAM") that the daily newspaper *La Libre Belgique* could recently read. The analysis dated 26 February covers the academic year 2016 to 2017, and was recently submitted to the Parliamentary Review Committee for the Implications of the Brussels Attacks in March 2016.

The OCAM says that the report, being around 40 pages, gives a frightening picture of the contents of training manuals used for classes by the CICB which is still dependent upon funding from Saudi Arabia until March 2019 and received 4.5 million EUR from Ryad in the last four years.

It must be recalled that upon recommendation by the parliamentary review committee, the government severed the Grand Mosque concession, giving a year's notice, following which the Grand Mosque will be entrusted to the Belgian Muslim Executive (known as the 'EMB').

Works mainly distributed in the French-speaking part of Belgium

The Grand Mosque of Brussels is part of the controversial World Islamic League. Since its foundation, it has spread Wahhabi Salafist doctrines in Belgium. These teachings reproduce, without any discernment, classical versions of Islamic law and doctrines dating back to the 9th – 12th centuries, the OCAM explains.

The problem is that, although the Grand Mosque will no longer be the property of Saudi Arabia, its manuals have been distributed and will go on circulating in other mosques of the country and even in prisons, mainly in the French-speaking part, according to the OCAM.

In 1984, the CICB created its own sharia school which became the European Islamic Institute. This is the place where imams, preachers and teachers of Muslim religion of the second and third generation are prepared. The training in Arabic lasts four years under the direction of the Egyptian imam Abd al-Hady Swayf. The training in French under the leadership of the Senegalese imam Muhammad Ndaye Galaye is considered moderate.

A manual favored by Al-Qaïda

One of the manuals used in Brussels in the third grade is "The main principles of Sunni Muslims". According to the OCAM, *"in the 80s-90s, this manual was part of the pedagogical material used by the Arab djihadist circles around and within the central leadership of d'Al-Qaïda"*. This brochure incites Sunni Muslims to resort to the armed fight with their leaders, whether they are under the guidance of Allah or corrupt in order to impose the rule of Islam laws. In the same material, Druzes and Alawites, who are to be found in Syria around Bashar Al-Assad but also elsewhere, are considered *"misguided polytheists"*.

Another manual, "The Voice of the Muslim", sold in bookshops in Europe, indicates that *"armed djihad is one of the highest forms of getting close to Allah and the most noble form of religious practice"*. Concerning the homosexuals, it proposes, like Daesh, three types of execution: stoning, funeral pyre or *"find the highest building in the village (or town) and throw the homosexual from its top, head down, and finish him by stoning"*.

Anti-Semitic teachings

A third manual, dealing with other religions and drafted by a contemporary Saudi theologian is a masterpiece of anti-Semitism. It teaches that Jews are *"traitors, infidels and impostors"*, *"obscene and vulgar"*, *"cruel and insensible"*, *"greedy, avid and avaricious"*. According to this famous theologian, *"Jews use violence, power and terror to control the world"*.

The book refers to the "Protocols of Zion", a fiction created at the beginning of the 20th century by the Russian tsarist intelligence and used to fuel all the plot theories in the Middle East. The manual also attacks the Freemasons who depicted as a "secret Jewish organization" whose objective is to put in place secular republic instead of religious states in the world.

Some members of the Belgian Parliamentary Commission having read the OCAM report envisage possible judicial prosecutions.

An encouraging sign though is the OCAM stating that a new generation of imams in Belgium is arguing for a contemporary interpretation of the Islamic texts.

Sources :

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Giving up control of Brussels mosque, Saudi Arabia sends a signal

By Alissa de Carbonnel, Stephen Kalin

Reuters (12.02.2018) - <http://reut.rs/2o800hJ> - Saudi Arabia has agreed to give up control of Belgium's largest mosque in a sign that it is trying to shed its reputation as a global exporter of an ultra-conservative brand of Islam.

Belgium leased the Grand Mosque to Riyadh in 1969, giving Saudi-backed imams access to a growing Muslim immigrant community in return for cheaper oil for its industry.

But it now wants to cut Riyadh's links with the mosque, near the European Union's headquarters in Brussels, over concerns that what it preaches breeds radicalism.

The mosque's leaders deny it espouses violence, but European governments have grown more wary since Islamist attacks that were planned in Brussels killed 130 people in Paris in 2015 and 32 in the Belgian capital in 2016.

Belgium's willingness to put its demands to oil-producing Saudi Arabia, a major investor and arms client, breaks with what EU diplomats describe as the reluctance of governments across Europe to risk disrupting commercial and security ties.

Riyadh's quick acceptance indicates a new readiness by the kingdom to promote a more moderate form of Islam - one of the more ambitious promises made by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman under plans to transform Saudi Arabia and reduce its reliance on oil.

The agreement last month coincides with a new Saudi initiative, not publicly announced but described to Reuters by Western officials, to end support for mosques and religious schools abroad blamed for spreading radical ideas.

The move towards religious moderation - and away from the extreme interpretation of Islam's Salafi branch that is espoused by modern jihadist groups - risks provoking a backlash at home and could leave a void that fundamentalists try to fill.

But Saudi Arabia's recent moves on religion are seen by Belgian diplomat Dirk Achten, who headed a government delegation to Riyadh in November, as a "window of opportunity".

"The Saudis are disposed to dialogue without taboos," he told Belgium's parliament last month after the mission was hastily put together after the assembly urged the government to break Saudi Arabia's 99-year, rent-free lease of the mosque.

But he also cautioned: "Some do not, or barely, admit that this form of Salafism leads to jihadism."

DETAILS BEING FINALISED

Details of the mosque's handover are still being negotiated but will be announced this month, Belgian Interior Minister Jan Jambon told Reuters.

The diplomatic contacts, led by the countries' foreign ministers, were intended by Belgium to prevent what Jambon called an "exaggerated response" from Saudi Arabia -- indicating the Belgian government had sought to ensure there was no diplomatic backlash.

This, he said, was "under control" following a visit to Belgium last month by Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir.

Before Saudi Arabia took control in the late 1960s, the Grand Mosque was a disused relic of the Great Exhibition of 1880 - an Oriental Pavilion.

Saudi money converted it to cater to migrants from Morocco invited to work in the country's coal mines and factories. It is run by the Mecca-based Muslim World League (MWL), a missionary society mainly funded by Saudi Arabia.

Concerns about the mosque grew as militant groups such as Islamic State started recruiting among the grandchildren of those migrants, many of whom say they still feel they do not belong in Belgian society, opinion polls show.

Belgium has sent more foreign fighters to Syria per capita than any other European country. Belgian officials now suggest the Muslim Executive of Belgium, a group seen as close to Moroccan officialdom, should run the Grand Mosque.

Although the Saudi government has denied any role in the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks against the United States which killed more than 3,000 people, 15 of the 19 airplane hijackers who carried them out were from Saudi Arabia and linked to late Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, the plot's Saudi-born mastermind.

Bin Laden was a follower of Wahhabism, the original strain of Salafism which has often been criticized as the ideology of radical Islamists worldwide. Yet many of Islamic State's positions are far more radical than Wahhabism, the ultra-conservative branch of Islam dominant in Saudi Arabia and founded by 18th century cleric Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab.

A classified report by Belgian security agency OCAD/OCAM in 2016 said the Wahhabi branch of Islam promoted at the mosque led Muslim youth to more radical ideas, sources with access to the report said.

"The mosque has influence to spread this hateful 'software'," a senior Belgian security source said. "Nobody paid attention for decades."

Belgium's parliament said what it preached was "a gateway or even a predisposition to a more combative Islam that is violent", calling in October for an end to the Saudi lease.

The same month, immigration minister Theo Francken tried to expel the Grand Mosque's Egyptian imam of 13 years, calling him "dangerous", but a judge reversed that decision.

But Belgian security sources say there is no proof imams at the Grand Mosque preached violence or have had links to attacks.

Some who went to fight in Syria had studied there but men are more prey to recruiters for militant groups online and on the streets of underprivileged boroughs such as Molenbeek, in Brussels, where some of the Paris attackers lived, they say.

Tamer Abou El Saod, who was appointed director of the Grand Mosque in May, says there are problems over the way it is perceived but denies it espouses a fundamentalist version of Islam. He says he is ready to work with Belgian officials.

"There are changes happening already and there are even more changes coming in the very near future," he told Reuters.

"EUROPEAN ISLAM"

Belgian leaders say they want the mosque to preach a "European Islam" better aligned with their values - a familiar refrain across Europe following the Islamic State attacks of the last few years.

But it is unclear who will operate the sprawling mosque complex, which receives about 5 million euros (\$6 million) a year through the MWL which has for decades promoted a hardline interpretation of Islam at dozens of institutions worldwide

The MWL has recently adopted a more conciliatory tone. In just over a year since being appointed, its secretary-general, Mohammad bin Abdul Karim al-Issa, has met with Pope Francis and taken a public stance against Holocaust denial. Issa told Reuters in November the organization's new mission was to annihilate extremism.

For Saudi Arabia, the mosque is a chance to prove it is turning over a new leaf after years of accusations it turned a blind eye to - if not actively endorsed - extremist ideology.

Crown Prince Mohammed has already taken some steps to loosen ultra-strict social restrictions, scaling back the role of religious morality police, permitting public concerts and announcing plans to allow women to drive this summer.

The changes, however, may be too late since most militant groups that emerged at some point from Saudi networks have grown independent, says Stephane Lacroix, a scholar of Islam in Saudi Arabia.

"That this is going to solve the problem of radical Islam because if the Saudis change, everything's going to change: It's not the case," he told Reuters.
