

## Reading the Position of Al-Qaradawi on the Palestinian Cause

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**Abstract:** This research follows the writings and speeches of Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi regarding the Palestinian cause. It tries to draw the Sheikh's vision of the nature of the conflict, his positions on its parties, and his provided solutions. The research also tries to find out the factors of the occupation's victory over the Arabs and Palestinians.

Furthermore, the research reviews Sheikh Qaradawi's position on the Palestinian resistance, and his support for it through fatwas. Moreover, the research attempts to identify the obligations that al-Qaradawi believes are owed to the leaders and people of the Arab and Islamic nation to liberate Palestine.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the last decades, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi was one of the most prominent and most prolific Muslim scholars, for his books, speeches and television meetings have discussed various contemporary issues. Al-Qaradawi's discourse is characterised by modernisation and facilitation as an expression of his understanding of the spirit of his time, and his profound reading of the nature of the challenges facing the "Ummah" in various fields. He also advocated the "Jihad" movements against colonialism in the Islamic world.

The research aims to identify the intellectual and political positions of al-Qaradawi on the Palestinian cause in all its aspects, as mentioned - these positions - in the writings, fatwas, speeches and public comments of al-Qaradawi.

The research attempts to answer the following questions:

- What is al-Qaradawi's position on the Palestinian cause?
- What is his position on the political settlement and on the parties that adopt it?
- What is his position on normalisation with the occupation?
- What is his position on the resistance and the parties that adopt it?
- What are the Ummah's duties towards Palestine from his point of view?

The research covers the period from the beginning of the emergence of al-Qaradawi to this very day, and it follows the historical method of research.

The research is divided into the following axes:

First: Al-Qaradawi's position on Jerusalem and Palestine.

Second: Al-Qaradawi's position on Jews, Israel and Zionism.

Third: The factors of the triumph of Jews over the Arabs and Muslims.

Fourth: Al-Qaradawi's position on the political agreements.

Fifth: Al-Qaradawi's position on the resistance and the resistance parties.

Sixth: Al-Qaradawi's position on the Martyrdom operations.

Seventh: Al-Qaradawi's position on the Palestinian Authority PA.

Eighth: The influence of al-Qaradawi's thoughts of moderation "Wasatiyyah" on the ideology of the Islamic Palestinian movements.

Ninth: The Ummah's responsibility towards Palestine from al-Qaradawi's point of view.

### 1.1. First: Al-Qaradawi's Position on Jerusalem and Palestine

Al-Qaradawi sees that for Muslims, Palestine and Jerusalem are the first priority now and stresses that this cause is not a one that could be quickly solved, but rather it would go on for decades. He considers that the Arabic and Islamic position on the question of Jerusalem is fragile. He also emphasises how dangerous the excavations that aim to demolish al-Aqsa mosque are and calls on the Arabs to save it.

He determined that (Judaization, settlements, and displacement) are a set of risks facing the city warning Muslims about the possible loss of the city. Al-Qaradawi reminds Muslims of the importance of the city in Islam as it is the land of "rebat" and blessing. Furthermore, he declared that "peace" is nonsense and called for resistance assuring that there is no way but through "jihad".

In his speeches, al-Qaradawi emphasised the Arabism of Palestine and refuted the claims of the religious right and historical right. He also asserted that the descendants of Abraham are the ones who followed his message, not the ones who biologically relate to him and even if it was all about his sons, it will not be restricted to Jacob and his descendants, for Ismail is also Abraham's son.

Moreover, in his fatwas, al-Qaradawi emphasises that it is proscribed to cede Jerusalem or any inch of the Islamic land. He considers that those who do so have betrayed God, His prophet and the Ummah. Regarding the refugees issue, al-Qaradawi asserts that it is not acceptable to cede the land and accept compensation -including personal properties- if the ownership of it will end up to the enemies. He considers this as one of the greatest sins and that the sin is doubled when ceding occurs collectively, asserting that the land was owned by the Arab Canaanites from the prehistoric times.

However, the observer of al-Qaradawi's writings, such as the book "The Islamic Movement's priorities" ( أولويات الحركة الإسلامية ) finds that he did not list the Palestinian cause as one of these priorities. A paradox appears here between the sheikh's sermons and his books about the Islamic movements in general. In the former, he talks about Palestine a lot, especially when Zionists commit a massacre, or when the Palestinians are exceedingly troubled. He, nevertheless, talks scarcer about Palestine in his books about the Islamic movements and in some of them, he never mentions Palestine!

When looking at al-Qaradawi's writings, it turns out that he believes that the well-impowered, strong and realistic Islamic movement will liberate Palestine, as stated in his book "The Generation of the Desired Victory" (جيل النصر المنشود). After listing the features of the generation of victory, al-Qaradawi said that "This desired generation is the generation of victory; they will liberate Palestine, Afghanistan, Eritrea, the Philippines, Bukhara and Samarkand, and all the land desecrated by tyrants.

It is worth mentioning that al-Qaradawi adopts such positions based on the fact that Jerusalem and the surrounding lands are sacred, not giving much attention to the patriotic, national or political dimensions. Being a cleric, al-Qaradawi has to religiously enthuse the ummah for jihad. Alternatively, he might be looking for a point of consensus that no one could oppose - not even a ruler or a president - as a base to get the nation's energies united towards Palestine. Nonetheless, al-Qaradawi could be based on the two backgrounds: the religious one of holiness and the political one of uniting the nation on an issue agreed upon by the ruler and the ruled.

### 1.2. Second: Al-Qaradawi's Position on Jews, Israel and Zionism.

Al-Qaradawi emphasises that the conflict between the Palestinians and Jews is not based on Judaism itself pointing out that they -the Jews- have lived for such long time in peace participating in the public life under the rule of Muslims. The conflict, in his opinion, is based on the act of occupying the land of Palestine. In his opinion, al-Qaradawi considers the Jews as infidels for they do not believe in the prophet Mohammed -peace be upon him-. However, he explains that the conflict is not based on this but rather on the land they occupied and the people they displaced.

On the other hand, al-Qaradawi considers that Jews are fighting Muslims for the sake of religion ad that they are gathered in the name of Torah seeking to take control over the holy sites of Muslims. Based on this, he considers the Palestinian cause as an Islamic issue in which all elements of the Islamic force must be brought together to defend the holy sites.

It seems that the distinction that al-Qaradawi has clearly demonstrated between Jews as people of religion that can be coexisted with, and "Israel" as a state occupying the land of Palestine, did not please the Zionist circles. The Washington-based Middle East Media Research Institute "MEMRI" translated and published some of al-Qaradawi's statements claiming that he considered that God sent Hitler to torture the Jews and that another torment by the believers will follow this one. Another quote for the same institution said that al-Qaradawi repeats public prayers to God to kill the Jews. Furthermore, some academic studies have considered him to spread hatred about Jews through his various speeches.

In this context, Ana Belén Soage, a researcher, sees that al-Qaradawi justified the killing of Jewish civilians and that he considered killing them as a duty about which the murderer must not feel remorseful. This is because he considered Israel as a military state which means that all its citizens, men and women are soldiers either in service or in reserve.

Al-Qaradawi sees that Israel is not a threat to the Palestinians only, but to all Arabs and Muslims. Thus, he warns them from the danger of the persistence of Israel's tyranny as it kills the fighters "mujahideen" such as Fathi Shaqaqi and Yahya Ayyash. Then, it meets with 30 countries at the Sharm el-Sheikh conference in order to fight what they named "terrorism" together. He also warned from the racist Jewish groups spread in the United States, especially the Jewish Defense League JDL, which is a radical Jewish group lead by Meir Kahane's followers. JDL has issued a statement threatening to kill Muslims in Britain and America.

In al-Qaradawi's opinion, Israel understands one language, which is the language of force. Besides, he once prayed to God in a sermon to stand against the "treacherous" Jews and protect believers from their evil and to turn it around to them and to destroy them.

It is noted that al-Qaradawi sometimes does not generalise when talking about Jews and rather specify the treacherous. He, unreservedly, other times talked about Jews and their treachery emphasising that they are motivated by religious reasons especially before the 11<sup>th</sup> of September. Up to that point, his discourse focused on emphasising the vile characteristics of the Jews as stated in the Quran and on explaining that Muslims fight Jews because of their occupation of the holy land of Palestine not because of their religion.

However, after September 11<sup>th</sup>, al-Qaradawi became more specific, especially in his book (Our Islamic Discourse at the Time of Globalization) "خطابنا الإسلامي في عصر العولمة" published in 2004, in which al-Qaradawi forbids imams and preachers from making provocative prayers against Jews. "Some preachers pray to God in sermons to destroy all Jews and Christians, orphan their kids, widow their wives and make them, their money, and their kids booty for Muslims," al-Qaradawi says.

Instead, al-Qaradawi called preachers to specify their prayers against the aggressors, bringing so much religious evidence to support his call.

In addition, he stressed that Muslims are not anti-Semites as the Arabs themselves are Semites. He went further when he says that it is unacceptable and inappropriate for a Muslim preacher to describe Jews as "descendants of monkeys and pigs" based on the fact that God has cursed a sect of them. The sheikh asserts that the curse was upon a sect of them that has no descendants providing religious evidence to emphasise that this cannot be generalised.

This plainly indicates that al-Qaradawi's positions regarding the conflict are clear and emphasises that the battle is with the occupation, not with the Jews as religious people. His positions though have become clearer over time. He began to emphasise that this battle does not require defaming and despising Jews, but requires intensified efforts to end their occupation of the Islamic Arabic land of Palestine.

Still, it is noted that the terms (Jews, Zionism and Israel) are confused in the writings and speeches of al-Qaradawi. Even though he emphasises that the battle is not for the religion of the Jews, but because of their aggression against us and our land, yet the three terms mentioned above almost mean the same in his discourse. Only in his book (Our Islamic Discourse in the time of Globalization) "خطابنا الإسلامي في عصر العولمة" did he accurately distinguish between these terms.

### 1.3. Third: The Factors of the Triumph of Jews over the Arabs and Muslims.

Dr al-Qaradawi believes that the main reason for the defeat of 1967 is the same as the reasons for the defeat of 1948, losing Andalusia to this day, and losing Palestine for nearly two centuries for the Crusaders; it is because abandoning the teachings of Islam, which made the ummah forget its identity

and lose its personality. The ummah, thus, lost the spirit of sacrifice and weakened its morale. As a result, Arabs got separated from their Muslim brothers because of national conflicts, and the tie between the rulers and the ruled became distant. Consequently, people felt that the battle is for the sake of the rulers, not the sake of the ummah; the soldiers fought far away from God, and thus they lost.

Al-Qaradawi believes that triumph starts by defining the goal. The goal from his point of view should not be limited to "Removing the effects of aggression" for this is a waste of the real goal. The goal should be "eradication the aggression from its roots ... and getting the situation before the mass migration to Palestine back". He points out that the goal shall be reached by jihad, explaining that he does not mean the jihad for the sake of the nation, but the jihad that God has imposed on Muslims just as praying and fasting. He calls for teaching the ummah and helping it get qualified to practice jihad effectively to achieve the desired goal. Jews, as al-Qaradawi sees, have conquered Muslims because they -the Jews- are persevering, well-planned and united.

### **1.4. Fourth: Al-Qaradawi's Position on the Political Agreements.**

Al-Qaradawi considered that the agreements concluded between the Palestinians and Israel have no value and that they do not represent the peace of the brave, but the peace between the strong and weak, the peace of the wolf and the sheep. He explains that these agreements that are already unfair are not implemented by the rulers of "Israel". In his fatwa, al-Qaradawi asserts that peace with "Israel" is not permissible because they are aggressors and did not seek peace, but continue aggression instead. Al-Qaradawi considered that the jihad of the Palestinians against "Israel" is a defensive jihad and that it is a preventive war, so it is a mandatory imposition on the ummah. Thus, it is not right to leave the obligation and go to peace with an enemy who does not seek peace.

Sheikh al-Qaradawi had a newspaper-based discussion with the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia Sheikh Abd al-Aziz ibn Baz. During the discussion, al-Qaradawi rejected the fatwa of Ibn Baz, which legitimized reconciliation with "Israel" if it sought peace and if the leaders (ululamr) saw it in the interest of Arabs and Muslims.

### **1.5. Fifth: Al-Qaradawi's Position on the Resistance and the Resistance Parties.**

Al-Qaradawi praised the resistance of the Palestinian people and stressed that it has been going on since the beginning of the Zionist aggression. In his speeches and writings, he reviewed the experiences of the Palestinian resistance at various stages, stressing the importance of the religious factor in activating the ummah's energies since the first revolutions in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as the participation of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1948 war. Al-Qaradawi strongly criticised the intervention of the Arab armies in the 1948 war and considered that their entry harmed the position of the Palestinian resistance. Stressing that there is no way but jihad and resistance, he considers that it must be a comprehensive resistance combining military, political, cultural and economic dimensions. Al-Qaradawi raises the slogan "I resist therefore I am." Al-Qaradawi considers that the Jihad is a must in order to liberate Palestine.

Al-Qaradawi considered that the Palestinian resistance could have aborted the Zionist project, had it not been for those interventions that lost outcomes and dashed hopes. He means the general strike of 1936, the 1948 war, and the two intifada

On March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004, he delivered a sermon about Sheikh Ahmed Yassin immediately after his martyrdom, describing him as a man that equals a nation, that he was a teacher, mujahid and worshiper and that he had a solid will and unrelenting determination. He considered his martyrdom a blessing for the Palestinian cause because he revived it.

Al-Qaradawi called for the practice of civil jihad in Palestine, especially in Jerusalem, focusing in this area on building hospitals, schools, mosques and various institutions, which will enable the Palestinian people to survive on their land. Al-Qaradawi issued a fatwa that Zakat can be paid to the Palestinian Jihad.

Al-Qaradawi stood by the resistance forces; he denounced Jordan's arrest of Hamas leaders and called on King Abdullah to address the situation appropriately. He considered this position as evidence of weakness and division, describing this deed as a gift to Israel.

He invested all occasions in order to praise the resistance or to denounce the plans and practices against it, such as the assassination of the martyr Mohiyedine Sharif. Besides, when Qaradawi talks

about the failures of the resistance, he does not forget to raise the morale of the ummah so that people do not think that the resistance is on its way to get defeated; when Sharif was assassinated, al-Qaradawi reminded the nation that "this will not weaken the resistance, that heroism is rooted in the hearts of the people and that the mothers of the martyrs welcome their sons with ululations."

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, al-Qaradawi rejected the American procedure, which considered the Palestinian resistance as terrorism and insisted on affirming the legitimacy of the Palestinian resistance

### **1.6. Sixth: Al-Qaradawi's Position on the Martyrdom Operations.**

Greatest types of jihad for the sake of Allah, describing it as legitimate terrorism. He also considered calling them suicide operations as a big mistake because they are heroic martyrdom operations. al-Qaradawi differentiated between the suicide and the martyr. The first, in his point of view, kills himself for the sake of despair and frustration of life and because of his lack of hope for God's mercy. The second becomes a sacrifice for the sake of his religion and his nation and in defence of his land and the hope of victory from God through which the ummah regains its rights.

Al-Qaradawi considered that the participation of women in the martyrdom deeds is blessed and supported by religion. He ruled that it is okay if a woman had to take off her hijab at the last minute for the big mission. He considered that such participation comes within the framework of defensive jihad, which is imposed and therefore, the woman can go out without her husband's permission.

In support of the resistance, al-Qaradawi denounced labelling martyrs through radio and satellite channels as suicide bombers. He stressed that they are martyrs and carry out martyrdom operations. He claimed that the martyrdom operations are legitimate because all Israelis are aggressors and military and there is no one civilian among them.

### **1.7. Seventh: Al-Qaradawi's Position on the Palestinian Authority PA**

There is no doubt that al-Qaradawi is biased towards the Palestinian resistance movement and opposes a political settlement. However, he did not stop advising the Palestinian Authority on the one hand, and the resistance forces on the other, and calling on both sides to unite. He tried to persuade the PA in 2002 not to respond to Israeli and American pressure to demand the arrest of the resistance members. He emphasised in his speeches that nothing would satisfy Sharon and that he at the moment of confrontation would target everyone.

However, after the position of the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on the "Israeli" aggression on the Gaza Strip, as well as the position of the President on the Goldstone report, Qaradawi said on January 3, 2010 that if it is proven that Mahmoud Abbas asked the Israelis to strike Gaza and if it is proven that he refused to submit the Goldstone report to the Human Rights Council, then he -Abbas- deserves stoning.

Because of this as well as his support to the Palestinian resistance led by Hamas, the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah launched a major media campaign against Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi. Palestinian President Abbas began this campaign by saying that Sheikh al-Qaradawi speaks from a partisan perspective rather than a religious one. Palestinian newspapers and websites loyal to President Abbas also published several articles that attacked al-Qaradawi and considered his position to serve the occupation. One of these is Yahya Rabah's article "Fadelat Sheikh al-Qaradawi" where the author claimed that the Sheikh cannot follow the events himself for many reasons and that there are those who whisper in his ears, provide him with incomplete facts and put words in his mouth, so that he utters positions similar to those of Netanyahu and Lieberman. The writer advised al-Qaradawi to pay attention to those around him for they might be from the ten lost tribes of Israel

The Ministry of Awqaf in Ramallah issued a circular on January 11, 2010, calling on all preachers of mosques in the West Bank to abide by a written sermon attached with the circular. "From the land of Palestine, we demand al-Qaradawi to take his words back and apologise for what he said against the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas because these words offend the Palestinian people not only the president," the sermon read.

President Abbas and those around him seem to have grasped the seriousness of what Sheikh al-Qaradawi's statements represent, given his religious position and his great credibility among Arab and Muslim elites and masses. This is why the leadership of the Palestinian Authority wanted to drop this

status and make al-Qaradawi a subject of controversy and disagreement, not unity and consensus, especially since al-Qaradawi provides great moral and material support to the resistance movement.

### **1.8. Eighth: The Influence of Al-Qaradawi's Thoughts of Moderation "Wasatiyyah" on the Ideology of the Islamic Palestinian Movements.**

Hamas has taken Sheikh Youssef al-Qaradawi as a reference in fiqh and relied on his books in the education of its members and cadres. It depended on his books and fatwas at critical times that were important turning points. One of these positions was when al-Qaradawi considered that the establishment of parties and the multiplicity of political forces are among the legitimate actions in Islam and even described political pluralism as a virtue to be recognised, and a safety valve against tyranny.

Al-Qaradawi sees that humanity, through the presence of parties, reached a formula for "enjoining good and forbidding wrong", away from the bloodshed. Al-Qaradawi also considers that the essence of democracy is that people choose who governs them without coercion and that no ruler or an economic or social ideology would be imposed on them if they do not want. Furthermore, al-Qaradawicriticised the rejectionists of democracy from the Islamists and emphasised that democracy restrains individual ruling and political domination. Hence, he considered that its rejection is out of superficiality and haste.

In his master's thesis, researcher Nizar Ramadan, a Hamas leader (who won among its list in the 2006 legislative elections), said that al-Qaradawi's view had influenced Hamas's position on pluralism, democracy and alliances between Islamists and others.

### **1.9. Ninth: The Ummah's Responsibility Towards Palestine From Al-Qaradawi's Point of View**

Al-Qaradawi emphasises in many of his writings, speeches and conversations that the question of Palestine is the cause of the ummah, not an issue of the Palestinians alone. Therefore, the Sheikh keeps asking the people, rulers, parties and all components of the Islamic nation to intervene in support of the Palestinians considering this as a duty of the nation. Through his writings and speeches, a set of duties that al-Qaradawi mentions could be noted. Sheikh calls on the rulers to forget their disagreements and unite. He praises all efforts of rapprochement between Arabs and Muslims, considers them steps in the right direction and calls for the continuation of expansion and deepening. Sheikh also called for standing by the Al-Aqsa Intifada when it erupted in 2000 and called on Arabs and Muslims to support the Palestinian people and protect their intifada. Moreover, al-Qaradawi called on people to boycott Israeli and American goods. He also praised Sheikh Ahmed Yassin when he visited Doha and called on Arabs and Muslims to emulate him.

Al-Qaradawi considered that the ummah should intend to do jihad. Once the conditions allow, everyone would start to fight for the sake of the liberation of Palestine. In addition to besieging the enemy by boycotting it economically, he called on the ummah to provide moral help and cash assistance to the Palestinian people. The nation's duties towards the Palestinian cause, from al-Qaradawi's point of view, can be summarised in the following five areas:

1. Political Jihad: By ending relations with Israel, and closing embassies.
2. Economic Jihad: By focusing on the boycott, as he considered that buying American and Israeli goods is a great sin.
3. Jihad with money: to help the mujahideen "fighters" who sacrifice their lives.
4. Cultural Jihad: This is to change the cultural life of our ummah, especially the phenomenon of dancing and singing in the media.
5. Spiritual Jihad: That the ummah should feel the pain of the Palestinians and that Muslims should pray more for them.

Some believe that Sheikh al-Qaradawi has adopted a moderation approach "Wasatiyyah" in formulating his positions on the Palestinian cause. However, it is clear from the review of previous positions that the Sheikh adopts a revolutionary position in all matters relating to the Palestinian cause, both in terms of what is right and in terms of providing solutions and theories in order to restore the right to its owners.

It is noteworthy by reviewing the various positions of Sheikh al-Qaradawi that they come in the context of guidance, focusing on the holiness of the land of Palestine, and the right of the Palestinians in it. They urge jihad and resistance to restore the rights, calling for not to compromise the fixed rights of the Palestinian people, and calling for Muslims to support the people of Palestine. Furthermore, al-Qaradawi's positions are far from discussing deep political issues such as the two-state solution, the secular one-state solution, the binational state, or the idea of a phased and historic solution, for a religious scholar is not expected to engage in detailed discussion of political issues that are disputed by the Palestinian factions themselves.

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**Citation:** Nehad M. S. Al Shaikh Khaleel, "Reading the Position of Al-Qaradawi on the Palestinian Cause". *International Journal of History and Cultural Studies (IJHCS)*. vol 5, no. 4, 2019, pp. 13-20 doi: DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.20431/2454-7654.0504002>.

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