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In the Name of God, most Gracious, most Merciful

Praise to God, and prayers and peace upon the Prophet, his Family, and Companions.

Beloved Brother Abu-Khalid, may God protect you.

Peace, mercy, and blessings of God be upon you.

I pray that you are all well, fear God, and are close to Him; our greetings to the dear ones.

Conditions in Afghanistan have developed in an unexpected way. Thank God, it appears to us that this development is to the advantage of Islam, and I wanted to give you the full picture.

I will discuss the following points to make the picture clear:

- 1 - The beginning of the Taliban movement
- 2- The leadership of the movement
- 3 - The importance of Afghanistan
- 4- The movement's relationship with Pakistan
- 5 - The military situation
- 6 - The role of Pakistan
- 7 - Taliban's position toward the Arabs and the past positions of the Rabbani government
- 8 - Negative aspects of the movement
- 9 - Duties toward the movement

1- The beginning of the movement:

According to information I have received, the movement started spontaneously, but the idea crystallized in Kandahar city as a reaction to horrific corruption, oppression, and assault prevalent in and around that city. Suffice it to say that there was a large number of outlaws [TC: lit., "highway robbers"] who were not satisfied with just stealing possessions and killing men, but went as far as sexual assault. So Sheikh Muhammad 'Omar began to move among the knowledge seekers in the Arabic schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan and called on them to rise against this great oppression. He said they are sinners in their quest of knowledge while ignoring the sexual crimes being committed and the corruption of the former leaders who were oppressing the people and did not rule in accordance with the Sharia (Islamic laws) of God.

So a very small group went with him and took over an important site. The word about them spread and God cast fear into the hearts of their enemies. They continued their operations and meted out the Islamic punishment of warfare on each outlaw. They occupied the whole city of Kandahar and they called the former leaders to account for everything they had done to people there. They disarmed them, punished the guilty, ordered people to pray, and declared the implementation of Sharia. The former leaders were called to account for the money they had in their possession, and security was established to an unprecedented degree. Oppression was eliminated, students began to join the Taliban, they became very powerful, and an entity began to emerge. Many [people from] neighboring areas started asking the Taliban to come to their regions to help them escape from the hell of thieves, outlaws, corruption, and oppression that had arisen from the diversity of parties and leaderships.

The Taliban went into many regions at the request of people seeking security and justice and an escape from oppression, corruption, outlaws, and party leaders.

2- The movement's leadership:

Praise God, we have met many of the movement leaders, including Sheikh Muhammad 'Omar, who received the allegiance of more than 1,500 scholars of Afghanistan to become Emir Al-Mu'mineen (Commander of the Faithful). We also met with Muhammad Hassan, an official in charge of the current government, Sheikh Ihsanullah, one of the most important symbols of the movement, Sheikh Hafeezullah, Minister of Planning and currently president of the organization for commanding good and proscribing the forbidden [TC: Jama'at al-'amr bi-al-ma'ruf wa-al-nahi 'an al-munkar], and some other governors and officials of lesser levels.

We learned the following during these meetings:

1. All the leaders in the movement are scholars who graduated from Arab schools;
2. Movement leadership consists of individuals previously associated with many organizations and not just one;
3. Many leaders were wounded during the previous Jihad;
4. We felt that sincerity and resolution to establish religion and extend Jihad to Bukhara and Samarkand;
5. Their position toward the Arabs who waged Jihad in Afghanistan is excellent and very welcoming, and they recognized the efforts of the Arab Mujahideen and their right to remain in Afghanistan as Muslims and Mujahideen;
6. The leadership, as I previously mentioned, consists of scholars or knowledge seekers who have little political experience.

There have been indications and steps taken by the leadership clearly showing their determination and resoluteness to implement the rule of God [TC: hukm Allah]. I will mention some of these steps, beginning with upholding Islamic laws.

1. Auditing the former leaders for the money in their possession;
2. [TC: punishing them for] their killing of Najib and his brother and taking them from the United Nations building;

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3. Banning television;
4. Banning music, video tapes, and other manifestations of corruption;
5. Forcing people to pray, so that you now find the mosques filled at all times as if it were Friday;
6. Ordering women to wear the Hijab (veil) and prohibiting them from working (30,000 women had been working in Kabul).

[TC: In the source text, 'women' and 'people' are reversed in items 5. and 6. above]

The relationship between the Taliban and Pakistan and those supporting Pakistan:

Before I discuss this important point, I must discuss two other important points.

First: The relationship between the Pakistani government and the Rabbani government;

Second: The military and economic importance of Afghanistan to Pakistan and the United States.

Firstly: The relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan during the Rabbani era:

The Pakistani government threw all its moral and material weight behind the Afghan Mujahideen in fighting the Russians to defend Pakistan and to bring about a pro-Pakistan government in Afghanistan — or a government allied to the Pakistani government, or at least neutral. Despite all this support, the Pakistani government lost that round, and a government was formed in Afghanistan under the leadership of Rabbani that was allied with India, Pakistan's historical archenemy. Pakistan became threatened from the Indian borders and also from its borders with Afghanistan. Albeit in the future, the relationship between Pakistan and the Mas'oud government worsened as the relationship between Afghanistan and India, Iran, and Moscow improved.

Pakistan emerged without achieving its strategic objective of securing its western front. The cards Pakistan was holding, especially at the border areas, were weak, and no one had faith in them (corrupt); they could not stand against Mas'oud and his allies.

In view of these unfortunate political conditions for Pakistan inside Afghanistan, the Taliban movement emerged and found a great resonance with the people in the southern regions as the Taliban became known for their justice, for not being oppressive, and for establishing security. A new card was dealt in the area, that of the scholars who had great dignity and respect in the hearts of the Afghan people. So, Pakistan had no other alternative but to ally with them and help them. I shall speak about the amount of aid and the goals of Pakistan during this period later on.

Secondly: The military - economic importance of Afghanistan (vis-à-vis Pakistan-the United States).

The importance of Afghanistan to the United States: as you know, the U.S. lost hope of being the leading economic power in the world after the rise of the European alliance under the leadership of France and Germany, which surpassed the U.S. economically. This was also after the rise of the Asian [economic] tigers led by Japan, which had an enormous impact on the U.S. The economic situation became unfavorable to the U.S. Indeed, it was in a continuing decline and a crash was expected. Therefore, the American government headed toward control of the most important commodity for material civilization, namely, oil.

The U.S. indeed controls the oil in the Gulf, which is 75 percent of the world oil reserves. The U.S. tries to control any region where there are large amounts of oil. The Islamic Republics surrounding the Caspian Sea (Turkmenistan and others) are among those regions. This region has one-eighth of the world oil reserves and a large amount of natural gas, as well.

The significance of Afghanistan in all of this is as follows. Oil and gas from the Caspian Sea can be transported to warm waters and then on to the rest of the world by sea in one of three ways:

1. Pipeline across the northern Russian republics north to Europe, which is a very long route controlled by Russia and Europe;
2. Pipeline across Iran to Bandar Abbas port and laying a pipeline across Iran would give the Iranians control over the oil, which the Americans completely reject;
3. A route across Afghanistan to Pakistan (Karachi), which is the best and most secure route, providing great profits to the Pakistanis and Americans.

We conclude that the American government is eager to lay oil and gas pipelines from Turkmenistan, across Afghanistan, to Pakistan. The pipelines would thereby be under American control in the Gulf, and they also would go through America's ally, Pakistan. Iran would be kept out of it and American companies would get contracts to implement the project worth \$5 billion, as well.

3- The importance of Afghanistan to Pakistan:

1. Afghanistan has great military importance for Pakistan's confrontation with India, and Pakistan will not tolerate being threatened from the east and west, by India and Afghanistan.
2. Economic importance:
 - a. Afghanistan has become a nexus of routes between the north (the Islamic Republics) and the south (Pakistan), and between the east and west. The population of the Islamic Republics is 200 million, a commercial market equivalent to another in the Arab world, the Bakr market. Competition over this market is fierce, especially between Iran and Pakistan and Turkey and Pakistan. Afghanistan is seen as constituting the sole corridor from Pakistan to the Islamic Republics. Iran has been able to build a rail line from Iran to Turkmenistan and to open this line, as well as a road.

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Iranian goods have begun to arrive, and Iran has signed an agreement with India whereby India sends its goods by sea to Bandar Abbas and from there to the Islamic Republics by rail and the Iranian road.

- b. The oil that I mentioned previously, which is very important to the Pakistanis and the Americans.

4- The relationship between Pakistan and the movement

As I mentioned, when the movement spontaneously began and gained control over many of the southern regions, many of the regions and their people followed the scholars because they wanted security, justice, and an escape from the hellish multitude of party leaders slaughtering each other in the same region. They also wanted to escape from the hell of corruption and oppression, and the people became a source of power for the scholars.

At that time the Pakistanis were between the frying pan and the fire -- between India and India's ally (Mas'oud). That door opened and they vied with each other in supporting and backing him. This took the form mainly in facilitating movement and fuel supply. However, when it came to weapons and financial support, there was no support from Pakistan. In other words, Pakistani support was extremely minimal, and Pakistan had a goal in doing that. If we compare between the level of intervention and the relationship between Pakistan and the parties waging holy war previously, on one hand, and the level of intervention and the relationship between Pakistan and the scholars, on the other hand, I can say that there is no comparison because the situation has changed completely from what it was previously, and new factors have arisen giving the Taliban a very powerful opponent position.

All of the offices, administrative centers, resources, and supplies of the parties waging holy war before were in Pakistan. Because of that, there was intervention in everything, in military planning, and other matters.

As for the Taliban, they were inside Afghanistan and could obtain some resources from within, and the movement was holding a powerful hand of cards (an excellent location, the oil situation) due to the regional rivalries in the area.

Therefore, we find that Pakistan's intervention in the Taliban's affairs, especially in military matters, was not complete. The main reason for the Taliban's quick conquest of the areas was not supplies, organization, or other factors. The most important factor, in contrast, is that conditions were in favor of any unified power with one cohesive leadership and a good reputation, which can save people from their plight. As I said, the people were a source of power for the movement. The other side had nothing to offer and had no combat motivation. All of this success was ordained by God Almighty.

It can be said that the Pakistan-Taliban relationship is a tactical alliance in which each side wants to exploit the other to achieve its own objectives. With the Taliban's rise to power, the Pakistanis

were able to completely eliminate the previous government, which had been allied with India. The Pakistanis signed a contract to build a road to the Islamic Republics, as well as another contract to lay a pipeline to transport oil and gas to the port of Karachi. It became clear to the Pakistanis, indeed it had been known to them previously, that the Taliban were not easy to lead.

Therefore, the Pakistanis will work toward finding a substitute for the Taliban that will completely follow Pakistan. The Pakistani government has begun to assemble the fleeing highway robbers and former field commanders, such as Qadeer, to put pressure on the Taliban and force them to deviate from their course.

"They plot and plan, and God plans too, but the best of the planners is God" [TC: Koran quotation]

There is no doubt that the Taliban's continued control of affairs in Afghanistan poses a great danger for Pakistan in the long-term, and also to the other neighboring countries, if the Taliban continue with their ideas.

What Pakistan has gained from the rise of the Taliban can be summed up as follows:

- A- Destroying the Mas'oud government allied to Iran and India;
- B- The existence of a government currently in Afghanistan that is not hostile to Pakistan;
- C- Use of Afghanistan as a corridor to the Islamic Republics (a very important market);
- D- Obtaining an agreement for the oil and gas pipelines to pass from Turkmenistan to Pakistan and on to Karachi.

Note: Iran built a railroad from Bandar Abbas port to Turkmenistan, and thereby is able to transport its goods to the Islamic Republics on this line. Another road was also opened.

India signed an agreement with Iran to send Indian goods to Bandar 'Abbas port and from there to the Islamic Republics via road and rail.

This note shows you the extent of the economic rivalry between the regional powers over the market of the Central Asian republics.

Another important note: Our meetings with some of the Taliban leaders clearly revealed their complete rejection of Pakistan's intervention in their affairs and the direction they are promoting. Sheikh Ihsanullah attended a celebration for a group of knowledge seekers graduating from the Haqqani School in Pakistan. The current Pakistani prime minister asked to meet with Sheikh Ihsanullah, so the Sheikh asked his leader, Sheikh Muhammad 'Omar, who ordered that the request for the meeting be denied.

Another note: There is cooperation from Pakistanis as individual knowledge seekers, such as followers of Sheikh Fadhlurahman, our old friend. That is the extent of the relationship between Pakistan and the Taliban. Now I will move on to another point, the military situation.

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5- The Military Situation:

1. The Taliban control about 21 of Afghanistan's 28 provinces;
2. The fighting advanced north of Kabul to Parvan province;
3. The opposing side is weak, multi ethnic, diverse, and corrupt as acknowledged by some of its members; many of them are not motivated to fight the Taliban;
4. The Taliban are making progress, albeit slowly. Sheikh Jalal joined as military commander, and now he is directing operations at the frontlines.

The question that comes to mind is how the Taliban are making such progress so easily. Many of the movement's opponents show that this progress is proof of foreign intervention, support, and direction.

I can confirm that this is not true. I sensed this myself when the Taliban entered Jalalabad peacefully because of their power and the fear of the other side. I have already said that the decisive factor here after God's assistance is that the people of Afghanistan are tired of corruption, oppression, outlaws, and a lack of security. They want someone to give them security and to get rid of oppression. The other thing is that the Taliban's opponents represented in the previous parties do not have any motivation to fight, especially after they ran after life's material pleasures when they came to power.

Another point is that the people of Afghanistan are in awe of the knowledge seekers and the scholars. So how could they fight them? It would be like fighting against Islam.

As for military equipment, the Taliban inherited what the former parties left behind of tanks, planes, and everything. A lot of the equipment was out of order and needed maintenance, assembly, and the Taliban has no prior experience in these matters or in building an organized force. The Russians have declared that the defense of the Islamic Republics begins with the Salang Pass, and that is why the Russians now support the Dustom-Mas'oud axis, while Pakistan supports the Taliban axis.

The situation in northern Afghanistan is very bad. The people are asking for help against Dustom, Mas'oud, and their men. Many people in the north are waiting for the Taliban to rescue them from their plight.

The Dustom-Mas'oud forces and some of the former Sayyaf forces were corrupted by their time in power in Kabul, and abominations are rife among them. This is something they admitted, and they admitted that the Taliban are better than them.

The Taliban are expected to gain control over northern Afghanistan, and we find ourselves on the Jayhoun [Oxus] River. The situation inside the Islamic Republics all the way to Moscow is favorable and ready, and it will not take long, God willing.

7- The Taliban position towards the Arabs

As soon as we arrived in Afghanistan the Taliban sent us letters welcoming us. They said we could go to the Taliban areas and stay there before they went to Jalalabad.

After they arrived in Jalalabad, we met with them and they gave us a warm welcome. Thank God, our relationship with them is excellent. The Saudi consul and the Pakistanis came at the behest of the Americans, and they asked the Taliban to hand us over. The Taliban took a really excellent stand, even after the meetings with the press.

This request to turn us over still stands, but the Taliban position is good. They have told us several times that we are Mujahideen and this is our country, and they would lay down their lives for us because of God's favor to us. We are completely reassured after several meetings we have had with them.

As for Rabbani's position, may God guide him to the right path, you can learn about it from his latest interview with *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* newspaper. This was a very important interview, where he warned the Pakistanis and the Americans that the Taliban will be defeated some day.

8- The negative aspects to the movement

1. It is a movement consisting of students and scholars who do not have sufficient administrative, organizational, and political experience;
2. Their economic situation is very weak.

These are the most important negative aspects of the Taliban, despite the existence of some propagandist leaders. However, there are few like Sheikh Ihsanullah, a man who is resolute and takes strong positions, especially against infidelity and Pakistan, which we believe to be one and the same. But we do not declare anyone more righteous than God.

9- Duties toward the Movement:

The movement has shown its sincerity through what it says and by raising the slogan of an Islamic entity being feasible, which can be a turning point to the benefit of the Islamic world. The movement needs advice and it needs support. It needs someone to draw up a military strategy, and to build up its military force in a way that suits the Afghan situation.

Perhaps this is an opportunity for the Islamic world, and afterward Afghanistan will be a secure base to spread Islam, and no one will dare to enter it militarily again.

Brother Abu-Khalid,

I am exhausted from writing, and there were some other points I wanted to discuss so that the picture would be clearer. One of these points is that the Taliban gained control over Jalalabad. This is a true account, because I lived through this and I saw Jalalabad before the Taliban came and after. I saw it when it was dangerous, and there was corruption, and people oppressed, and rape, in a battle against God.

And I have seen Jalalabad with the mosques completely full, with absolutely complete safety in the city and the villages. Music is not permitted, it is prohibited to hang pictures, and television is

banned. The women are in their homes. The Taliban entered Jalalabad with 200 people, some of whom were unarmed. The former leadership fled merely having heard that the Taliban were coming. This is a summary.

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You must come for a visit to see for yourself. Perhaps there is something more behind what is happening.

My greetings to everyone there, especially Abu-Youssef,

I just want to let you know that I appreciate your position on Afghanistan given what I have seen there. The situation was not pleasant there at the time we left, but things are changing, in my view, but God knows best.

God knows best, and I ask God to forgive me if I have erred in my analysis. Peace, mercy and blessings of God upon you.

Your brother Abu-Hafs