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Navigating Peace: Al-Qaradawi's Critique of Arab-Israeli Relations in the Trump Era

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ABSTRACT

The signing of the Abraham Accords by many Arab nations revived the issue of normalizing relations with Israel. This agreement has prompted an array of comments from Islamic scholars, one of which comes from Sheikh Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi. This paper will examine al-Qaradawi's perspective on the issue of normalising Arab-Israeli relations, focusing on the peace efforts led by the United States (US) under the Trump administration. The analysis was done using the text analysis method. It was based on his fatwas, publications, lectures, and works on his official website, as well as his posts on social media. As a consequence of this agreement, al-Qaradawi' is vehemently opposed to a full normalisation of ties, such as what occurred during the Trump administration, and believes that recognising the unlawful state of Israel is a betrayal of Allah, His Messenger, and the Palestinian people. As long as the Zionists continue to oppress the Palestinian people and unlawfully occupy Palestinian territory, he opposes all efforts to make peace with Israel. Given the contemporary milieu in Muslim societies, where tolerance and open recognition of Israel are on the rise, al-Qaradawi's viewpoint can help Muslims approach the topic of normalising relations with a critical mindset.

Keywords: *Abraham Accords, Arab-Israeli, Al-Qaradawi, normalization, Palestine.*

According to Barston (2019), the concept of normalization can be understood as a process aimed at achieving a mutually agreed resolution to conflicts, which may involve measures such as implementing a ceasefire, negotiating a peace agreement, or establishing diplomatic ties. The topic of normalization, particularly concerning the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims, notably Jews, has long been a sensitive and often taboo subject.

The ascension of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States sparked a contentious debate surrounding the normalization process through the Abraham Accords, in which several Arab countries and Israel participated. Building upon the efforts of his predecessors, Trump sought to reinforce the hegemonic role of the US as the "World's Police" by assuming the role of mediator in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and endorsing the normalization

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agreement. The emergence of this theme, exemplified by the four Arab nations that recently establishing full diplomatic relations with Israel, appears to be a growing trend. Trump's foreign policy regarding peace initiatives in the Middle East, particularly the Palestinian issue, has engendered significant controversy and heated debates. The peace plan introduced by his administration, referred to as the "Deal of the Century," evoked varied reactions from global leaders and scholars.

Among the prominent figures frequently engaged in discussions regarding the Palestinian issue and the efforts to normalize Arab-Israeli relations is Sheikh Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi. He is often recognized as a moderate Islamic scholar (*wasatiyy*) due to his ability to strike a balance between adherents of ancient sunnah sources or the Quran (*salafiyyah*) and liberal trends (Winter 2022). He serves as the leader of the largest socio-political Islamic movement in the Middle East, the Muslim Brotherhood, and actively participates in various international Islamic organizations. Widely regarded as one of the most influential Islamic scholars of the 20th and 21st centuries, his extensive knowledge across diverse fields positions him as a significant contemporary reference. Al-Qaradawi's profound expertise across diverse disciplines positions him as a prominent and authoritative figure in contemporary times. He actively championed the concerns of Muslims and ardently criticized the global community's indifference towards the widespread atrocities perpetrated against Muslims, exemplified in regions such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kashmir, and Burma. Notably, he emerged as the foremost Islamic scholar advocating for Palestine, thereby exerting a profound impact on the global Muslim community.

Al-Qaradawi has authored over 120 books (Bartal 2016), several of which directly address the issue of Palestine, such as *Al-Quds: Al-Qadiyyat Kulli Muslim* (1999) and *Fiqh al-Jihad: Dirasah Muqaranah li-Ahkamih wa Falsafatih fi Daw' al-Qur'an wa al-Sunnah* (2009). For instance, he exposes the atrocities committed by Zionist terrorists during the Nakba events and the violent expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland in his works, particularly *Fiqh al-Jihad*. Consequently, al-Qaradawi has drawn the ire of Western and certain Arab countries due to his unwavering condemnation of Zionism, which is fueled by factual truths rather than lies, media distortions, or manipulations (Johnston 2014). He has faced accusations of being an Islamic extremist inciting hatred, animosity, and lacking tolerance (Baroudi 2014). Criticism against him escalated when he labeled Israel as a nation founded upon the violence perpetrated by the Irgun, Haganah, and Stern groups.

This criticism manifested in his ban from entering the US, Britain, and Egypt. Additionally, Saudi Arabia designated al-Qaradawi as a terrorist in 2017, while Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, and Bahrain imposed sanctions on Qatar, demanding the expulsion of al-Qaradawi from the country. However, Qatar rejected these demands (Harb & Gambrell 2017). Ironically, all four Arab countries making the claims have fully normalized their relations with Israel, with the exception of Saudi Arabia. As a *wasatiyy* scholar, al-Qaradawi has played a pivotal role in safeguarding Arab and Islamic societies from radical extremism by promoting moderation, adaptability to modern challenges in a gradual manner, rejecting sectarianism, and fostering inter- and intra-religious dialogue despite facing numerous obstacles and criticisms (Ghazali 2013). Therefore, it is imperative to evaluate and give proper academic attention to al-Qaradawi's perspective on the Palestinian issue, specifically regarding the normalization of relations between Arab countries and Israel.

Relations Between Muslims and Non-Muslims According to Al-Qaradawi

When examining the topic of Muslim and non-Muslim relations, scholarly perspectives can be categorized into two distinct viewpoints. The first perspective asserts that the foundation of relations between non-Muslims and Muslims is rooted in warfare rather than peace. According to this viewpoint, whenever Islam reaches those who have not embraced it, Muslims are obliged to engage in combat until they either convert to Islam or pay the annual per capita tax known as *jizya* (Bhat 2023). In contrast, Al-Qaradawi adheres to the second perspective, which posits that

the fundamental basis for Muslim and non-Muslim relations is peace. In this view, measures of war are only to be taken when circumstances exceed control or when urgent matters arise (Muslimin & Hosny 2021). This position is founded upon Quranic verses and the following hadith:

وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلَامِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah. Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing. (Al-Quran, al-Anfal 8: 61).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السَّلَامِ كَافَّةً

O you who have believed, enter into Islam completely [and perfectly] and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy. (Al-Quran, al-Baqarah 2: 208).

لَا يَنْهَى اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ
الْمُقْسِطِينَ

Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly. (al-Quran, al-Mumtahanah 60: 8)

Narrated by Abu Huraira: The Prophet said:

لَا تَمَنَّوْا لِقَاءَ الْعَدُوِّ، فَإِذَا لَقَيْتُمُوهُمْ فَاصْبِرُوا

Translation: Do not wish to meet the enemy, but when you meet face) the enemy, be patient (Sahih al-Bukhari, No. 3026)

Al-Qaradawi (2009a) expresses his disappointment with the prevailing belief among classical scholars that non-Muslims, including Jews, Christians, and others, should be fought regardless of their peaceful disposition towards Muslims. However, he emphasizes the need for critical examination, reevaluation, and careful analysis of this issue, rather than simply relying on biased opinions. Al-Qaradawi (2009a) firmly asserts that the notion that Islam was spread by the sword is a baseless falsehood and a grave lie that has detrimental consequences for both Islam and Muslims. He resolutely rejects the idea that the objective of military jihad is to eliminate disbelief. On the contrary, he argues that Muslims are obligated to maintain a strong military in order to defend against enemies ('Abd Zuhd 2011). Al-Qaradawi takes pride in his perspective, as he believes it accurately reflects the essence of relations with non-Muslims who choose peace, emphasizing that the foundation of such relationships is peace rather than war. He affirms, "Thanks to God for guiding me to this opinion, as it reflects the truth of Islam" (Muslimin & Hosny 2021).

In the context of the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims, particularly Jews, al-Qaradawi issued a fatwa elucidating his viewpoint. He states, "It is essential for everyone to recognize that I do not harbor hatred towards Jews based solely on their Jewish identity, as Judaism is not the cause of the conflict between us and Israel. Jews, as followers of a heavenly religion, remain close to us in terms of faith and Sharia, despite potential distortions or alterations, and they are actually closer to the religion of Ibrahim (Abrahamic) compared to other religions" (al-Qaradawi 2006). The nature of the conflict with Israel can be approached from two perspectives: (i) Considering it a clash of religious ideologies rooted in Jewish identity, and; (ii) perceiving it as a struggle against colonialism rather than Judaism itself. This viewpoint is espoused by all official Islamic institutions, including the majority of Al-Azhar scholars and Muslim Brotherhood scholars (Pandian et al. 2020).

Al-Qaradawi's significant fatwas on this matter can be found in his book *Nahnu wa-Al-Gharb: As'ilah Sha'ikah wa Ajwibah Hasimah (We and the West: Critical Questions and Concise Answers)*. Al-Qaradawi asserts that the Palestinian issue constitutes the foremost contemporary Jihad, emphasizing that it is the primary concern for Arabs and Muslims. He maintains that it represents an ongoing struggle between Muslims and Zionist Jews, dating back to the beginning

of the last century. He further clarifies that Muslims do not oppose the Israeli entity based on Semitic grounds. According to Al-Qaradawi, Muslims cannot be considered Semitic for two reasons: (i) Arabs are also Semitic, and contemporary Jews do not exclusively descend from Semitic origins, as various racial elements have become part of their population. The Jewish identity is primarily rooted in religion rather than nationality. (ii) Muslims adhere to the principles of humanity, universality, and non-racism, which align with the values of Islamic teachings (al-Qaradawi 2006). As Allah stated:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقْوَاهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

O mankind, indeed, We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted. (Al-Quran, al-Hujurat 49: 13)

Al-Qaradawi further argues that Muslims do not harbor hostility towards Israel due to Judaism itself, as Judaism is a divinely revealed religion and Prophet Musa AS (Moses), a revered figure within Islam, is counted among the five Messengers who attained the title of *Ulul 'Azmi*. The Quran also refers to Jews and Christians as "*People of the Book (Ahl al-Kitab)*," highlighting their close association with Muslims. Al-Qaradawi (2009a) elucidates that the true cause of the conflict with Zionism in Palestine lies in their aggressive actions, such as land confiscation, displacement of Palestinian inhabitants, and the use of violence, oppression, brutality, and murder. It is the prolonged occupation of our land, usurpation of our sacred sites, and denial of Palestinian rights that fuels this enduring conflict. According to Al-Qaradawi, any notion of peace cannot be accepted if it entails recognizing the invasion and legitimizing their claim to the land and holy places. He asserts that no one has the authority to relinquish the land of Palestine, which has been regarded as a *waqf* (endowment) for all Muslims since it was liberated by Muslims.

Consequently, Al-Qaradawi (2009a) issued a fatwa declaring that the struggle with Jews in Palestine must persist until the full restoration of Palestinian rights, including the entirety of Palestine. He emphasizes that the nature of the Muslim side's battle is based on religious teachings, as it seeks to defend the rights that have been seized. He asserts that in any war, the principle for Muslims is to defend the truth and oppose falsehood, framing the conflict in religious terms because it is a war for the sake of Allah, rather than a war against Jews.

Al-Qaradawi and the Jihad for Palestine's Defence

Al-Qaradawi is widely recognized as a prominent advocate for the Palestinian cause and is considered one of the most ardent supporters of Palestinian Jihad. He has consistently raised his voice in defense of the Palestinian people's plight and the preservation of Jerusalem's sovereignty. Al-Qaradawi consistently calls upon the global community, particularly Muslims, to intensify their efforts to liberate Palestine from colonialism. His fatwas on jihad in Palestine are not confined to a single publication but are disseminated across various books, websites, social media platforms, and scholarly references. The underlying premise is that jihad to reclaim Palestinian territory seized by Israeli occupation is a duty incumbent upon all Palestinians and the entire Muslim community, without exception.

In his book *Fiqh al-Jihad*, Al-Qaradawi (2000) expounds upon the types of Jihad that are obligatory for Muslims today. The fatwa pertaining to Jihad for the liberation of Palestinian land, which has been documented in the opening pages of this book, states: "The land of Israk and Mikraj, the original qibla of Muslims, the third holiest mosque in Islam, and the sacred Al-Aqsa Mosque are at the forefront of areas that must be defended and liberated by Muslims from the most wicked and violent form of colonization, namely the cruel, destructive, racist, bloody, and

unlawful Zionist occupation. Based on jurisprudential principles, it is established that the Palestinian people must engage in combat to expel this infidel enemy, and Jihad on their part is an obligation upon each individual according to their capabilities. Women are required to participate in jihad and resistance even without the permission of their husbands, and sons are obligated without their father's consent, as are slaves without their master's permission. The collective right and welfare supersede the individual right; if the Palestinian population is unable or inactive, the responsibility is then entrusted to their nearest neighbors to assume their role in Jihad against the usurping colonizers and to drive them out of Muslim lands. If the neighbors are unable to fulfill this obligation or fall short, the duty falls upon those who follow them, and so on, until it encompasses all Muslims. Today, it is unequivocally established that all Muslims are duty-bound to protect Al-Aqsa Mosque and liberate Palestine from the contamination of usurpers" (al-Qaradawi 2009a).

It is evident that the liberation of Islamic lands from conquerors or aggressors constitutes a form of jihad (Kassab 2007). This Jihad is deemed obligatory and noble, primarily for the citizens of the affected country. If the citizens are unable to engage in combat, then Muslims from neighboring nations must offer their assistance. If even this support is insufficient, then it becomes incumbent upon Muslims worldwide to lend their aid. Furthermore, in his fatwa concerning the Zionist occupation and the imperative of jihad to free Palestine, al-Qaradawi (2015) asserts: "Israel is perceived as a parasitic entity, an aggressor that frequently engages in oppression, violation, and tyranny. It is the duty of religion and the nation to liberate the Islamic land (Palestine) from the foreign contaminants that infiltrate the body of this Islamic country." "If Islamic law prohibits Muslims from relinquishing even a single cubit of Islamic land, how much more so when that land encompasses the first of the two qiblas and houses the third holiest mosque? Thus, the jihad for its liberation assumes even greater significance, compulsion, and nobility within the religion of Allah SWT" (al-Qaradawi 2009a).

Al-Qaradawi, alongside 63 other Islamic scholars, intellectuals, and preachers, wholeheartedly endorses the fatwa issued by the International Conference of Islamic State Scholars (1989-1990), which strictly prohibits the surrender of any part of Palestine. The fatwa's contents emphasize that "Jihad for the sake of Allah SWT is the sole means to liberate Palestine, and it is categorically forbidden, under any circumstances, to acknowledge even an inch of the occupation of Palestinian land by the Jews. No individual or party possesses the authority to provide the Jews with any legal document pertaining to Palestinian land, surrender any portion thereof, or recognize any rights for them. Such recognition would constitute a betrayal of God, His Messenger, and the trust entrusted to the Muslims" (Muslimin & Hosny 2021).

In his book *Al-Quds: Al-Qadiyyat Kulli Muslim*, Al-Qaradawi (2000) expounds upon the significance of Palestine and emphasizes the obligation to defend it, stating: "Baitul Maqdis (Jerusalem) does not belong solely to Palestine, although they are the people with the greatest right to it, nor is it exclusively for the Arabs, despite being the nation most deserving of its defense. Rather, it is the right of every Muslim, regardless of their geographical location in the eastern or western regions of the earth, in the northern or southern parts of it. It is the right of the ruler and the ruled, the educated and the illiterate, the wealthy and the poor, men and women alike, each according to their position and capability." Consequently, Al-Qaradawi consistently calls upon Muslims to extend support to the Palestinian people with whatever means they possess (Rubinstein-Shemer 2016). This sentiment aligns with the words of Allah:

وَإِنْ أَسْتَنْصِرُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمْ النَّصْرُ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِيثَاقٌ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

And if they seek help of you for the religion, then you must help, except against a people between yourselves and whom is a treaty. And Allah is Seeing of what you do. (al-Quran, al-Anfal 8:72)

When it comes to the terrible peace that the Zionists seek to impose, Al-Qaradawi warned Muslims against showing any signs of weakness or despair. Allah said:

فَلَا تَهِنُوا وَتَدْعُوا إِلَى السَّلْمِ وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ وَاللَّهُ مَعَكُمْ وَلَنْ يَبْرُكُمُ أَعْمَلَكُمْ

So do not weaken and call for peace while you are superior; and Allah is with you and will never deprive you of [the reward of] your deeds. (Al-Quran, Muhammad: 47: 35)

Moreover, Al-Qaradawi (2009b) provides an additional fatwa emphasizing the imperative for unity among all Muslims to support Palestine. While discussing the issue of ceasefire agreements signed by certain countries with Israel, he asserts, "The current duty of Muslims is to stand in solidarity with the liberation of Palestine. They bear the responsibility for Palestine and its liberation in the sight of Allah, history, and future generations. Some may exclude certain countries that have entered into truces with Israel, deeming them places of truce. However, I firmly believe that this issue cannot be fragmented or compromised separately, as such division would be detrimental to our overall cause." Al-Qaradawi underscores the importance of Muslim unity in Islam, encompassing unity in faith, adherence to sharia, unity toward the Qibla (the direction of prayer), as well as unity in suffering and hope. Allah states:

إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ

Indeed this, your religion, is one religion, and I am your Lord, so worship Me. (al-Quran, al-Anbiya 21: 92).

Furthermore, Al-Qaradawi emphasizes that Allah does not burden individuals beyond their capabilities, but rather seeks only what they are capable of accomplishing. Allah declares:

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ وَأَطِيعُوا وَأَنْفِقُوا خَيْرًا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَمَنْ يُوقِ شَحْحَ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

So fear Allah as much as you are able and listen and obey and spend [in the way of Allah]; it is better for your selves. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul - it is those who will be the successful. (Al-Quran, al-Taghabun 64: 16).

Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said:

وَإِذَا أَمَرْتُكُمْ بِأَمْرٍ فَأَتُوا مِنْهُ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ

And if I order you to do something, *then do of it as much as you can*. (Sahih al-Bukhari, No. 7288)

In addition, Al-Qaradawi recommends Jihad through boycott efforts against Israel as a means to counter the Zionist forces. According to his viewpoint, the minimum effort a Muslim can contribute is to boycott goods produced by the enemy (Haluan 2002). In conclusion, it is incumbent upon Muslims to exert their utmost efforts, utilizing various forms of resistance and Jihad, in the fight for the Palestinian cause and the liberation of Jerusalem.

Peace and Reconciliation with Israel

Al-Qaradawi (1993) has consistently regarded Israel as a significant threat within the Islamic world, considering the Zionists to be the primary adversaries of Muslims and deeming Israel the most dangerous government globally. This stems from his belief that Palestine does not represent Israel's ultimate objective. He elucidates, "Israel's insatiable greed knows no bounds. Despite exploiting vast territories, their appetite remains unsatisfied. Israel continues its relentless pursuit to seize the lands of Iraq, Egypt, and the Hijaz, as well as the territories where the tombs of Allah's messengers and their holy sites reside. They target areas populated by Jews such as the

Bani Qainuqa, Banu Quraiza, Bani Nadir, Khaibar, and other Jewish settlements. This aligns with the Zionist ambition to establish Greater Israel, which would stretch from the Nile River in Egypt to the Euphrates River in Iraq" (Nor 2010). The normalization of relations with Israel through reconciliation efforts would enable Israel to expand its influence within these regions.

Al-Qaradawi firmly maintains that it is impermissible to enter into a peace agreement (whether permanent or fully normalized) with Israel as long as Palestine remains under illegal occupation, particularly in relation to the Al-Aqsa Mosque. He further asserts that selling any Palestinian land to Jews is forbidden as long as they continue to unlawfully occupy the territory (Muslimin & Hosny 2021). He states, "Entering into a peace agreement with Israel or any form of settlement, or relinquishing any part of Palestinian land to them, is not allowed. Recognizing the state of Israel constitutes betrayal" (Saleh 2020). Al-Qaradawi contends that the agreement reached between Palestine and Israel holds no value and fails to represent a genuine and courageous peace. Instead, it reflects a peace between the strong and the weak, akin to a wolf making peace with a sheep. He explains that the Israeli government has consistently failed to implement the terms of the agreement, which was inherently unfair from its inception. In his fatwa, Al-Qaradawi asserts that peace with Israel is not permissible due to their aggressive nature and their persistent refusal to seek genuine peace; they persist in their acts of aggression.

Al-Qaradawi perceives the jihad undertaken by the Palestinian people against Israel as a defensive Jihad and a preemptive war. Hence, it becomes an obligation for the ummah (the Muslim community) since genuine peace is not desired by the enemy. Ignoring this duty and pursuing peace with an adversary who rejects peace is considered a sin. This fatwa by Al-Qaradawi stands in contrast to the fatwa issued by the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Abd al-Aziz ibn Baz, who legitimizes peace with Israel (Al Shaikh Khaleel 2019). Al-Qaradawi's perspective on peace with Israel is evident in his remarks during the conference held in his honor, titled *Imam al-Qaradawi: A Forum for Students and Friends*, which took place in Qatar in July 2007. During the conference, Al-Qaradawi reiterated his support for the Palestinian cause, resistance, and Jihad. He expressed his opposition to the peace plans devised by Israel and the United States, considering them illusory, and voiced his support for martyrdom operations (Bartal & Rubinsten-Shemer 2018).

Consistently, Al-Qaradawi invokes religious motivations when addressing the issue of peace agreements with Israel, stating, "We are a religious nation, and so are the Jews. Our struggle for land is a religious struggle" (Helfont 2009). In his work *Al-Quds: Al-Qaḍīyyat Kullī Muslim*, Al-Qaradawi (2000) emphasizes the religious character of the conflict between Israel and Muslims. He states, "Although the struggle revolves around land, this does not negate the religious aspect of the conflict. Religion plays a significant role, and the objective of the conflict is deeply intertwined with religious considerations." Given the religious dimension, a resolution cannot be easily achieved through territorial divisions or governmental compromises (Helfont 2009). In his book *Fiqh al-Jihad*, Al-Qaradawi (2009a) elaborates on the concept of the "Zionist entity" and the underlying reasons for the complex war between Jews and Muslims. He asserts that "the war between us and the Jews has one singular cause: the usurpation of our land, the land of Islam, Palestine. The Jews have expelled its rightful inhabitants and forcibly imposed their presence upon us through iron, fire, violence, and bloodshed." According to Al-Qaradawi, the conflict with Israel is not a matter of choice but a defensive war, a battle for home, and a fight for the land of Islam. However, if the Palestinian land is liberated from Zionist control, Al-Qaradawi would consider temporary peace with Israel (Reiter 2014).

Perspectives on Israel's Normalization Efforts

The United States (US) has played a pioneering role in facilitating the normalization of relations between Arab countries and Israel over the past four decades. This began with the US-sponsored normalization agreement between Israel and Egypt in 1978, followed by the Jordan-Israel peace treaty in 1994. More recently, the US brokered the Abraham Accords in 2020, which led to the

normalization of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan. The relationship between the US and Israel extends beyond friendship, with the US demonstrating a willingness to make sacrifices in support of Israel. Al-Qaradawi has long regarded both Israel and the US as adversaries, going so far as to label the US as the '*Second Israel*'. He contends that the Zionist entity has received significant assistance from the US, without which Israel would not have been able to seize Palestinian lands and maintain its power. The financial aid, weaponry, and diplomatic support provided by the US have facilitated Israel's destructive actions in Palestine.

Al-Qaradawi views all efforts towards achieving peace, including normalization of relations, as mere façades concealing hidden agendas. He considers the process of normalizing relations with the Zionist regime as prohibited and unacceptable under Sharia (Islamic law). From his perspective, such normalization entails Arabs and Muslims recognizing the Zionist sovereignty over the lands usurped from Muslims. Al-Qaradawi was asked about the Sharia ruling on recognizing Israel during an interview on Al-Jazeera, to which he responded, "Recognition of Israel means accepting its legal sovereignty, according to both Sharia and civil law, over the land it has stolen from Muslims. If we recognize it, we forfeit our right to reclaim it. Is this permissible according to Sharia?!... The only path I endorse, until Muslims regain their rights, is the path of resistance (muqawama)" (Reiter 2014). Despite being supportive of Qatar, Al-Qaradawi openly criticized the normalization that occurred between Qatar and Israel, condemning Israel's diplomatic presence in Qatar. He harshly rebuked the Qatari regime and demanded, "Anyone who shakes hands with Peres is trying to cleanse their hands (resign)" (Sayed 2018).

According to Muslimin and Hosny (2021), the normalization of relations with Israel can be categorized into three types, each eliciting a specific viewpoint from contemporary scholars like Al-Qaradawi. The first type is partial normalization, often in the form of a ceasefire where involved parties agree to cease hostilities, aggression, and seek security or mutual interests. This form of normalization is permissible in Islam and is determined by legitimate leadership based on the overall or partial interests of Muslims (state interests). The second type is permanent peace leading to full normalization of relations, with a focus on upholding the rights of the Palestinian people to their land. This type of normalization is permitted in Islam based on the interests of the Palestinian people or Muslims at large. However, it should be informed by the careful recommendations of Muslims, the Arab nation, and the Palestinian people, represented respectively by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the League of Arab States, and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). The final type is permanent reconciliation resulting in full normalization of relations and lasting peace. This normalization encompasses not only the resolution of territorial disputes but also encompasses commercial, tourism, diplomatic, cultural, and historical aspects. However, this form of normalization is not allowed unless the Israeli occupation of Palestine comes to an end. This prohibition applies to all parties, including the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the League of Arab States, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), as well as other Arab and Muslim countries. In conclusion, according to Al-Qaradawi, the authority to enter into a peace agreement or achieve permanent normalization with Israel lies solely with the highest representatives for the interests of Muslims, Arabs, and Palestinians, namely the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). This agreement must be based on the recognition and preservation of the rights of the Palestinian people to their land, taking into account the principle of advancing the collective welfare of the Palestinian population as determined by the majority. The realization of these interests may involve negotiation and compromise, and it is the responsibility of these entities to ensure that their decisions align with the best interests of the Palestinian people. Al-Qaradawi strictly prohibits any Arab or Muslim country from entering into such an agreement as long as the Palestinians have not achieved their rights. No party, whether it is the League of Arab States, the OIC, the PNA, or any Arab or Muslim regime, is permitted to establish permanent peace or engage in full normalization with Israel until the Palestinians have

attained their rights and Muslims have regained the religious rights from which they have been deprived, including full sovereignty over the sacred land of Palestine.

Recognition of Jerusalem: Consequences and Backlash

The issue of Baitul Maqdis, or Jerusalem, holds significant importance for all Muslims worldwide and not just for the Palestinian people. This Holy Land is of utmost significance to three Abrahamic religions: Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. For a long time, it was recognized as a *corpus separatum* under international law. However, on December 6, 2017, the status quo of Jerusalem was challenged when Donald Trump officially acknowledged Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and initiated the process of relocating the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (Aljamal 2020). In response to this declaration, Al-Qaradawi (2017a) took to his Twitter page to convey a message: "What does Palestine mean without Jerusalem? Where are the Muslims? Where is the Muslim world? Where are the Muslim countries? There is no option but to oppose this and firmly say 'no.'"

In his article *la nuqbil tanazulan 'an al-Quds wa-'lmasjid-al-Aqsa (We Will Not Accept Any Deviation from Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque)*, Al-Qaradawi (2017b) emphasized that the issue of Baitul Maqdis concerns all Muslims globally, extending beyond the Palestinian cause. He argued, "It is naive to think that concessions will lead us to a just solution... The Arabs have consistently made concessions and suffered losses in their negotiations with the Zionists, ultimately having to surrender everything. It is misleading to believe that peace is the only solution and a mistake to perceive Israel as an invincible and unshakable power that requires our surrender and appeasement."

The following day, Al-Qaradawi (2017c) shared another post on social media, calling for jihad by Muslims to safeguard Jerusalem and criticizing Arabs who either refrain from fighting for Jerusalem or implicitly seek normalization with Israel. He wrote, "Baitul Maqdis is in danger from the Zionist enemy, who has effectively executed their plan to swallow and Judaize it. I want to draw the attention of those who remain indifferent, those who are fearful, to strengthen the hesitant, expose the traitors, and empower the warriors of jihad to liberate our land from a state of weakness. May we live as strong warriors or die as martyrs!" The post included an image of the cover of his book, *Al-Quds: Al-Qadiyyat Kulli Muslim (Jerusalem: The Concern of Every Muslim)*. Three days later, Al-Qaradawi (2017d) tweeted, "I wish I could respond to the call from the first qibla (Baitul Maqdis) and participate in some form of Jihad for the beloved Baitul Maqdis and Al-Aqsa Mosque, seeking honor through martyrdom on this blessed land." The following day, he expressed his enmity towards misguided Jews, stating, "The Quran extensively addresses the Jews, revealing their crimes and wicked deeds. They are the greatest liars in their speech, the most wicked in their disputes, and the most treacherous in their alliances" (al-Qaradawi 2017e).

In one of his books, Al-Qaradawi elaborates on the reason the Quran provides extensive information about the Jews compared to other nations. He explains, "This is because Allah knows that there will be future conflicts between us and them. Therefore, it is crucial for us to understand them accurately based on reality, not imagination" (Al-Sa'id 2003). He also released a video where he delivered a Friday sermon, during which he became emotional and cried out "Al-Aqsa!" multiple times. He expressed his deep desire to be taken to Palestine, even in a wheelchair, to fight for the cause and be martyred (al-Qaradawi 2017d).

On December 13, 2017, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan convened an Islamic Leadership Conference to address the announcement made by Donald Trump regarding the relocation of the United States (US) embassy to Jerusalem. The conference brought together various leaders, including Mahmud Abbas, the President of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA); Khaled Mashal, representative of Hamas; and President Rohani of Iran, among others. Although al-Qaradawi did not personally attend the conference, he published a letter on the official website of the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS), representing his role as the head of the association, addressed to the representatives of the participating countries

(Rubinstein-Shemer 2020). In the letter, al-Qaradawi urged the leaders of Muslim nations to strive for the unification of Islamic countries as a crucial prerequisite for the struggle to liberate Palestine and protect the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Furthermore, Al-Qaradawi (2017f) called upon Muslim countries to provide financial support to sustain jihad in Palestine and to strengthen organizations fighting against Israel, such as Hamas and Murabitun. He emphasized the significance of the battle for Jerusalem, stating, "Jerusalem and Palestine represent the abodes of the prophets. They impose a heavy responsibility that Arab countries must bear. Our nation cannot liberate Jerusalem and the occupied Palestinian and Arab lands without first uniting and fortifying our own nation, and without the permission of God. Seventy years have passed since the occupation of Palestine, half a century since the loss of Jerusalem, and a quarter of a century of failed negotiations in achieving peace with the illegally occupied territories, all of which clearly demonstrate the failure of the Arab concession policy on the Palestinian issue."

A week later, al-Qaradawi (2017g) affirmed that jihad to liberate Jerusalem is a religious obligation imposed upon all Muslims: "Jihad (in defense of the land) is an individual religious duty upon its inhabitants. Islam does not permit Muslims to relinquish even a small portion of Islamic land, and if that land is Baitul Maqdis (Jerusalem), then jihad to liberate it becomes the most honorable and dignified action." Al-Qaradawi (2023) later posted another comment asserting that the only solution to the issue is to employ force and combat Israel, as this is the only 'language' that Israel comprehends: "Reality has taught us that our enemies do not comprehend the power of reason; they only understand the logic of power. They seized the land from its rightful owners by force, fulfilling their nation's dream through force, establishing their country through force, and annexing new territories to this country by force." This argument put forth by al-Qaradawi underscores that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict stems from the Israeli occupation of Palestine, which is considered part of the Islamic land (Dar al-Islam). According to al-Qaradawi (2000), "The war between us and the Jews is based on one reason and no other: They have taken over our land—the land of Islam—Palestine."

Al-Qaradawi perceives Jewish control in Israel as illegitimate, as he believes that Muslims are the true representatives of God. Consequently, Islam should govern Baitul Maqdis, the first Qibla of Muslims and home to the third most sacred mosque in Islam. In his efforts to safeguard Jerusalem and expel the Zionists from Palestinian territory, al-Qaradawi assigns Muslims a historic divine mission to hold accountable the deviant Jews and remove them from the land. This explains why al-Qaradawi calls for Jihad against the state of Israel.

Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel not only leads to the validation of Israel's occupation and the denial of Palestinian rights, but it also poses a problem for Muslims as it symbolizes the affirmation of Judaism as a relevant religion (Rubinstein-Shemer 2020). Based on his theological background and a series of revelations, we can comprehend the profound shock experienced by al-Qaradawi in response to Trump's declaration.

Normalization of Arab-Israeli Ties under Trump

On January 28, 2020, President Trump unveiled his Middle East peace plan, "Peace to Prosperity," during a ceremony at the White House, which was attended by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Representatives from Arab countries such as the UAE, Bahrain, and Oman were also present, while no Palestinian representatives attended (Gearan et al. 2020). In response to the plan, the International Union of Islamic Scholars (IUMS), based in Qatar and funded by Qatar, issued a statement. It is important to note that IUMS, founded by al-Qaradawi in 2004, aims to establish him as a prominent figure in the field of Islam and promote the Islamic agenda he supports independently of the Muslim Brotherhood movement. The IUMS characterized the plan as an attempt at a "war of extermination" and urged the Muslim world to "use all means" to fight against it.

The proposed plan suggests a two-state solution, but it would result in significant land loss for the Palestinians. The Palestinian people outright rejected the plan, with President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) categorically rejecting it. The response from the Arab world was more predictable, with Arab leaders refraining from fully condemning Trump's plan and insisting that dialogue between the parties should continue. In an official statement following the plan's announcement, the IUMS stated that they were closely observing the world's display of violence and exploitation, expressing surprise at President Trump's alleged peace plan in the Middle East. The IUMS called on all free people worldwide to oppose this "war of extermination" using all available means. The statement also quoted al-Qaradawi, the organization's founder, urging Muslims to engage in jihad and sacrifice their lives to defend Baitul Maqdis (Naar 2020). Furthermore, al-Qaradawi emphasized that opposition to normalization of relations is the least effort Muslims can make. In his speech, he stated that the lowest level of resistance involves economic, social, and cultural boycotts, rejecting all attempts to normalize relations with the usurping enemy, and maintaining a psychological barrier that cannot be broken or violated under any circumstances (al-Qaradawi 2001).

Exactly five weeks later, on August 13, 2020, President Trump made a surprising announcement on his official Twitter account, revealing an agreement between the United Arab Emirates and Israel to normalize their relations, including the opening of embassies in each other's territories. In response, 500 scholars and religious institutions participated in a special Zoom conference organized by the IUMS based in Qatar. The three-hour Zoom conference aimed to draft a fatwa (religious ruling) regarding "normalization with the people of Al-Aqsa, the holy Jerusalem, and occupied Palestine." The fatwa, issued after the conference, states that Islam prohibits normalization with Israel. It was signed by Islamic jurists from Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Sudan, Syria, Turkey, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, and also Europe, while Islamic jurists from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the UAE were noticeably absent (IUMS 2020).

During the conference, seven arguments were presented against the normalization agreement. Some of these arguments were put forth in response to the UAE's justifications following the agreement, as they were expected to provide various reasons to defend their actions, similar to the experiences gained after the Egypt-Israel agreement 41 years ago and the Jordan-Israel agreement 26 years ago. As a result, no new developments were achieved in this agreement, only peace with Israel, without addressing the critical discourse surrounding previous agreements and the demands made against them.

The primary argument against the treaty revolves around the relinquishment of "the most holy and blessed land" and the recognition of the legitimacy of the occupying enemy. Consequently, it is deemed a crime and a betrayal of the rights of Allah, His Messenger, the Palestinian people, and the broader Islamic nation. The agreement is portrayed as a deviation from the established Islamic legal consensus since the Balfour Declaration, which asserts that all of Palestine, particularly Al-Aqsa, constitutes Muslim land belonging to its Palestinian inhabitants, with no portion of it to be surrendered. Furthermore, engaging in various forms of jihad against Israel is seen as the personal obligation of every Muslim, which cannot be set aside in favor of peace with those who occupy Muslim lands and usurp the rights of Muslims (Winter 2022). When considering the essence and nature of the Abraham Agreement itself, al-Qaradawi staunchly opposes it in line with the comprehensive fatwa carefully issued by the IUMS (2020). Therefore, al-Qaradawi maintains that the Abrahamic Agreement should not be perceived as a *hudna* (ceasefire) or *sulh* (agreement) permissible under Sharia law, drawing parallels to the Hudaibiyyah Agreement made with the Quraish tribe in 628 CE.

To conclude, based on the aforementioned explanation, it can be deduced that al-Qaradawi has emerged as a vanguard and influential figure among contemporary Islamic scholars due to the fatwa he issued pertaining to the normalization of relations. He possesses a lucid stance on Palestinian matters, including the normalization of Arab-Israeli relations. In his perspective, the establishment of Israel occurred at the expense of the Palestinians, who were forcibly

displaced from their homeland. Consequently, Israel's existence is deemed both criminal and unjust, necessitating its dismantlement. Nonetheless, al-Qaradawi still advocates for dialogue between Islam and Judaism as a viable means to address the Palestinian predicament. Al-Qaradawi's disposition towards Israel remains adversarial, contending that peace can only be achieved by restoring Jerusalem's ownership to its rightful place and terminating Israeli control over the region. He perceives this conflict not as a struggle against Judaism, but as a consequence of Israel's illicit occupation of Palestine's sacred lands. Accordingly, he underscores the significance and obligation of every Muslim to strive for the realization of Jerusalem through various efficacious means. The least Muslims can do in this endeavor is to engage in economic, political, and social boycotts against Israel.

Regarding the relocation of the US embassy to Jerusalem, al-Qaradawi vehemently opposed the actions undertaken by Trump. Following the announcement, he issued numerous statements emphasizing the significance of Jerusalem in Islam and calling upon Muslims to intensify their efforts in countering Israel through jihad. His staunch opposition to the embassy relocation stems from the belief that plans to Judaize Jerusalem, displace Arab inhabitants, demolish mosques in al-Haram as-Sharif (Temple Mount), and erect fictitious temples (*al-Haykal al-Maz'oum*) pose the gravest threat to Islam in contemporary times (Bartal 2016). In this matter, al-Qaradawi paid little heed to patriotic or nationalistic dimensions, firmly grounding his position on the sanctity of the politics surrounding Baitul Maqdis and its environs. Regarding the issue of normalization, particularly the Abraham Accords, al-Qaradawi did not issue an extensive array of new statements compared to Trump's foreign policy regarding Palestine. Nevertheless, al-Qaradawi has conducted prolonged research on this matter, and his viewpoint on it remains steadfast and currently adopted. Ultimately, he opposes any form of normalization agreement with Israel unless the rights of the Palestinian people are restored and until it is demonstrated that peace can be attained through such an agreement.

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