

Sheikh Abdullah Azzam (rahimahullah)

Dr. Sheikh Abdullah Yusuf Azzam. Palestinian. Assassinated on 24 November 1989 in Peshawar, Pakistan, Aged 48.

Time Magazine wrote about him that ' he was the reviver of Jihad in the 20th Century'. Abdullah Yusuf Azzam was born in the village of Ass-ba'ah Al-Hartiyeh, province of Jineen in the occupied sacred land of Palestine in 1941 CE. He was brought up in a humble house where he was taught Islam, and was fed with the love of Allah, His Messenger (SAW), those striving in the Way of Allah, the righteous people and the desire for the Hereafter. Abdullah Azzam was a distinguished kid who started propagating Islam at an early age. His peers knew him as a pious child. He showed signs of excellence at an early age. His teachers recognized this while he was still at elementary school.

Sheikh Abdullah Azzam was known for his perseverance and serious nature ever since he was a small boy. He received his early elementary and secondary education in his village, and continued his education at the agricultural Khadorri College where he obtained a Diploma. Although he was the youngest of his colleagues, he was the cleverest and the smartest. After he graduated from Khadorri College, he worked as a teacher in a village called Adder in South Jordan. Later he joined Shariah College in Damascus University where he obtained a B.A. Degree in Shariah (Islamic Law) in 1966. After the Jews captured the West Bank in 1967, Sheikh Abdullah Azzam decided to migrate to Jordan, because he could not live under the Jews' occupation of Palestine. The sin of the Israeli tanks rolling into the West Bank without any resistance made him even more determined to migrate in order to learn the skills necessary to fight.

In the late 1960's he joined the Jihad against the Israeli occupation of Palestine from Jordan. Soon after that, he went to Egypt and graduated with a Masters Degree in Shariah from the University of Al-Azhar. In 1970 and after Jihad came to a halt by forcing PLO forces out of Jordan, he assumed the position of teaching in the Jordanian University in Amman. In 1971 he was awarded a scholarship to Al-Azhar University in Cairo from which he obtained a Ph.D Degree in Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence (Usool-ul-Fiqh) in 1973. During his stay in Egypt he came to know the family of Shaheed Sayyed Qutb.

Sheikh Abdullah Azzam spent a long time participating in the Jihad in Palestine. However, matters there were not to his liking, for the people involved in the Jihad were far removed from Islam. He told of how these people used to spend the nights playing cards and listening to music, under the illusion that they were performing Jihad to liberate Palestine. Sheikh Abdullah Azzam mentioned that, out of the thousands in the camp he was in, the number of people who offered their Salah in congregation were so few that they could be counted on one hand. He tried to steer them towards Islam, but they resisted his attempts. One day he rhetorically asked one of the 'Mujahideen' what the religion behind the Palestinian revolution was, to which the man replied, quite clearly and bluntly, "This revolution has no religion behind it." This was the last straw. Sheikh Abdullah Azzam left Palestine, and went to Saudi Arabia to teach in the universities there.

When Sheikh Azzam realised that only by means of an organised force would the Ummah ever be able to gain victory, then Jihad and the Gun became his pre-occupation and recreation. "Jihad and the rifle alone: no negotiations, no conferences and no dialogues," he would say. By practising what he

was preaching, Sheikh Abdullah Azzam was one of the first Arabs to join the Afghan Jihad against the communist USSR

In 1979, when he learned about the Afghan Jihad, he left his teaching position at King Abdul- Aziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and went to Islamabad, Pakistan, in order to be able to participate in the Jihad. He moved to Pakistan to be close to the Afghan Jihad, and there he got to know the leaders of the Jihad. During the early time of his stay in Pakistan, he was appointed a lecturer in the International Islamic University in Islamabad. After a while he had to quit the University to devote his full time and energy to the Jihad in Afghanistan.

In the early 1980's, Sheikh Abdullah Azzam came to experience the Jihad in Afghanistan. In this Jihad he found satisfaction of his longing and untold love to fight in the Path of Allah, just as Allah's Messenger (SAW) once said, "One hour spent fighting in the Path of Allah is worth more than seventy years spent in praying at home." [Authentic, At-Tirmithi and Al-Hakem].

Inspired by this Hadith, Sheikh Abdullah Azzam immigrated with his family to Pakistan in order to be closer to the field of Jihad. Soon after, he then moved from Islamabad to Peshawar to be even closer to the field of Jihad and Martyrdom.

In Peshawar, Sheikh Abdullah Azzam founded the Bait-ul-Ansar (Mujahideen Services Bureau with the aim of offering all possible assistance to the Afghani Jihad and the Mujahideen through establishing and managing projects that supported the cause. The Bureau also received and trained volunteers pouring into Pakistan to participate in Jihad and allocating them to the front lines.

Unsurprisingly, this was not enough to satisfy Sheikh Azzam's burning desire for Jihad. That desire drove him finally to go to the front-line. On the battlefield, the Sheikh gracefully played his destined role in that generous epic of heroism.

In Afghanistan he hardly ever settled in one place. He travelled throughout the country, visiting most of its provinces and states such as Lujer, Qandahar, Hindukush Heights, the Valley of Binjistr, Kabul and Jalalabad. These travels allowed Sheikh Abdullah Azzam to witness first hand the heroic deeds of these ordinary people, who had sacrificed all that they possessed -including their own lives - for the Supremacy of the Deen of Islam.

In Peshawar, upon his return from these travels, Sheikh Azzam spoke about Jihad constantly. He prayed to restore the Unity among the divided Mujahideen commanders; called upon those who had not yet joined the fighting to take up arms and to follow him to the front before it would be too late.

Abdullah Azzam was greatly influenced by the Jihad in Afghanistan and the Jihad was greatly

influenced by him since he devoted his full time to its cause. He became the most prominent figure in the Afghani Jihad aside from the Afghan leaders. He spared no effort to promote the Afghan cause to the whole world, especially through the Muslim Ummah. He travelled all over the world, calling on Muslims to rally to the defence of their religion and lands. He wrote a number of books on Jihad, such as Join the Caravan and Defence of Muslim Lands. Moreover, he himself participated bodily in the Afghan Jihad, despite the fact that he was in his forties. He traversed Afghanistan, from north to south, east to west, in snow, through the mountains, in heat and in cold, riding donkeys and on foot. Young men with him used to tire from such exertions, but not Sheikh Abdullah Azzam.

He changed the minds of Muslims about the Jihad in Afghanistan and presented the Jihad as an Islamic cause which concerned all Muslims around the world. Due to his efforts, the Afghani Jihad became universal in which Muslims from every part of the world participated. Soon, volunteer Islamic fighters began to travel to Afghanistan from the four corners of the Earth, to fulfil their obligation of Jihad and in defence of their oppressed Muslim brothers and sisters.

The Sheikh's life revolved around a single goal, namely the establishment of Allah's Rule on earth, this being the clear responsibility of each and every Muslim. So in order to accomplish his life's noble mission of restoring the Khilafah, the Sheikh focused on Jihad (the armed struggle to establish Islam). He believed Jihad must be carried out until the Khilafah (Islamic Rule) is established so the light of Islam may shine on the whole world.

Sheikh Abdullah Azzam made Jihad in every possible way, responding to the call of Allah: "Go forth, light and heavy, and strive with your selves and your wealth in the path of Allah. That is better for you, if only you knew." [Quran, 9:41]

He reared his family also, in the same spirit, so that his wife, for example, engaged in orphan care and other humanitarian work in Afghanistan. He refused teaching positions at a number of universities, declaring that he would not quit Jihad until he was either martyred or assassinated. He used to reiterate that his ultimate goal was still to liberate Palestine. He was once quoted as saying, " Never shall I leave the Land of Jihad, except in three circumstances. Either I shall be killed in Afghanistan. Either I shall be killed in Peshawar. Or either I shall be handcuffed and expelled from Pakistan."

Jihad in Afghanistan had made Abdullah Azzam the main pillar of the Jihad movement in the modern times. Through taking part in this Jihad, and through promoting and clarifying the obstacles which have been erected in the path of Jihad, he played a significant role in changing the minds of Muslims about Jihad and the need for it. He was a role model for the young generation that responded to the call of Jihad. He had a great appreciation for Jihad and the need for it. Once he said, " I feel that I am nine years old: seven-and-a-half years in the Afghan Jihad, one-and-a-half years in the Jihad in Palestine, and the rest of the years have no value."

From his pulpit Sheikh Azzam was always reiterating his conviction that: "Jihad must not be abandoned until Allah (SWT) Alone is worshipped. Jihad continues until Allah's Word is raised high. Jihad until all the oppressed peoples are freed. Jihad to protect our dignity and restore our occupied lands. Jihad is the way of everlasting glory."

History, as well as anyone who knew Sheikh Abdullah Azzam closely, all testify to his courage in speaking the truth, regardless of the consequences. He always bore in mind the command of Allah to:

"Proclaim openly that which you were commanded, and turn away from the polytheists (Mushrikeen)." [Quran, 15:94].

On every occasion Sheikh Abdullah Azzam reminded all Muslims that, "Muslims cannot be defeated by others. We Muslims are not defeated by our enemies, but instead, we are defeated by our own selves."

He was a fine example of Islamic manners, in his piety, his devotion to Allah and his modesty in all things. He would never adulate in his relations with others. Sheikh Azzam always listened to the youth, he was dignified and did not allow fear to have access to his brave heart. He practised continual fasting especially the alternate daily fasting routine of Prophet Dawud (SAW). He strongly counselled others to practice fasting on Mondays and Thursdays. The Sheikh was a man of uprightness, honesty and virtue, and was never heard to slander others or to talk unpleasently about an individual Muslim.

As the Jihad in Afghanistan went on, he was succeeding in uniting together all the various fighting groups in the Afghani Jihad. Naturally, such a pride to Islam caused great distress to the enemies of this religion, and they plotted to eliminate him. In 1989 CE, a lethal amount of TNT explosive was placed beneath the pulpit from which he delivered the sermon every Friday. It was such a formidable quantity that if it had exploded, it would have destroyed the mosque, together with everything and everybody in it. Hundreds of Muslims would have been killed, but Allah provided protection and the bomb did not explode.

The enemies, determined to accomplish their ugly task, tried another plot in Peshawar, shortly after this in the same year When Allah (SWT) willed that Sheikh Abdullah Azzam should leave this world to be in His closest company (we hope that it is so), the Sheikh departed in a glorious manner. The day was Friday, 24 November 1989. The enemies of Allah planted three bombs on a road so narrow only a single car could travel on it. It was the road Sheikh Abdullah Azzam would use to drive to the Friday Prayer. That Friday, the Sheikh, together with two of his own sons, Ibrahim and Muhammad, and with one of the sons of the late Sheikh Tameem Adnani (another hero of the Afghan Jihad), drove along the road. The car stopped at the position of the first bomb, and the Sheikh alighted to walk the remainder of the way. The enemies, lying in wait, then exploded the bomb. A loud explosion and a great thundering were heard all over the city.

People emerged from the mosque, and beheld a terrible scene. Only a small fragment of the car remained. The young son Ibrahim flew 100 metres into the air; the other two youths were thrown a similar distance away, and their remains were scattered among the trees and power lines. As for Sheikh Abdullah Azzam himself, his body was found resting against a wall, totally intact and not at all disfigured, except that some blood was seen issuing from his mouth.

That fateful blast indeed ended the worldly journey of Sheikh Abdullah Azzam which had been spent well in struggling, striving and fighting in the Path of Allah (SWT). It also secured his more real and eternal life in the gardens of Paradise - we ask Allah that it is so -, that he will enjoy along with the illustrious company of "those on whom is the Grace of Allah, the Prophets, the Sincere ones, the Martyrs and the Righteous. The Best of company are they." [Quran, 4:69].

It was in this way that this great hero and reformer of Islam departed from the arena of Jihad and from

this world, never to return. He was buried in the Pabi Graveyard of the Shuhadaa' in Peshawar, where he joined hundreds of other Shuhadaa'. May Allah accept him as a martyr, and grant him the highest station in Paradise. The struggle which he stood for continues, despite the enemies of Islam. There is not a Land of Jihad today in the world, nor a Mujahid fighting in Allah's Way, who is not inspired by the life, teachings and works of Sheikh Abdullah Azzam (May Allah have Mercy on him).

We ask Allah (SWT) to accept the deeds of Sheikh Abdullah Azzam and bring him to the Highest Part of Paradise. We ask Allah (SWT) to raise up for this Ummah more Sheikhs of this calibre, who take their knowledge to the battlefield rather than confining it in books.

With this article, we record the events of Islamic history which took place in the ten years from 1979 to 1989, and continue to happen. As Sheikh Abdullah Azzam himself once said, " Indeed Islamic history is not written except with the blood of the Shuhadaa', except with the stories of the Shuhadaa' and except with the examples of the Shuhadaa' . "

"They seek to extinguish the light of Allah by their mouths. But Allah refuses save to perfect His light, even if the disbelievers are averse. It is He who has sent His messenger with the guidance and the true religion, in order that He may make it prevail over all religions, even if the pagans are averse." [Quran, 9:32-33].

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