Written by Louis Palme
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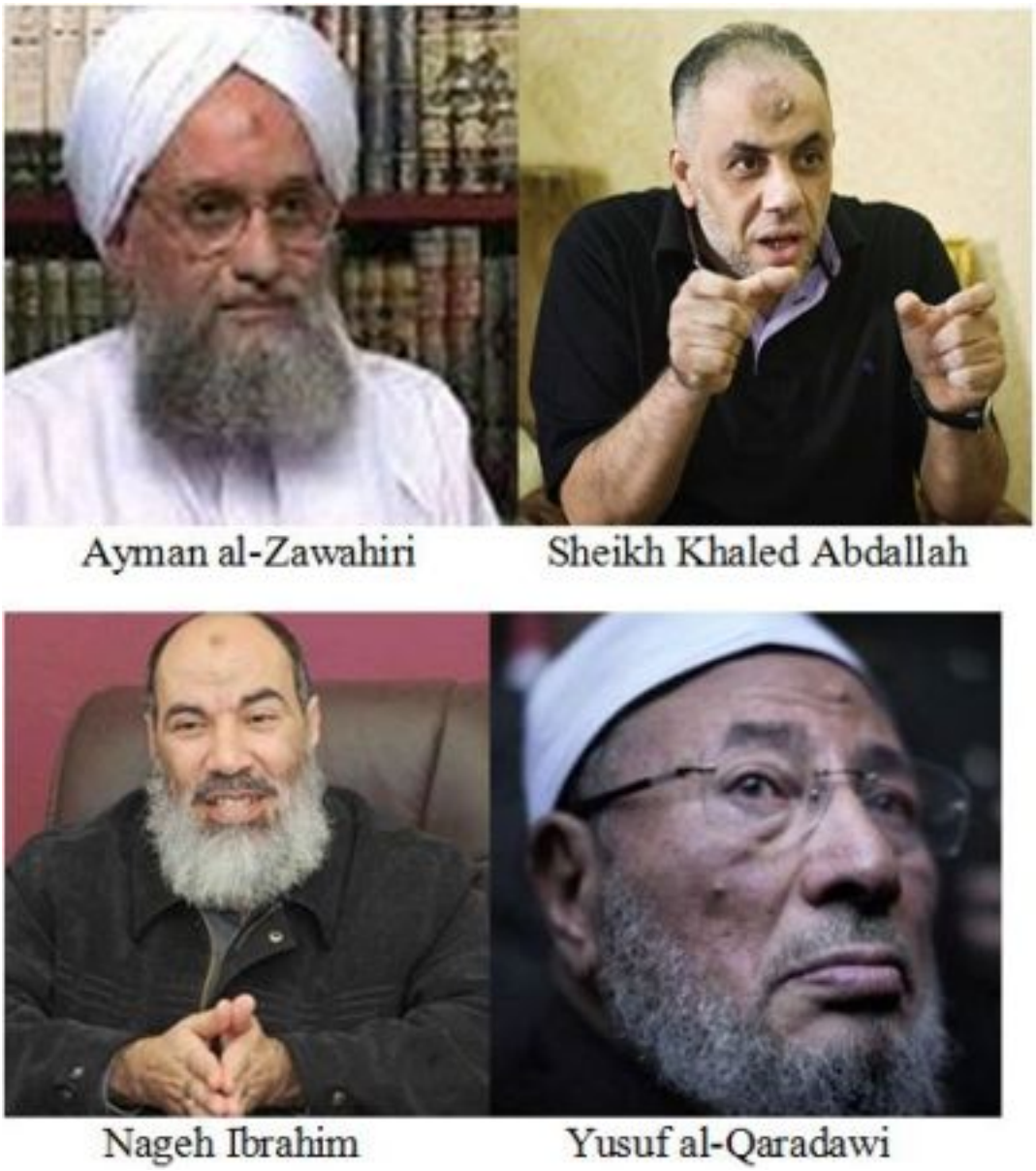
Images of pious Muslims coming out of the Middle East have introduced Western readers to a phenomenon unique to Muslims: a dark scar in the middle of their forehead. For devout Muslims, these scars are a sign of piety, indicating strict adherence to their required five-times-a-day prayers. Below are just a few of the Islamic religious leaders who seem to have indelible marks on their foreheads.



Such scars are known in the medical world as Clavus, or commonly called "prayer callus". They are caused by repeated bowing of the head onto a prayer carpet, most likely a dirty prayer carpet judging by the extent of the scarring. Maceration and secondary fungal or bacterial infection are a common overlying feature in the soft clavi, or calluses.

The question is: Are these scars, in true sense, a “mark piety”, which means devotion to God, or a “mark of beastliness”? Let us evaluate in light of actions and preachings of these notable pious figures of today’s Islam.

Ayman al-Zawahiri: He was the spiritual adviser to Osama bin Laden, and succeeded him as the leader of Al Qaeda. Al-Zawahiri is the most wanted criminal in the United States for his involvement in the September 11, 2001 Islamic terrorist attacks in New York and Washington D.C., which resulted in death of nearly 3,000 innocent people. The US government has $25-million bounty for information leading to his capture.

He joined the Muslim Brotherhood at the age of 14, and, although trained as a medical doctor, has made a career in terrorism. Al-Zawahiri was imprisoned in Egypt for dealing in weapons, and he was jailed in Russia for promoting jihad in Chechnya. Before plotting the attack on the U.S., he was paid $2 million by the Iranian government to plot the overthrow of the Egyptian government in 1990. Al-Zawahiri had this to say about Osama bin Laden: “*I have lived with him up close and have seen nothing but good from him*
.” Here is what he said to the people of the U.S. and Great Britain: “
Make sure, you peoples of Crusaders alliance, to have catastrophes hit you. These will be brought to you by the policies conducted by Bush and Blair and their followers. You, people of the Crusaders alliance, we have warned you, but it seemed you want us to drink your death, so taste what you have already given to us. …it is the same reciprocated treatment. Are the people in your countries not women and children?
”

Sheikh Khaled Abdallah – the hardline Egyptian ‘tele-Islamist’ on the Islamist satellite television channel al-Nas who brought the anti-Islam film trailer, “ *The Innocence of Muslims,*
” to the attention of Muslims, resulting in over 75 deaths, including four American deaths at the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi. According to the New York Times, al-Nas “
traffics in demagoguery and hatemongering. Abdallah is its star. In previous broadcasts, he has called the revolutionaries of the Arab Spring ‘worthless kids’ and condemned newspapers that don’t support his views
.” Apparently, Abdallah’s main targets are the Egyptian Christian Copts who comprise one-tenth of the population. The TV channel name, al-Nas (Man), comes from the final Surah of the Quran, which says, “
I seek refuge in the Lord …from the evil of the whisperings of the slinking (Shaitan) who whispers into the hearts of men.
”

Salafists in Egypt attempted to use the September 11, 2012, rioting over the “Innocence of Muslims” film as a pretext for demanding the release of Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman (aka the blind sheikh), who is serving a life-term for his involvement in the first World Trade Center bombing in February, 1993, which killed six and injured over 1,000 people.

Nageh Ibrahim – A senior member and chief ideologue of al-Gamaa al-Islamiya, the Egyptian Sunni Islamist movement which is considered a terrorist organization by the United States and European Union. This group has been dedicated to the overthrow of the Egyptian government and replacing it with an Islamic state. Ibrahim was imprisoned for 24 years for his involvement in the assassination of President Anwar Sadat in 1981. Following new Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi’s recent decree to make his decisions irrevocable by the judiciary, Ibrahim warned that he expects to see, beginning in December, targeted assassinations of prominent liberal politicians and intellectuals who dare to oppose Morsi’s latest edicts. Spokespersons for al-Gamaa al-Islamiya denounced Ibrahim’s statement, but tensions are increasing in Egypt over Morsi’s apparent ‘power grab’.

Yusuf al-Qaradawi – Recognized as the unofficial spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, al-Qaradawi is sometimes heralded as the Ayatollah Khomeini of Egypt. He has been exiled from Egypt since the 1960’s for his involvement with the Muslim Brotherhood. He is media-savvy, and actually worked on the establishment of the Al Jazeera satellite television network, where he still gives a weekly broadcast world-wide to 60 million viewers. Since the overthrow of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, al-Qaradawi has interjected himself into the Arab Spring revolution, even taking the podium in Cairo’s Tahrir Square. On November 16, he was invited to lead the Friday Prayers at Al Azhar University, considered the world’s greatest center of Islamic learning. Al-Qaradawi has written extensively, including the best-selling book, “ *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam.* ” In his writings, he has supported suicide bombings, wife beating, punishment for female rape victims, and the murder of Jews. He recently stated, “ *I ask God to kill the Jewish Zionists, every last one of them.* ”

It is difficult to discern any spiritual piety or devotion to God in these famous Muslim men, bearing large so-called “piety marks” on their foreheads. They rejoice in the death of innocent human beings. They plot violence instead of peace. They model themselves after Muhammad, who bragged that he was made victorious through terror (Bukhari, Vol. 4, No. 220). If these scars signify anything, they can only be signs of “evil”, “beastliness”, not otherwise.