

Salafi satellite TV in Egypt

By Nathan Field and Ahmed Hamam

Spring, 2009. According to conventional wisdom in Western media, an ultra-conservative form of Islam is gaining traction in Egypt, pushing aside other moderate interpretations and threatening the country's cosmopolitan nature.¹ Often cited as evidence of this trend are popular "Salafi" satellite television stations, which since 2006 have been licensed to operate inside the country. While religious television is not new in Egypt, traditionally stations have focused on prayer recitation or readings from the Qur'an. Since 2006, however, roughly corresponding with the Muslim Brotherhood's capture of a fifth of the seats in the 2005 Parliamentary elections, several new stations have been founded that focus on preaching from a more puritanical perspective that does not emphasize politics. Many Egyptian experts such as Khalil Anani believe that these stations are the most watched in Egypt.²

Since the Egyptian government does not allow the more politically-active Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin) to base their own satellite stations in the country, some critics claim that this is part of a strategy to cultivate Salafism as a counterweight to the Brotherhood. According to Egyptian novelist and cultural commentator Alaa Aswany, "the political quietism of the Salafis and their injunctions to always obey the ruler are too good an opportunity for established Arab rulers to pass up," adding that Salafism is "a kind of Christmas present for the dictators because now they can rule with both the army and the religion."³

Yet outside of these dramatic claims – usually made by non-Islamists writing in opposition newspapers – there has been little in-depth study of the issue, and nothing in English. We attempt to rectify this situation by addressing two questions: To what extent, if any, is the popularity of Salafi television a reflection of the rise of a distinctly more puritanical form of Islamism in Egypt? And to what extent, if any, are these stations a tool in a competition between Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood? We base our study on extensive interviews with Egyptian and American experts, a survey of the available written Arabic language material and our personal viewing of the stations.⁴ Given our research limitations,⁵ we do not believe that the presence and popularity of Salafi television is causing Egyptians to become more conservative in their religious beliefs nor is it part of a government strategy of cultivating Salafism as a counterweight to the Muslim Brotherhood, as Aswany claims. Rather, its popularity is best viewed, mundanely, as reflecting a logical shift towards more puritanical interpretations of religion, across broad segments of society, in response to specific economic, cultural and political developments.

Salafism and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt

Before going any further, we must distinguish between these two trends. Like any Arab political movement, Islamism must be understood in its proper historical context. The central question of modern Egyptian intellectual thought is *how* to deal with a decline made clear by French and British occupations and subsequent Western hegemony over the country. Non-Islamists generally viewed these developments through the lens of imperialism against weak states and therefore advocated adopting the tools of Western strength to propel Egypt forward. Islamists, however, have a much different interpretation of what went wrong and what to do about it. In their perspective, Egypt declined precisely because Islam, the system which governed the country for a thousand years, was marginalized at the expense of inferior Western ideas. Their approach to reform is to re-Islamicize society and rid it of what they consider corrupting Western influences such as secularism.⁶ Islamists agree on this general end goal but what distinguishes movements is their strategy for achieving it.

The difference between the Salafis and the Ikhwan is “a matter of degree rather than a sharp divide,” explains Marc Lynch, an American professor of Arab politics. He describes the Muslim Brotherhood, which since its founding in Egypt in 1928 has been the most influential reform movement, as “highly pragmatic, not particularly textual, and focused on carving out deep Islamic spaces in society through deep participation in society.”⁷ The Brotherhood’s approach can be described as comprehensive because it uses all of the tools at its disposal to bring about reform, including politics. Close to the Ikhwan are independent Islamists such as the cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi, intellectuals Fahmy Howedi and Tariq al-Bishri, and the preacher Amr Khalid who may disagree over details but generally follow the same strategy of Islamization through deep engagement in society. Members of this group often describe themselves as adherents to *Wasatiya*, a term popularized in the 1980s by Qaradawi to describe an Islamic centrism positively distinguished from more conservative Islamists and violent groups like al-Qaeda.

Salafism is an alternative reform trend that emerges from the same 20th century context of reform and revival. Traditionally, the term refers to those who want contemporary society to be reordered based on the model set by the Prophet and his companions – the Salaf. On this basis, all Islamists can be considered Salafis. However, in a newer formulation that seems to be gaining currency in the last five years,⁸ Salafism has come to describe a more puritanical alternative to the Brotherhood that emphasizes study of the Qur’an and scrupulous imitation of the personal characteristics of the Salaf.

In comparison to the Brotherhood, Lynch describes Salafism as “far more interested in textualism, focused on Islam for its own sake, and much more concerned with external manifestations of religious practice. It also has a much more rigid view of gender relations and the symbolic aspects of religion and is more Wahhabi and Saudi in its orientation.”⁹ Indeed, many of the Egyptian self-defined Salafi preachers received their religious training in Saudi Arabia instead of Cairo’s al-Azhar and millions of Egyptians became more conservative while working in the Gulf.¹⁰ However, if Saudi interpretations of Islam are influential in Egypt it is incorrect to think of Egyptian Salafism strictly as a

Saudi import. This newer trend must be seen as a puritanical alternative to a more pragmatic reform approach, and, as evidence of this, Salafism exists wherever there are Islamist movements, even in countries with much less Saudi influence than Egypt.¹¹ Furthermore, the geographical distribution of Salafism, present mostly in the cities of northern Egypt and not the rural south¹² which has provided much of the labor in Saudi Arabia, further illustrates that Salafism is an Egyptian trend first and foremost. In Northern cities, where foreign influence is strongest, the question of taking a position for or against it – the central question of modern Egyptian intellectual thought – is most present. By contrast, in rural Upper Egypt, which lacks significant foreign and non-Muslim influence, Muslims are merely conservative.

The primary difference between Salafis and the Brotherhood lies in tactics and strategy. If Qaradawi and the Brotherhood evoke the spirit of the scriptures, Salafis evoke the letter. Whereas Qaradawi and the Brotherhood make heavy use of the four schools of Islamic law that have been debated and developed by scholars over the centuries, Salafis generally believe that the Qur'an, read literally, provides sufficient guidance for contemporary situations. The Brotherhood holds that individual Muslims accepting the central pillars of faith provides a basis for simultaneously pursuing reform in other areas such as politics (applying Sharia). Salafis counter that it is fruitless to talk about applying Sharia if Muslims do not have what they consider proper beliefs, and so they focus on correcting these beliefs.

Another critical difference between Salafis and the Brotherhood lies in their position towards the West. Salafis are hostile to the West for what it is, whereas (at least officially) the Brotherhood and like-minded intellectuals are hostile to the West for what it does – confining their criticisms to Western dominance or “imperialist ideology.” In December 2008, when we asked Mohamed Habib, the Deputy Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, what he thought of President-elect Barack Obama, he replied by saying “we will wait and see what his policies are.”¹³ For Salafis, who interpret the Qur'an more literally, there is less gray area: the world is divided into infidels and believers and the West clearly lies in the latter category. Therefore, at least theoretically, dialogue with the “other” is unlikely.

Conventional wisdom holds that Egyptian Salafis are disorganized and it is true that security forces do not allow organization along the lines of the Brotherhood – a traditional political and social movement. However, it may be that other forms of organization exist or are developing, although this requires further study.¹⁴ Salafis are not apolitical. Throughout the Arab world, Salafi movements choose to enter politics based on calculations about whether participation is possible without compromising their puritanical beliefs. Salafis participate in political life in Lebanon, Bahrain, Yemen, and Kuwait. In Egypt, where the state is centralized and far more powerful, Salafis refrain from political activity out of necessity, not lack of desire. In Alexandria, for example, Salafis display the interest and ability to engage in politics but choose not to as it would require a compromise on principles and likely cost them popularity.¹⁵ And the former militant group *al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya*, which Anani argues is now part of this Salafi trend, clearly want the state to let them participate in politics. During the Israeli

assault on Gaza in January, a disgruntled younger member posted but quickly removed a statement on the group's website saying "Let us engage in politics or go fight in Gaza."¹⁶

Pinpointing clear differences between the two trends is not always easy. One reason for this is that Islamists see themselves as pursuing something bigger than mere politics, and therefore behavior normally associated with Western-style politicking, denouncing individuals or overtly trying to convince people that their approach is better than other Islamist trends, is frowned upon. At the same time, Islamists, either intellectuals or clerics, are ambitious; they want people to listen to their ideas and there is some evidence that elements of the two approaches see themselves as engaged in a competition for influence and followers.

Some non-Salafi Islamists view Salafism as simplistic or fanatical. Fahmy Howedi¹⁷ claims Salafism focuses on the external trappings of religion but ignores its supposed true meaning, and, like Rafiq Habib,¹⁸ points to an alleged predisposition for violence. An Azhar-trained Imam called Salafism "a misreading of the scriptures that occurs whenever Egypt passes through socio-economic crisis."¹⁹ For their part, some Salafis accuse certain non-Salafi preachers²⁰ of compromising on principles in order to gain fame or influence. In a recent speech, a popular Salafi cleric mocked the "artist" Amr Khalid.²¹ While the Salafis we talked to were careful to speak only about their personal beliefs,²² one was clearly referring to the Brotherhood when he said "God bless those who do not seek personal glory in religion."²³

Station profiles

NileSat, Egypt's main satellite broadcaster, currently carries at least twelve stations that give significant airtime to Salafi programming.²⁴ Given Salafism's focus on the basics of Islam, program content does not vary dramatically; a station's success depends on the presence of popular personalities. By all accounts, al-Nass and al-Rahma are the most popular due to the star power of their main preachers.

Al-Nass. When founded in early 2006, al-Nass (The People) was not originally a Salafi station and featured music, dancing and dream interpretation.²⁵ But when this formula failed to attract high numbers of viewers in a crowded market, owner Mansour Ben Kedsa, a Saudi investor, invited three prominent Salafi clerics, Mohamed Hassan, Abu Ishaq al-Heweny and Mohamed Yacoub to join the station. Women and music disappeared from the airwaves, the slogan changed from "Qanat al-Nass: for all the people" to "Qanat al-Nass: the station that takes you to paradise," and viewership soared. Since that time the station has been dominated by Salafi-oriented preachers.

Owned by investors, al-Nass is a business, as demonstrated by the long commercial breaks, a constant source of complaints from viewers. Management makes programming choices based on who can draw the highest ratings and not religious dogma. When in 2006 station management refused to ban the popular but non-Salafi Amr Khalid and the Sufi Ahmed Abduh Awid from the airwaves, Heweny, Hassan and Yacoub quit in protest.²⁶ And probably for the consumption of potential advertisers, the

station lists as its official policy “an openness to all persuasions” and includes in a list of “Our Ulema” the late Mohamed al-Ghazali, a clearly non-Salafi cleric.²⁷

Al-Nass is now a larger network of several Salafi stations all owned by Saudi investors. Al-Khaleejeya focuses on the Arab family and children, al-Baraka focuses on economic issues in the Arab world, Health and Beauty focuses on women and al-Hafith focuses on teaching people how to learn the Qur’an properly.

Al-Rahma. Founded in 2007, al-Rahma (Mercy) is owned by Mohamad Hassan – formerly of al-Nass – who is also the main on-air personality. The charismatic Hassan is considered by many to be the most influential Salafi preacher in Egypt. In his late 40s, he studied Sharia at al-Azhar while a student at Cairo University, then studied in Saudi Arabia under the Salafi Sheikh Ibn Uthamin.²⁸ According to several experts, Hassan is also gaining large followings in Saudi Arabia and Morocco.²⁹

Since the station is owned by clerics, they have control over programming and therefore doctrine, not market concerns, determine its contents. In comparison to al-Nass, this station lists only Salafis as contributors, there are no commercials and it only broadcasts twelve hours per day.³⁰ The main thrust of programming is how correcting individuals’ religious beliefs can cure social problems. Hassan hosts a show called *Diseases of the Umma* which tackles the alleged moral corruption of the Arab people and argues that only through proper belief and more scrupulous religious practice can these problems be solved.

What makes Salafi TV Salafi?

As a reform approach that places strong emphasis on literally mimicking the pious ancestors, looks are very important. Salafis view mannerisms of the Prophet, wearing a long beard for example, as a constant reminder of their commitment that will help avoid sin. These choices are reflected visually on Salafi stations: preachers wear long beards and the same type of clothing that the first generation of Islam would have worn, whereas preachers affiliated with the Brotherhood or who define themselves as non-Salafi wear less conspicuous robes or a suit and tie.

The near total exclusion of women from the airwaves reflects Salafism’s more rigid views on gender relations – a clear distinction from non-Salafi media. For example, on al-Resalah, a Kuwait-based non-Salafi satellite station, several female Egyptian ulema, who appear on-air wearing only the hijab, are listed as “stars of al-Reselah.” In 2007, a female scholar from Kuwait sat in for Qaradawi on the al-Jazeera program *Sharia and Life*, talking for forty five minutes with a man who is not her husband—something that would be unthinkable on a Salafi station.³¹

Another feature of Salafi networks is an unwillingness to give platforms to non-Salafi viewpoints: while other religious stations may give airtime to Salafi preachers they disagree with, when given the chance, Salafis do not return the favor. For example, Sheikhs Heweny, Hassan and Yacoub quit al-Nass in 2006³² after management refused to ban Amr Khalid from the air; the more dogmatic al-Rahma, owned by clerics,

exclusively features Salafi preachers. In contrast, Salafi preachers do appear on al-Reselah.

If the Salafi strong preference towards preaching in Classical Arabic reflects their more puritanical approach, it also illustrates that the difference between the Brotherhood and Salafis is primarily over means and not ends. All Islamists agree that preaching should be done in classical Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, but some, such as Amr Khalid, make greater use of the colloquial dialect to reach a wider audience. Most non-Salafis agree with the Salafi preference towards Classical Arabic. For example, Qaradawi recently dedicated an entire episode of his weekly al-Jazeera talk show to "the threats posed to the Arabic language."³³ Two YouTube clips from late 2008 illustrate how, if the linguistic means differ, the message does not. At a time of great tension over the fate of the Palestinians in Gaza, one Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated preacher criticized, in Egyptian Colloquial Arabic, Egypt's preoccupation with football at a time when much more pressing issues were at play.³⁴ In another segment, Salafi sheikh Mohamed Hasaan gave essentially the same message, but in thundering Classical Arabic.³⁵

Finally, and most importantly, Salafi networks' singular focus on basic beliefs (*'aqida*) and not Sharia, which would inevitably lead them to question certain government policies, is the most critical distinction between Salafi and non-Salafi programming. In fact, it is the reason why the Egyptian government allows Salafi stations to operate in the first place. This becomes clear if we look at a recent interview Qaradawi gave to *al-Masri al-Youm*, a major Egyptian newspaper.³⁶ He advised Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to distance himself from rumors that his son Gamal would succeed him as President and gave a detailed critique of the aspects of Egyptian economic policy he claims do not adhere to Sharia. It is critical to point out that Qaradawi is not speaking as a private citizen, but as part of his comprehensive approach to religious reform, and everything he says, even on political topics, has significant religious legitimacy in the eyes of Egyptian Muslims. So it is not difficult to comprehend why the Egyptian government has no interest in giving a media platform to clerics who would then use it to question their policies.

We should note that Salafi television stations do focus extensively on the fate of the Palestinians, an issue that is arguably political. During the Gaza war in January this focus was especially acute. Some preachers prayed for the fate of the Palestinians, whereas Hassan harshly criticized Arab society and leadership, though not by name.³⁷ But this is not necessarily something unique about Salafis because all Egyptian stations, regardless of religious orientation, focus on the Palestinian cause. It is not considered a red line by the government.

Reception and prospects

If Salafism is growing in popularity, as illustrated by the high viewership for al-Nass and al-Rahma, what does this mean? Is it evidence that a new and distinctly conservative or puritanical strain of Islam is gaining ground in Egypt? Is the Salafi trend gaining traction while the Brotherhood – kept of the airwaves – loses popularity? Not

necessarily. Given the incomplete data, it is difficult to make decisive statements, but several factors, all requiring further analysis beyond the scope of this article, need to be taken into consideration:

First, clear distinctions between “what Salafis believe” and “what Muslim Brothers believe” do not exist. It is wrong to think of this as a zero-sum game where the popularity of one movement is a loss for another. Perhaps some activists think this way, but none of our interviewees explicitly said so. Moreover, Dia Rashwan, Abu Elela Mady, and Fahmy Howedi do not believe that the government is encouraging the rise of Salafism as a tool against the Brotherhood, as Alaa Aswany and others claim.³⁸

We also need to know more about how average Egyptian viewers perceive Salafi stations. They certainly do not see themselves as watching “intolerant” Islam. But do viewers tune in to these networks because they are “Salafi,” or do they see them as providing advice toward becoming better Muslims? We suspect it is the latter. There are 91 Facebook fan groups for Mohamed Hassan. Yet dozens of females who list themselves as fans are pictured wearing only the hijab or not even any hair covering at all. That they consider themselves his fans but at the same time put pictures of their faces on a public site – a severe violation of Salafi injunctions against cross-gender socializing – indicates that the popularity of Salafi preachers does not automatically equate with a commitment to their platform.

And considering that Salafism’s main competition, the Muslim Brotherhood and clerics such as Qaradawi, are not allowed to operate television stations in Egypt, we can not assume that high viewership for al-Nass or al-Rahma are an indication of deep support for the Salafi approach. If Qaradawi, “the most influential cleric in the history of Islamist movements” according to Hussam Tamem, were given equal access, he would probably draw higher ratings.³⁹

Finally, it may be significant that at al-Nass, the most popular station, profit and not religious dogma, is the primary determinant of program content. Whenever Salafi doctrine has challenged the market it has lost. In 2006, the major Salafi Sheikhs quit the station after management refused to ban advertisements and popular non-Salafi preachers from the air. The recent decision to allow the limited presence of women on the air at al-Hafith – over the objection of Sheikh al-Heweny – should be seen in the same light. Islam Online quotes a Cairo University professor who points to the likely motive: capitalism and calls it a “cheap exploitation of religion to attract viewers.”⁴⁰ So is Salafi television an indication of a deep shift in religious practice or are investors merely riding the wave to make money? Preachers are like rock stars or actors: eternal popularity is never a guarantee. Just a few years ago Amr Khalid was at the peak of his fame but has declined, probably due to overexposure – being on the cover of *Time Magazine* and his ostentatious role in trying to mediate the Danish cartoon crisis probably did not help.⁴¹ Could the same thing happen to Salafi preachers? Salafism sells in 2009 but will it five years from now?

Conclusion

Egyptians are not becoming more conservative because Salafi networks appeared in 2006. These stations should be viewed as a reflection and not a cause of the shift towards more conservative religious views which may be best understood by using Rafiq Habib's sociological framework. "People do not embrace rigid ideas because they read them in a book or heard them on TV. Rather their social environment determines how they interpret the words of the Qur'an – perhaps rigidly – to come to grips with the realities they experience on a daily basis."⁴² Using this framework, we believe the rising popularity of Salafism is a reaction to specific economic, cultural and political developments.

The appeal of Salafism is most prevalent amongst the lower classes for economic reasons. Liberalization and privatization might be producing macroeconomic growth, and certainly benefit the upper and middle classes, but the policies also put the majority of Egyptians at the mercy of the market. For most, barely struggling to get by, and with no foreseeable prospects for improvement, the more dogmatic views of Salafism provide comforting answers to their predicament.

The cultural dimension – especially the rampant spread of Western influence in the media – explains Salafism's appeal to more affluent Egyptians. On a daily basis, the average Muslim is bombarded with messages that implicitly or quite explicitly challenge basic tenets of their Islamic identity. A woman who wants to work at one of the "trendy" chain cafes in Cairo, such as Cilantro, can not unless she removes her hijab. The content of Egyptian films increasingly takes up topics and glorifies behavior that might be common in Hollywood but has not—until recently—been present in Egypt.⁴³ This is why Sheikh Mohamed Hassan saying "no compromises on our values" has some appeal to all levels of society and explains his popularity among women from social classes high enough to join Facebook.

Finally, there is the political aspect. The popularity of Salafism probably is linked to the Brotherhood's experience since its 2005 Parliamentary victories. There is a sentiment in Egypt that the Brotherhood is wasting its time participating in an ineffective Egyptian Parliament and has lost a sense of priorities. Even Qaradawi himself said that the Brotherhood has given politics too much attention.⁴⁴ According to several different sources, a younger generation wants the Brotherhood to focus more extensively on preaching and teaching at the expense of politics. If the pragmatic approach proves to be ineffective, people turn to more dogmatic alternatives. But we should not think of this as people giving up membership in one movement and switching to another. If members of the Brotherhood or their sympathizers – seeing the futility of bringing about change in the political arena – are becoming less pragmatic and more interested in *da'wa* and teaching, they are essentially becoming more Salafi.

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¹ One of the most outspoken proponents of this idea is the secular Egyptian writer Alaa Aswany, whose novel *The Yacoubian Building* has played a major role in shaping how Westerners think about the country. It is important, however, to note that Aswany's biggest following is abroad, and his secular, Western vision for Egypt is shared by only a minority of Egyptians. For example, several recent articles quoting Aswany have lamented the decline of bars in downtown Cairo, portraying this as a sign of increasing intolerance. But for most Egyptians, if they care at all, this is seen positively, as a removal of negative foreign influences. See Christian Fraser, "Sad Goodbye to Cosmopolitan Cairo," *BBC*, 17 March 2009.

² Four interviews with Khalil Anani, a specialist in political Islam at the *Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies*, Cairo, 2008-2009.

³ Paul Schemm, "Ultra-Conservative Islam on Rise in Mideast," *The Associated Press*, 19 October, 2008. We should note that those who criticize this so-called "game" usually point to an alleged Salafi disposition for violence. Their argument is that Salafis are peaceful now due to weakness but due to their extremism, will eventually show their true violent colors – if the government keeps allowing them to grow. See Nabil Sharf ad-Deen. "Salafism: The Worst Alternative to the Ikhwan," *Al-Masri Al-Youm*, Arabic section. 16 September 2008.

⁴ Since November 2008, we have interviewed in Egypt, seven non-Salafi Islamist intellectuals, four Salafi preachers, three self-defined Salafi students, and four non-Islamist commentators on Islamism. In America we interviewed three non-Islamist professors of Arab politics.

⁵ Many factors make this a difficult topic to research. For security reasons Salafis are cautious about meeting with people and hesitant to talk about anything other than their personal beliefs. Second, unlike the United States, there are no accurate systems for tracking television viewership. Stations might have their own data, but as this information affects advertising rates, it is sensitive and they have little interest in giving it away to journalists.

⁶ Islamists are often portrayed as reactionaries, especially in Western media, in comparison to "forward-thinking" secular and modern types. But Rafiq Habib counters that "there is the Islamist vision of reform from the perspective of left-wing or secular analysts and then there is the Islamist vision for reform as seen by Islamists." Islamists have a vision for the future of Egypt that is every bit as "modern" and forward thinking as their secular counterparts. It is based on the model set by the first generation of Islam whereas secular thinkers want to copy the Western model.

⁷ Interview, Marc Lynch, Professor of Arab Politics, George Washington University, January 2009.

⁸ There have traditionally been apolitical Salafi institutions in Egypt which focus specifically on studying the Qur'an. In this article we are talking about a newer trend that has emerged more recently. Anani calls it a "new wave" of "political Salafism," and like several others we talked with dates its emergence to about 2003-4. See also William Raymond Baker's *Islam without Fear: Egypt and the New Islamists*. Writing in 2003, he does not use the word Salafi but "extremist" to describe what is widely described in 2009 as Salafi.

⁹ Lynch, Interview.

¹⁰ Toth, James. "Islamism in Southern Egypt." *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2003.

¹¹ Interview with Dia Rashwan, prominent Egyptian journalist, December 2008.

¹² Anani, interviews.

¹³ Interview with Mohamed Habib, Deputy Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, November 2008.

¹⁴ It may be that the Salafis are developing smaller forms of organization in comparison to the large bureaucracy of the Brotherhood. Sheikh Abu Ishaq al-Heweny is the son of the founders of the Matimdiya Islamic Association for Muslims to Unite Efforts to Act According to the Qur'an and Sunna. This is a possible organizational link. Also, the television stations in themselves could be a unit of organization.

¹⁵ Ali Abdel Aal, "Salafists in Alexandria: Interested in Politics But Not Preoccupied With It," *Islam Online*, Arabic section. March 24, 2008.
http://islamyoon.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1203758305161&pagename=Islamyoun/IYALayout&ref=body . The author said the same thing in an interview in January.

Two factors explain why Salafis in Alexandria are more organized. Due to a less imposing security presence in Alexandria in comparison to Cairo, Salafis have more room to maneuver, and given the smaller size, geographically, can communicate more easily. The following video, from 13 January 2009, (<http://youtube.com/watch?v=aPNOvfcBk0w>) is from a Salafi pro-Gaza rally in Alexandria. In it the speakers assert that assisting Gaza and its people is a major priority. Such an action did not take place in Cairo, even though all Salafi stations and the majority of viewers live in the capital.

¹⁶ We heard this from a Salafi cleric and Dia Rashwan and Khalil Anani confirm that it happened.

¹⁷ Interview with Fahmy Howedi, one of Egypt's most influential intellectuals, December 2008.

¹⁸ Three interviews with Rafiq Habib, prominent Coptic Christian expert on Islamist movements, 2008-2009.

¹⁹ Interview with al-Azhar trained cleric and expert on Fiqh, November 2008.

²⁰ A commonly held claim is that Salafis and the Brotherhood "hate each other" but we did not find strong evidence of this in our interviews with Islamists. If they hate each other, they keep it to themselves.

²¹ In this video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GkakThjUZKo>), dated 7 June 2007, Salafi Sheikh Abu Ishaq al-Heweny mocks Amr Khalid. But notice that the criticism is directed at Khalid's approach, and his alleged lack of credentials, but not his actual Islamic message.

²² This was for security reasons. Every non-Salafi Islamist we interviewed talked about any subject, on tape, without any hesitation. The Salafis, however, generally did not agree to taped conversations and were very cautious about talking about anything other than their personal religious beliefs.

²³ Interview, Salafi cleric, February 2009.

²⁴ Salafi stations are: al-Nass, al-Hafith, al-Baraka, al-Rahma, al-Hekma, al-Majd TV, al-Fajr, al-Huda, al-Efasi, al-Madinah, al-Ummah, and Tiba.

²⁵ See Ali Abdel Aal, "Salafis and Qanat al-Nass," *Islam Online*, Arabic section. 7 May 2008 and Mustafa Suleyman, "From Salafism to the New Religiosity," *Islam Online*, Arabic section. 7 May 2008.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ http://alnas.tv/new/index.php?option=com_content&task=category§ionid=2&id=3&Itemid=38

It does not seem that the website gets a lot of traffic. We logged on and there appeared to be only twenty or so visitors, this is in comparison to music sites which have thousands of people logged on.

²⁸ See his official biography at his website: <http://www.mohamedhassan.org/ta3reef%20belshiekh.htm>

²⁹ Interviews, Khalil Anani

³⁰ See the station's Website: <http://www.alrahma.tv/olmaa.php>

³¹ See 27 August 2007 episode of al-Jazeera program *Sharia and Life*.

³² Mustafa Suleyman. Islam Online. 7 May, 2008.
http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1209357320618&pagename=Zone-Arabic-Daawa%2FDWALayout

³³ 22 March 2009 Episode of *Sharia and Life* on al-Jazeera.

³⁴ From 1 July 2008: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7ieYQQHU3c>

³⁵ Posted on 1 October 2008: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sgLHMPyUvJE>

³⁶ Interview with Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, *Al-Masri Al-Youm*, 8 September 2008.

³⁷ In this video, (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rawfEcLHq3Q&feature=PlayList&p=7AE73F8454E76767&playnext=1&playnext_from=PL&index=26), posted on 13 January 2009, Sheikh Hassan says that all people are going to die but Muslims should die with honor and that dying with defending God's word in Gaza is the highest honor. He also indirectly refers to the Arab leadership when he says "Did a king or sultan or an emperor defy death? Did their possessions protect them or was that a hindrance to death? We should die with honor – what's the difference between us and those who know nothing about God and judgment day."

³⁸ Interviews, November-December 2008.

³⁹ Tamem, Hussam. *Islam Online*. 8 July 2008.

⁴⁰ Al-Sayyid, Zayyid. "Female Presenters on Salafi Stations," *Islam Online*, 2 March 2009. See the article here:
http://islamyoon.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1235628736401&pagename=Islamyoun/IYALayout&ref=body

⁴¹ Mshari Al-Zaydi, "Qaradawi vs Amr Khalid," *Asharq al-Awsat*, Arabic section. 3 September 2006. Amr Khalid was seen by many as intervening in an area he was not really qualified. He had no special knowledge of Denmark, for example.

⁴² Habib, Interviews, 2008-2009.

⁴³ Anani pointed us in this general direction. Traditionally, if there was alcohol consumption in Egyptian film it was to prove some kind of social point and as a criticism of certain social or political conditions in Egypt. For example, if Adel Imam's characters have traditionally consumed alcohol, the message was that he was driven to do this by conditions in society. More recently his films feature gratuitous alcohol consumption and blatant glorification of womanizing and this was not the case before. One recent film, *Hayna Meysura*, featured an implied lesbian sex scene, a topic that has never been present in Egyptian film.

⁴⁴ Interview with Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Al-Masri Al-Youm*, 8 September 2008.