



Feiz Muhammad: Extremist Ideologue with Influence in the West

A NEFA Backgrounder on Feiz Muhammad
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Feiz Muhammad [source: www.sheikhfeiz.com]

Overview

This is the third in a series of backgrounders the NEFA Foundation has published on extremist ideologues that take a close look at the personalities, doctrine, scope of influence, and methods of communication of some of the most influential purveyors of radical Islamist ideology to English-speaking audiences. As U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies become increasingly concerned about homegrown terrorism at a time when Al-Qaida is actively encouraging American Muslims to commit terrorist acts, understanding the sources of radicalization becomes an essential component of combating the threat. Here, we profile Feiz Muhammad (a.k.a. Feiz Mohammad, Sheik Feiz), an Australian citizen now residing in Malaysia, who has been labeled Australia's "most dangerous sheikh" due to the number of connections he has to known and suspected terrorists.¹

Muhammad's target audience is young Muslims worldwide who feel disaffected and disassociated from local Muslim communities, where mosque

¹ Cameron Stewart and Richard Kerbaj, "Muslim Cleric a Danger on Paper," *The Australian*, June 30, 2007.

clerics show “a lack of interest toward the youth.”² His lectures frame the United States as the enemy of all Muslims, including those living in the United States and in other Western countries. He emphasizes that Muslims should regard Western culture as corrupt and immoral, and Muslims should not associate with non-Muslims.

Profile

Feiz Muhammad’s parents emigrated from Lebanon to Sydney, Australia, where Muhammad was born in 1970.³ On his web site, he describes his family as being “so-called” Muslim, and wrote that while growing up he “never placed any effort in understanding the deen of truth due to the negative influences that surrounded him.”⁴ He participated in boxing and bodybuilding at a competitive level, and trained horses professionally.⁵ After a troubled adolescence that included the use of drugs and heavy drinking,⁶ Muhammad became serious about Islam. At the approximate age of 19, Muhammad went to Saudi Arabia where he spent two years studying Arabic, and subsequently, he attended the University of Medina to study Islamic law for four years.

When Muhammad returned to Sydney, he founded the Global Islamic Youth Centre (GIYC) as an alternative to the existing mosques and Islamic community centers, which he described as being out-of-touch with the Australian youth.⁷ GIYC serves a community of more than 4,000 Muslims and is part of a Salafi network of Islamic centers in Australia called Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah (ASWJ).

In 2005, Muhammad moved with his wife and children to Lebanon to care for his ailing father.⁸ In December 2008, while Muhammad was out of the country, the GIYC decided to remove him as director. The move came at a time when the Centre announced that it was raising funds to build a larger facility. Some reports suggest that it was likely that the board of directors wished to distance themselves from Muhammad, who had already attracted attention from Australian authorities for preaching extremist ideology.⁹ Now under the leadership of Saudi-trained cleric Sheikh Abu Adnan, GIYC offers religious instruction and Tai Kwan Do classes to men, women, and children.¹⁰

² www.sheikfeizonline.com.

³ Luke McIlveen, “Preaching Death and Dishonour,” *The Daily Telegraph*, January 19, 2007.

⁴ www.sheikfeizonline.com.

⁵ Martin Chulov, “Treatment has Sheik Wary of Returning Home,” *The Australian*, January 6, 2007.

⁶ Cameron Stewart and Richard Kerbaj, “Muslim Cleric a Danger on Paper,” *The Australian*, June 30, 2007.

⁷ www.sheikfeizonline.com.

⁸ Sally Neighbour, “Nations Linked by Blood and Islam,” *The Australian*, July 2, 2007.

⁹ Joe Hildebrand, “Sheikh Feiz Mohammad Dumped As Leader of Sydney Youth Centre,” *The Daily Telegraph*, December 11, 2008.

¹⁰ <http://www.giyc.com.au/html/index.php?categoryid=84>, last accessed on February 17, 2010.

Currently, Muhammad is living in Malaysia where he is reportedly working toward earning his doctorate in Islamic law. He also teaches at “various places in Malaysia, and also on the Internet.”¹¹ According to Muhammad’s YouTube channel, he lectures every other week at the Al-Khadeem Centre in Sg Kayu Ara, Malaysia.¹²

In a 2007 interview with *The Australian*, Muhammad said that he was reluctant to return to Australia because he felt that Muslims were treated with suspicion there. “I can’t walk through the airport without hundreds of eyes on me. They are like foxes trying to eat sheep.”¹³

Rhetoric, Ideology, and Influences

Muhammad’s mentor was Sheikh Mohammad Omran¹⁴ (a.k.a. Sheik Abu Ayman), who is also considered to be among Australia’s most radical clerics, and whose prayer room was a bountiful source for terrorist recruiters.¹⁵ Omran is the emir of the Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah (ASWJ), which in Australia is an organization comprised of seven Islamic centers, one of which is Muhammad’s Global Islamic Youth Centre.¹⁶ In other countries, Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jammah (“followers of the Sunnah”) is a less structured Salafi movement. ASWJ adherents around the world intend to practice Islam according to the methods of the prophet Mohammed and his followers. Some who refer to themselves as ASWJ are pro jihad. Feiz Muhammad is a Salafi jihadi and refers to Muslims who are not Sunni, as well as those who do not practice the faith according to the strictest interpretation, as apostates. For example, in a series of talks that can be found on YouTube titled “The Deviant Sects,” Muhammad rails against the Shia, calling them “kuffar” because they give their leaders “divine attributes of absolute infallibility.”¹⁷



Muhammad states that he, Omran, and a third Australia-based extremist cleric, Abdul Salem Mohammed Zoud,¹⁸ offer a “guarantee to safeguard their

¹¹ <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=23703251544>, last accessed on February 2, 2010.

¹² <http://www.al-khaadem.com.my/index.html>, last accessed on February 9, 2010.

¹³ Martin Chulov, “Treatment has Sheik Wary of Returning Home,” *The Australian*, January 6, 2007.

¹⁴ “Worst of the Worst,” “Four Corners,” Australian Broadcasting Corporation, July 20, 2004.

¹⁵ “Worst of the Worst,” “Four Corners,” Australian Broadcasting Corporation, July 20, 2004.

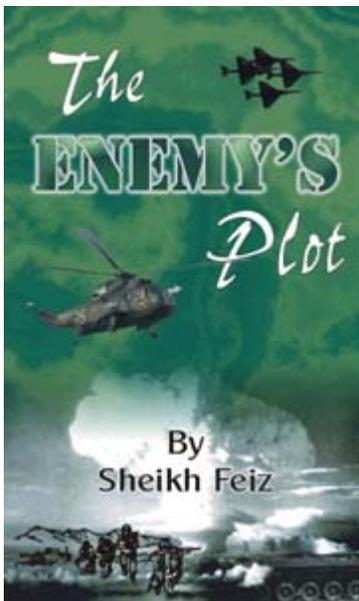
¹⁶ Martin Chulov, “Treatment has Sheik Wary of Returning Home,” *The Australian*, January 6, 2007.

¹⁷ Feiz Muhammad, “The Shia and the Sufis,” last accessed from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-P7XzGMRAbk&feature=related> on February 4, 2010.

¹⁸ Zoud was named by Willie Brigitte, a French convert to Islam who plotted an attack in Australia, as a terrorist recruiter.

homeland from radicalism and the anger of Muslim youth that simmers over ‘the evil ways of the American regime.’”¹⁹ This statement is reminiscent of a similar tacit agreement made by Omar Bakri Mohammed (the leader of the U.K.’s al Muhajiroun), which he referred to as “the covenant of security.” In a 2008 interview from Tripoli,²⁰ Bakri Mohammed explained that the British government had violated the covenant that “had guaranteed peace between Muslims and the British state.” He further stated that because Britain, an ally of the U.S., was attacking Muslims many young Muslim men believed that the covenant of security was no longer in effect, and believed that they were at war with the British state. Thus, attacks on the homeland would be considered legitimate to them.²¹

Muhammad’s publicly available pronouncements have received minimal coverage in the mainstream Australian press, other than a lecture series titled “The Death Series,” which sparked public outrage and concern from politicians in Sydney in 2007.²² The lectures cover the journey of the soul from the body to the hereafter. In one lecture Muhammad states, “The most noble death is the death of a martyr.” While “The Death Series” may be considered extreme, many of Muhammad’s lectures are far more damning.



In a widely available lecture titled “The Enemy’s Plot,” Muhammad states that the “Jews and the Christians will never stop fighting the Muslims unless they follow their path. They will continue plotting against the Muslims. They want to remove the Koran as the source of our law and guidance.” He further states that the U.S. perpetrates attacks on “the innocent Muslims living in the West.” “The war on terrorism is nothing but a war on Islam and on Muslims.” He continues, “Those American pigs, the Zionists. . .they are also attacking in a secret, subtle way . . . The ideological attack is more devastating than military warfare. The eventual outcome will be that Muslims will be diseased in their thoughts.” “He will want to wear a Yankee shirt! . . . We will love what they want you to love.” “They [Americans] are

evil. . . We’ve given allegiance to the non-Muslims by befriending them. . .They are evildoers.” “What happens when you become loyal to the kuffar? Our further destruction.”

¹⁹ Martin Chulov, “Treatment has Sheik Wary of Returning Home,” *The Australian*, January 6, 2007.

²⁰ Bakri was banned from returning to the U.K. in 2005, and currently resides in Lebanon.

²¹ Mahan Abedin, “A Search for Unity: Omar Bakri Mohammed,” Interview in “Asia Times Online,” originally posted on June 12, 2008, last accessed from http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/JF12Ak02.html on February 17, 2010.

²² “Police Probe Firebrand Cleric,” *The Sunday Morning Herald*, January 18, 2007.

In a speech co-delivered with extremist cleric Khalid Yasin, Muhammad said, “Today, the Muslims are the most humiliated ‘nation’ on earth because they are afraid to “lose a drop of blood.” “Our lifestyle is more important to us than coming to the aid of our brothers who are suffering.”²³

In another lecture titled “Ruling on Mixed Colleges/Universities”, Muhammad states that if a man allows his wife to attend a university in which there are co-ed classrooms then he is a cuckold.

In a lecture simply titled “Homosexuals”, Muhammad stated that if Islamic law were to be implemented then homosexuals would be killed. However, because “we live in the West we can only warn against his homosexuality; the worst, disgusting, scummy, dirty, filthy, abominated, act on the face of this earth.”²⁴

Scope of Influence

Muhammad’s lectures are not only extreme, but his delivery is known to be fiery and engrossing. His voice rises and falls; he appears smiling and accessible at one moment and severe and intimidating the next – a style that can be described as more emotionally stirring than scholarly. Muhammad’s young audience perceives him as credible because he can speak Arabic fluently and because he was educated at the University of Medina in Saudi Arabia.



Through extensive use of the Internet, Muhammad has been successful in his ambition to reach young English-speaking audiences on a broad basis. In fact, it appears that Muhammad’s popularity is currently on the rise. Muhammad has three fan pages on Facebook. One fan page had just shy of 1,300 fans on February 16, 2010. Less than a month later, on March 5, 2010, the page showed close to 1,500 fans.²⁵ Another Facebook

²³ Feiz Muhammad and Khalid Yasin, “Where are the Muslims,” last accessed from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFazJoTnp48&feature=related> on February 4, 2010.

²⁴ Feiz Muhammad, “Homosexuals,” last accessed from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhyimpli0V8&feature=related> on February 4, 2010.

²⁵ Facebook page last accessed at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Sheikh-Feiz/65258485409?ref=search&sid=124567.4014927125..1> on March 5, 2010.

fan page has close to 800 members.²⁶ His Facebook fans are located in the U.K., Canada, South Africa, and the United States. Nearly all of his Facebook fans appear to be high school through college aged.

Hundreds of web sites carry Muhammad's video and audio lectures. His lectures can also be found on YouTube and other video sharing sites. One YouTube "channel" is entirely devoted to Muhammad's lectures.²⁷ Muhammad also broadcasts live lectures via Paltalk.²⁸

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Muhammad's potential as a radicalizing influence is evidenced by the fact that he has risen to the same stature of some of the most well-known and extreme English-speaking spiritual and ideological figures; web sites that feature Muhammad tend to also feature lectures by Anwar al-Awlaki, Ali al-Timimi. In addition, Muhammad's lectures are also featured on the web sites of groups that have track records of incitement. One example includes the Islamic Thinkers Society web site.²⁹ The Islamic Thinkers Society is a New York City-based Islamist group that is an offshoot of al Muhajiroun.³⁰

Muhammad's lectures can be found marked as "favorites" on hundreds of personal "YouTube" web pages, including that of Duane Reasoner who was Major Nidal Hasan's protégé from his Killeen, Texas mosque.^{31, 32}

²⁶ Facebook page last accessed at <http://www.facebook.com/search?q=feiz+muhammad&init=quick#!/group.php?gid=23703251544&ref=search&sid=124567.1403090544..1> on February 7, 2010.

²⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/user/paradisewoodSHFEIZ>, last accessed on February 9, 2010.

²⁸ http://blogs.muxlim.com/amatullah_a/free-online-tawheed-class-with-shaykh-feiz/, last accessed February 8, 2010.

²⁹ http://www.islamicthinkers.com/index/index.php?option=com_content&task=category§ionid=15&id=91&Itemid=80

³⁰ Note: On April 17, 2006, a Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) suicide bomber killed nine Israelis in an attack on a restaurant in Tel Aviv. Three days later, NEFA investigators were on hand to videotape a rally held outside the Israeli consulate in midtown Manhattan by the so-called "Islamic Thinkers Society" in order to demonstrate their support for anti-Israeli suicide bombings. In 2003, a British member of Al-Muhajiroun carried out a suicide bomb attack at a British-themed restaurant in Tel Aviv, killing three bystanders. See: <http://www.nefafoundation.org/multimedia-intvu.html>.

³¹ "Natural Disasters," http://www.youtube.com/user/ooklepookle#p/f/8/Hf_OZ1QIKAc, last accessed on February 2, 2010.

³² See the NEFA Foundation's "Target: America" report "Massacre at Fort Hood" at http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/nefa_forthood.pdf.

Muhammad also travels to speak in front of live audiences. In May 2009, for example, he traveled to Johannesburg, South Africa to participate in “The Islamic Awakening” conference. His speech was titled “Cursed are those who fight Islam.” Jamaican radical cleric Abdullah al Faisal and Yemen-based pro-Al-Qaida ideologue Anwar al Awlaki were also featured speakers.

Jihadi Connections

The Australian proclaimed Muhammad to be the nation’s most dangerous sheikh because he has connections to more accused terrorists than any other leading Australian Muslim figure.³³



Ahmed Elomar, Australian boxer arrested in Lebanon on terror charges.



Jack Roche

Five former students of Muhammad’s, including the Australian flyweight boxing champion Ahmed Elomar, were arrested in June 2007 in Lebanon in connection to the seizure of weapons allegedly stockpiled by Fatah al-Islam.³⁴ Elomar’s family had been of interest to Australia’s security services since 2000, when a military-style training camp was discovered on their pine plantation,³⁵ which was located in a very rural and remote area outside of Canberra.

Muhammad was also a friend and ideological inspiration to Jack Roche.³⁶ Roche is an Australian convert to Islam who became involved with the Indonesian Al-Qaida affiliate Jamaah Islamiya and subsequently with Al-Qaida in Afghanistan. Roche borrowed Muhammad’s video camera in order to film

³³ Cameron Stewart and Richard Kerbaj, “Muslim Cleric a Danger on Paper,” *The Australian*, June 30, 2007.

³⁴ Sally Neighbour, “Nations Linked by Blood and Islam,” *The Australian*, July 2, 2007.

³⁵ Sally Neighbour, “Nations Linked by Blood and Islam,” *The Australian*, July 2, 2007.

³⁶ Sally Neighbour, “Nations Linked by Blood and Islam,” *The Australian*, July 2, 2007.

prospective attack targets in Australia, including the Israeli Embassy in Canberra.³⁷ He was convicted on terrorism charges in 2002 for which he served a four-year sentence.

Muhammad is also a friend of Rabiah Hutchinson, who could be described as Australia's "Jihad Jane." Hutchinson's sons were questioned on terrorism-related charges in February 2008 while they were living in Lebanon, not far from where Muhammad lived with his family.³⁸ Hutchinson's sons had previously been arrested in Yemen for alleged connections to Al-Qaida. Rabiah Hutchinson is an Australian citizen who converted to Islam as a teen. She openly supports jihad and was married to a member of bin Laden's inner circle and has been closely associated with other jihadist leaders throughout her life.³⁹

A 2007 article in *The Australian* states that Muhammad is friends with Jordanian-born Saleh Jamal,⁴⁰ of Sydney, who was arrested in Lebanon after fleeing bail in Australia using a false passport. Jamal had been convicted in Australia on a gang-related murder in 1998.⁴¹ He had also been charged with opening fire on a Sydney police station.⁴² Jamal was arrested by Lebanese authorities, accused of having trained in a Palestinian refugee camp in Southern Lebanon and for being an Abu Musab al-Zarqawi contact.⁴³

Implications

Feiz Muhammad has a large following of young Muslims worldwide, including in the United States. His speaking style is engaging and persuasive, and, although he is not as well-known as Anwar al Awlaki, Ali al Tamimi, or Abdullah al Faisal, his lectures are often featured with theirs on radical Islamist web sites.

On March 7, 2010, Al-Qaida released a video featuring American spokesman Adam Gadahn, in which he called on Muslims to attack the U.S, "and it is for you - like your heroic Mujahid brother Nidal Hasan - to decide how, when and where you discharge this duty. But whatever you do, don't wait for tomorrow to do what can be done today, and don't wait for others to do what you can do yourself"⁴⁴ Al Qaida's message is reinforced by radical Islamist figures

³⁷ Cameron Stewart and Richard Kerbaj, "Muslim Cleric a Danger on Paper," *The Australian*, June 30, 2007.

³⁸ BBC Monitoring: Counterterrorism Digest 4-5, February 2008.

³⁹ Sally Neighbour, "Muslim Matriarch Rabiah Hutchinson's Suburban Nightmare," *The Australian*, May 2, 2009.

⁴⁰ Martin Chulov, "Treatment Has Sheik Wary of Returning Home," *The Australian*, January 6, 2007.

⁴¹ "Australian Judge Rejects Terror Suspect's Claims of Torture," *The Age*, August 17, 2007.

⁴² "Radical Australian Islamist Extradited From Lebanon to Face Shooting Charges," *AFP*, September 28, 2006,

⁴³ "Australian Arrested in Iraq," *The Age*, December 10, 2004.

⁴⁴ See transcript of Adam Gadahn's statement at <http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/nefagadahn0210.pdf>

like Feiz Muhammad, who continually frames the U.S. as the enemy of Muslims, including those who live in the United States. In addition, he calls on Muslims to participate in armed jihad.

Muhammad is already perceived as credible by his audience. His credibility will likely rise as he continues to pursue an education in Islam in Malaysia, where he resides currently, and his following will also likely continue to grow as increasing numbers of English-speaking Muslims are exposed to his lectures via the internet.