

Interview of Nouakchott News with Khalid Abu Al-Abbas Amir of the Al-Mulathimun brigade from the Qaedat Al-Jihad in the Islamic Maghreb



His real name is Mukhtar bin Mohammed Balmukhtar, and he is known between his comrades with the kinetic nickname “Khalid Abu Al-Abbas”. The Algerian press calls him “Al-Awar – the one-eyed”, referring to losing one of his eyes during his participation in fighting against the Russians during the war of liberating Afghanistan in the beginning of the nineties.

He was born in Ghardaïa in Algeria in 1978. He went to Afghanistan in the beginning of the nineties, where the Russian forces were being breaking down on its way to defeat. There he received military training with tens of Algerians and Arabs, who were known later as the “Afghan Arab”. He participated in some military operations, before he returned to Algeria in the end of 1992, to participate in the so called “jihad against the Algerian regime” with the members of the Islamic Armed Group.

Khalid Abu Al-Abbas became known as the founder of the so called “Islamic Emirate of the Sahara” which was previously known as the ninth region that followed Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat. He was one of the most prominent from the group’s leaders who explored the Nigerian and Mali desert. He assumed for a period of time the emirate of the Sahara region until 2007, and then he remained Amir of the Al-Mulathimun (the masked ones) brigade after appointing Yahiya Jawadi as Amir of the Sahara. Despite of that he remained

described as the strong and mysterious man of the Sahara, since he has a wide network of relations in the region.

His name appeared on the façade of events in Mauritania in 2005 when he led in July of the same year an attack against the Al-Magaiti military garrison and killed 17 from soldier, he also planned for several operations on the Mauritanian territory.

“Nouakchott News” met Khalid Abu Al-Abbas, and conducted with him an interesting interview, on topic relating to Libya and smuggling its weapons to the members of the organization, operations of Al-Qaeda in Mauritania and the possibility of stopping the military activities of the organization on the Mauritanian territory, as well as what has been published about his negotiations to surrender himself to the Algerian authorities years before, and the relation of his organization with the parent Al-Qaeda organization in Afghanistan.

Nouakchott News: It is said that the Sahara emirate in Al-Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb was the biggest recipient from the Libyan crisis, by arming and reinforcing its presence in the region, and that its members have fought with the Libyan rebels. It that true that you were participants in fighting against the forces of Gaddafi beside the rebels?

Khalid Abu Al-Abbas: الحمد لله رب العالمين و العاقبة للمتقين و لا عدوان إلا على الظالمين، و الصلاة و السلام على نبينا الكريم المبعوث رحمة للعالمين و على آله و صحبه و من تبعهم و سلم تسليما كثيرا، شهادة حق ودين ندخرها ليوم لقاءه يوم لا ينفع مال و لا بنون إلا من أتى الله بقلب سليم. أما بعد:

Yes the mujahidin of Al-Qaeda organization in general were the biggest recipients from the revolutions of the Arab world, because these revolutions broke the chains of fear and barrier of fear that were empowered by these regimes that are agents to the West in general.

Even if we see that these revolutions in general, including the Libyan revolution didn't reach to what is desired – which is establishing the overall righteous Islamic method in all the aspects of life – through this historical rising and heavy sacrifices – and it deserves that – that were presented by the Moslem Ummah and in particular its youth, because we see that the same secular intellectual and political system is the master of the situation but the big benefit is that the people of the

region won a an important victory resembled in gaining self-confidence of capability of changing and capability of initiative and struggle.

Regarding our benefiting from the arms, this is normal in such circumstances but what is more important for us is the empowerment of the Libyan people in general and in particular enabling the youth of Islamic movement from these arms that were the striking hand of these regimes over their people.

On this occasion I would like to warn my Moslem brothers in Libya from being misled by the calls and projects of disarmament, I swear to Allah that it's their pride and the guarantee of their security Insha'Allah.

Regarding our participation in fighting against Gaddafi in the concept of field participation, no.

N.N: Some of the fighters from Libyan rebels are accused of being linked with you ideologically or organizationally, is it true that you have comrades in arms and intellectual convictions among the Libyan rebels?

K.A.A: It's not a secret to anyone with sight that the course of events of the revolution in Libya that the youth of the Islamic Sahwa and the Jihadi in particular were the first to confront the regime's brigade with their bare breasts and were the first spark that gave the strong push to the Libyan people in his overall uprising.

Regarding their organizational and ideological association with us, this isn't an accusation against the Moslem with his Moslem brother, but rather it's a pride and honor to us and them, and that the effects of the Western occupation to our lands like the artificial borders and fake national considerations didn't gain from our methodology and Aqeeda which from its core is that the support of the Moslem to his Muslim brother is obligatory – prophet peace and blessings of Allah be upon him: “Support your brother if he was oppressor or oppressed” – in the east and west of the earth and because the power of the Moslems lies in their unity that the Kaffir West sought to fight it and are still.

N.N: You are engaged for years in a war with Mauritania, you were the first to begin it with the Lamgiti attack in 2005 and the subsequent attacks in Al-Galawiya and Tarwin. Why did you decide to transfer the war to Mauritania and confront it army without justification?

K.A.A: Regarding our entering in a war with the Mauritanian army, we never got in a direct war with the Mauritanian army in the traditional concept of war, but

rather our operations against with the Mauritanian army were limited to some extent. Because it's not from our policies and nor from the priorities of the Al-Qaeda organization to begin targeting these armies, but rather the declared strategy of Al-Qaeda is confronting the Crusade and Jewish West because they are the real rulers of the Moslem lands. And it's clear and obvious in all statements and interviews of sheikh Osama rahimahullah and sheikh Aymen may Allah preserve him and the literature of the organization through its publications.

Regarding the Lamgiti operation I see that it's necessary to give some details about it because we realized that Mauritanian people didn't understand then our motives behind the operations, adding to that the misinformation and lies that were practiced by the regime of Ould Al-Taya their his media and press as evidenced by the statement of the Mauritanian defense ministry that claimed that we slaughtered the prisoners, and we in the occasion confirm that we didn't slaughter any soldier and challenge the defense ministry to prove that we did this act to any of the soldiers of the garrison.

The Lamgiti operation wasn't a declaration of war against Mauritania, but it was a limited operation and for justifications including but not limited to:

a- the Mauritanian army entered on the ground in a war against the mujahidin, and the Lamgiti barrack was a base for joint American Mauritanian maneuvers.

And some of the 35 soldiers that we captured admitted about the frequentation of American forces and informed us about some of the special facilities of the Americans.

What confirms that our release to the 35 prisoners after gathering them and preaching them and giving them some letters to the Mauritanian regime at that time, and we gave the issue some study before the operation and we gave orders not to shoot anyone who laid down his arms, and we called for that during the operation.

b- the Mauritanian regime established an embassy for the Israelis in the heart of Nouakchott in a clear disregard to the feelings and dignity of the Mauritanian people and even all the Moslems – because Mauritania is the only state outside the cordon states that have a declared relation with Israel, and that stage witnessed an unusual activity of the Israeli Mossad in Mauritania like the visit of the Israeli foreign minister_Silvan Shalom which angered the Mauritanian people and that

was manifested in the youth demonstrations in the university and high schools of the capital Nouakchott.

It's not a secret to tell to you that we set an ambush to kill the ambassador of the Zionist entity in Mauritania before attacking the compound that housed the embassy and the nightclub that the ambassador was present in minutes before the attack.

c- increase of the brutality and oppression on the sons of the Dawah resembled in prison, restriction and torture of many of the Uelma and Daa'iyahs, it even reached to the point of besieging mosques and shooting in it as what happened in the mosque of Osama in Arafat in Nouakchott, insulting the hijab and the veiled women as what happened to the sister that died due to the severe beating – and she was pregnant – by the security men, but rather the clear insulting of the rituals of Allah by threatening to turn the Houses of Allah to bakeries as the minister of culture said then.

d- the presence of secret prisons of the Central Intelligence Agency in Mauritania and one of them were under our surveillance and follow up and it housed a group of forces for American Marines who supervised the guarding of the building, and this issue was raised by the press and the political class then.

N.N: You say that your operations against the Mauritanian forces especially in Turin and Al-Glawiya were self-defense, and that your groups that executed these operations were searching for Western tourists and employees in the region and it were intercepted by the Mauritanian army, do you think that the Mauritanian army can give up the protection of the of its land and the foreign guests of its country to you, and when it tries to intercept you to prevent you from kidnapping or killing them, it becomes assaulting and oppressor and its soldiers deserve killing and slaughter?

K.A.A: Yes, the operations of Al-Glawiya and Turin that you mentioned were only self-defense, because the Mauritanian army were the ones to begin the attack, and we once again confirm that our primary goal in our operations are the Western and Jewish interests - economic and military - that plundered the riches of our Ummah and that we consider it a new occupation.

And anyone who stands between us and them in our operations is a legitimate goal for us, and how do we give up fighting those Westerners while they are afflicting our Moslem brothers in Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine with the worst torment of

killing and displacement even to the children and women and you know about the photos of Abu Ghraib. So how can we call them after that guests while they have come only to invade our lands and to eliminate our religion and plunder our riches, the Almighty says: (And they will not cease from fighting against you till they have made you renegades from your religion, if they can) 217 Surah Al-Baqara.

Regarding your mentioning that some of the soldiers were killed with that method (slaughter), we weren't pleased with the matter when we heard about the it and consider it wrong as in the case of the mistakes of war, at the time instructions were issued from my brother the Amir of the organization Abu Musab Abdel Wadoud not to repeat that act again.

N.N: What are your demands or conditions to stop your military operations on the Mauritanian territory?

K.A.A: If you mean neutralizing Mauritania in this confrontation that purposes and goals as have mentioned, I think that this matter can be subject to study. We in principle don't refuse it for matters that we see that this is not the proper place to unwrap and discuss it. There was an attempt in the beginning of the past year when this regime began to release some prisoners from our brothers and offered us through some of the imprisoned brothers to send a delegation of people of knowledge headed by sheikh Mohamed Al-Hassan Ould Al-Daddou – despite of our criticism – we welcomed the idea and we still are ready for meeting any delegation of people of knowledge regardless of differences in views. And we also are ready for any scientific dialogue on the methodology and fundamentals of people of knowledge to study the challenges that our Muslim Ummah is passing through.

N.N: If the Mauritanian army stopped its operations against you in the Malian territory, are you ready to stop attacking it and the Mauritanian territory?

K.A.A: Know that the entrance of the army of Ould Abdel Aziz to Mali was never an obstacle to our access to our goals in Mauritania, but quality of our goals as you know are what impose on us the location and time of execution.

For your knowledge the intervention of the army of Ould Abdel Aziz in Mali was planned and incited by France and even with a field participation as what happened in the joint French – Mauritanian attack against a company of the mujahidin and eight of our brothers were killed in it, may Allah accept them.

In a desperate attempt from the French to drag us to a war that is not from the priorities of the organization as we have said before and their agent to execute this program were Ould Abdel Aziz and the pillars of his regime and it has become evident that Ould Abdel Aziz and his army are engaged in a proxy war for France.

We in turn realized this scheme so we sought to circumvent it with an opposite plan that resembled in the attempt to strike the head of the regime Ould Abdel Aziz and the French embassy which was a den for intrigues and maliciousness for this scheme, with two car bombs that reached the outskirts of Nouakchott while the army of Ould Abdel Aziz was present on the Malian territory then, by the way these cars passed at least eight provinces but it also passed to military barracks which were in their sight and that shows that we were capable of striking the military targets in these provinces and we believe that the operation have achieved the most important political and military goal that we desired from it.

The military goal resembled in the withdrawing of the army of Ould Abdel Aziz from Mali immediately after the operation, and regarding the political goal this operation refuted the claim of Ould Abdel Aziz that he controls the borders tightly and he have transferred the battle to the bases of Al-Qaeda in north Mali.

Most of the interventions of the army of Ould Abdel Aziz incurred consecutive defeats starting with the Nouakchott operation that forced him to withdraw from Mali and ending with the military operation in the forest of Wagado where the mujahidin destroyed 12 military vehicles in the first engagement in this military campaign.

Also its interventions were characterized by insulting the people from our brothers in Azawad and it reached to the point of killing, so it killed two from our Muslim sisters and injured others in the deliberate shelling of the civilian car that carried a family with its sons.

N.N: During the past years operations of theft and robbery happened in Mauritania that targeted public funds like the money of the Friendship (Nouakchott) port in October 2008, also stealing of some government cars, and it were attributed to your followers, and it has been said that at least one of them was ordered and planned personally by you, do you believe that seizing the money of the poor Moslem Mauritanian people a jihad or something permissible?

K.A.A: We believe that the people of our country are Muslim and their blood and money are infallible and that is what we approved according to the Sharia and how

can we transgress the money of the Moslems and the prophet peace and blessings of Allah be upon him said: “O People, just as you regard this month, this day, this city as Sacred, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust”.

Regarding the public funds that mentioned it's originally are funds of the Ummah but it's plunder by these ruling gangs and only very little reach to the Ummah.

And if we assume for argument the validity of your claim, what does the operation of the Friendship port represent when compared to the billions that were embezzled and are still bring embezzled by the ruling gangs over the many years taking advantage of its influence in the rule and this isn't a secret to the public.

N.N: It has been said that you personally after being deposed from the Emirate of the Sahara and assigning it to the current Amir Yahiya Abu Amar, embroiled in a dispute between you from one hand, and Abu Amar and Abdulhamid Abu Zaid on the other hand, and that you spent years in a semi-truce and stopped during that the armed action against Algerian army, and you negotiated with the Algerian authorities to surrender, and these negotiations failed, so you decided to return to the armed action, how authentic is this talk, and did you really exceed the disputes between you and the new leadership of the Emirate of the Sahara?

K.A.A: Dispute as you know comes from contrast, and comes from diversity, and that in general is due to the difference of perceptions and understanding them each according to his experience and the conditions that surround its activity and how he deals with the different events and stances.

The dispute that you have mentioned is only a dispute of diversity our standard in it were the Islamic manners and ethics and mutual respect without smear and attacking each other unlike the people of passions and malicious policies. This type of dispute that we standard with the noble Sharia happened in the time of Abu Bakr and Omar and they were from the best of Sahabah in dealing with the calamities of that time.

Regarding the claim about the truce that you mentioned that is only a convert in our strategy that imposed on us to create material and tactical and moral conditions which were necessary to launch a new stage and that after a deep evaluation and revision to the experience that lasted for more than 15 years in fighting the Algerian regime.

Regarding the negotiations with the Algerian authorities and its failure, on this occasion I want to remove all doubt by saying that I didn't enter in any direct or indirect negotiations and not even attending meetings about this subject – which the paid press promoted for the propose of destabilizing the ranks of the mujahidin and undermine the morals of the Ummah and supports of the jihad – except one meeting with one of the notables of the Tamanrasset region in January 2006 who asked to meet me in a personal initiative from him – as he said to me – and offered me in timidity something like that, and our response was clear and obvious and didn't need interpretation, we went out and fought this regime which Malfunctioned and changed the Sharia of Allah Almighty and afflicted people with humiliation and oppression and sold the country and it's riches to the enemies of the Ummah and insulted the honor of the Algerian people when it chose something other than Islam, which is the secular regime.

Unfortunately, the first points of the reconciliation project which was claimed by the regime and its intelligence is glorifying the officers of the army and security which the world witnessed it brutal horrible crimes against this oppressed people.

I ask you by Allah how can we leave this divine path that we are honored with, when the features of the global struggle between Islam and the Kufr are becoming clear, and we ask Allah to make us steadfast and guide our steps on the truth until we meet Him.

N.N: Is it true that you personally objected the joining of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat to Al-Qaeda organization?

K.A.A: First I want to give notice that many of the claims and delusions that were promoted by the puppet Algerian press like Al-Nahar and Echorouk, mouthpiece of the Algerian intelligence, there was a scheme behind it to pass and serve their political program resembled in the oppressive reconciliation program.

Because we understood the danger of this project we hastened the steps which we supervised by ourselves, which we began from 2000 in an attempt to unite the ranks of mujahidin with our brothers in Al-Qaeda, and from the success of Allah to us that our joining to Al-Qaeda was a political project that countered the oppressive reconciliation project.

From these steps that we took was inviting brother Abu Mohammed Al-Yemeni and his entrance with us to Algeria in an attempt to transfer a picture of the situation inside and the great Sahara.

And contacting brother Yunis Al-Mauritani (Yusuf) who was captured recently in Pakistan, which was our first direct contact between us and our brothers in Al-Qaeda, and it was the beginning of the correspondence between us and the leadership there, with other efforts of our brothers in Algerian.

I wouldn't have mentioned these steps and initiatives if not for the many fallacies and rumors that were released by Algerian media especially about this subject.

N.N: Currently you have French hostages, the leadership of the organization linked between their fate to a demand presented by Osama bin Laden, which is the withdrawal of France from Afghanistan, are you still adhere to this demand after the death of Osama bin Laden, or you are currently negotiating on other demands to release them?

K.A.A: Yes we are still adhere to this demand, as you know that the issue of negotiating about the French have been determined by our leadership in clear demands and there has been no change in this matter until now.

N.N: Why were you insisting in the exchange of Spanish hostages operation a year ago, on the release of Omar Al-Sahrawi, and abandoned your colleagues from the members of the organization in the Mauritanian prisons, after you demanded the release of some of them?

K.A.A: Yes in the beginning our demands were releasing a group of our imprisoned brothers in Mauritania, and the only reason in changing our demands, quite simply, is that the two Spanish captives Roque Pascual (Abu Nabil) and Albert Vilalta (Abu Yahiya) embraced Islam and before them their colleague Accio Solidaria embraced Islam also and chose the name Aisha, and we released her unconditionally because of her embracing of Islam.

But the two men with entering Islam have preserved their blood so we were forced to speed the negotiations and accept the release of Omar Al-Sahrawi, who handing him over to us was an agreed upon issue before a period in offers presented to us.

N.N: You are always accused that you have relations with the drug smugglers in the great Sahara, and that you justify for yourselves dealing with them, with the pretext that there is nothing wrong in the drugs that that are directed to the land of the Kuffar, and its permissible to send it to them to inflict harm to them, to what extent is that true?

K.A.A: God forbid to legalize or justify making Halal what Allah has made Haram. The illegitimacy of drugs or trafficking of it to near or far and even to the land of the Kuffar is from the most obvious haram in the Sharia of Allah Almighty and this is clear to ordinary Muslims as well as we as mujahidin seeking to establish the Sharia and establish justice and the promotion of virtue and prevention of vice, peace and blessings be upon him: “Allah is good and accepts nothing but what is good”, this rumor isn’t new which deliberately intends to distort the image of the mujahidin, but rather we were accused with more than this like selling drugs and even protecting it and even that we are created by the intelligence, wa Allah Al-Mustaan, and we are not the first to be accused of that.

Regarding the claim that we deal with them everyone who knows us testifies that we warn all the peoples and tribes in this region about the illegitimacy and danger of this phenomenon that spread terribly across the great Sahara.

I want to notify that the great Sahara region which is the vital area for our activity is full of the aspects of smuggling as the activity of the gangs of weapons, bandits, drugs and cigarettes in addition to territorial and tribal fronts struggling with the governments of the region.

We deal with a clear methodology that is based on Dawah and advice and clarifying the rule of Allah and reconciliation and warning from these paths that only brought to this Ummah wars and conflicts that were unfortunately used by the enemies of Islam to strike the Moslems against each other.

From the fruit of this policy taken by the mujahidin for more than a decade that we were able to block the way on the intelligences of the Western countries – which increased its activity significantly in the region – and the intelligences of the countries of the region to drag us to clash with these gatherings and peoples in an attempt to find a justification to create militias (Sahwas) to fight the mujahidin and this is the new American and Western policy to fight Al-Qaeda and the mujahidin in general after the Iraq experience because they failed in the direct confrontation with the mujahidin.

This policy that we took as a result of long harsh experience that we suffered with the inhabitation of some regions in Algeria.

N.N: There is talk that you carried out executions against some Mauritians for spying for the Mauritanian army, and it is said that among the dead are members of the organization, is that true, and who are the victims of these operations?

K.A.A: Yes, some of the spies have been captured and they confessed that they worked for the benefit of the department of state security and the bureau of the military intelligence and they conducted espionage activities, after investigation and follow-up from by one of the units of the mujahidin and one of them have confessed in his involvement with Mohammed Ould Makt in luring a group of the mujahidin.

The mujahidin were able to lure these people in a security operation and there was no one among them from the organization.

I would like on this occasion to give an advice to our Muslim brothers in Mauritania and especially the youth to take caution from the deceit of the security and intelligence agencies to hurl them in a war that the regime of Ould Abdel Aziz by proxy from the French against your brothers against the mujahidin exploiting your living conditions and flimsy material temptations, and that is the losing of the Dunya and hereafter, we ask Allah for safety and wellness.

Regarding their names and the details of their confessions, they are recorded and it will be published formally in the appropriate time. Finally, I would like to send from your platform a greeting to our people in wounded Palestine and all the Muslims for this great victory that this Ummah never saw such, that we are today living it in reality in Gaza of glory which we lived it's happiness for releasing hundreds of our Moslem brothers and sisters, and a greeting of tribute and appreciation to our brothers the mujahidin of Izz Ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades and all the mujahid factions on the land of Isra and we consider them the shield of the Ummah in the face of the Zionist enemy and behind it the states of the crusader West, and this is a proof that the enemies only understand the words of arms.

We thank you for this initiative on the path of searching for the truth and conveying to the Ummah. We ask Allah for us and you success and Jazakum Allah Khayran, Subhanaka Lahumma wa Bihamdik, wa Alaykumu Salamu wa Rahmatu Lahi wa Barakatuh.

Interviewed by Mohammed Mahmud Abu Al-Ma'ali