



Web-Street Talk Trends and Analysis October 24th, 2007

Back to back Bin Ladin audio releases PI Online Gauges Reaction on the Street

A speech attributed to Bin Ladin was released on Monday, followed on Tuesday with the release of second recording. In contrast to his previous style, these messages were not laced with rhetoric threatening the West. In fact, Bin Ladin acknowledges that mistakes were made and essentially calls on all *Mujahidin* to put aside their differences, shed any nationalistic and tribal affiliations and unite for the sake of the *Ummah*. In general, comments in the Arab media and on Islamic sites were not receptive. Both sides – those who wanted the insurgency to fail and those who championed it – saw the message as “too little too late.”

There were also those who questioned the timing of Monday’s message. One poster claimed that, in the background of another propaganda video issued a month ago,¹ Bin Ladin is heard making statements identical to those heard in a portion of Monday’s release. [PI Online](#) has confirmed that the identical statements are heard in both tapes, but was unable to determine if it was the same tape being “recycled” or Bin Ladin repeating the same passage on two separate occasions.

In Tuesday’s message, Bin Ladin asked the *Mujahidin* to join the fight against the invading crusaders in the Sudan. Bin Ladin appears to want to switch the focus of *jihad* from Iraq to other parts of the Middle East, by inciting fighters, particularly from the Arabian Peninsula to answer the call.

[PI Online](#) filtered and analyzed 439 messages on the Web² commenting on the Bin Ladin tapes, for the period 10/22 to 10/24

Findings:

- Reaction to Bin Ladin’s reference to “mistakes made” ranged from total condemnation of violence and rejection of Bin Ladin’s philosophy at one end of the spectrum, to calls by hardliners for the *Mujahidin* to close ranks and continue the fight, at the other end.
- As expected, the percentage of posters on *Al-Arabiya* who were critical of Bin Laden far exceeded those on *Al-Jazeera*. (67% versus 34%). The most prevalent criticism of Bin Ladin centered around his inability to acknowledge that the mistakes he refers to in his speech were committed by *Al-Qaeda* under his guidance. Some portrayed the call by Bin Ladin to elevate Islam above nations and tribes as the crux of the message, in order to strike a wedge between the Sunni tribal leaders who joined the fight against *Al-Qaeda* and their young constituents who are being recruited for *jihadi* activities.
- Those in the “others” category (20% of the total) made various comments of a general nature that did not support or condemn Bin Ladin’s message: Bin Ladin is an American invention; what’s important is the liberation of Palestine and not Iraq; Islamic unity is the goal; Bin Ladin is an escape mechanism for Bush; Bin Ladin does not recognize mistakes, this video is an

¹ <http://www.muslim.net/vb/showthread.php?t=259167> – The poster attributed Bin Ladin’s statement asking Allah to strengthen the hearts of the *Mujahidin*, strengthen their steps and guide their aim... (minute33 of Monday’s video) to the recording of Bin Ladin heard in the background of a propaganda video, “*Al-Sahm al-kha’ib*,” produced by the “*Furqan*” and released on September 25th, 2007 (minute 13 of that video).

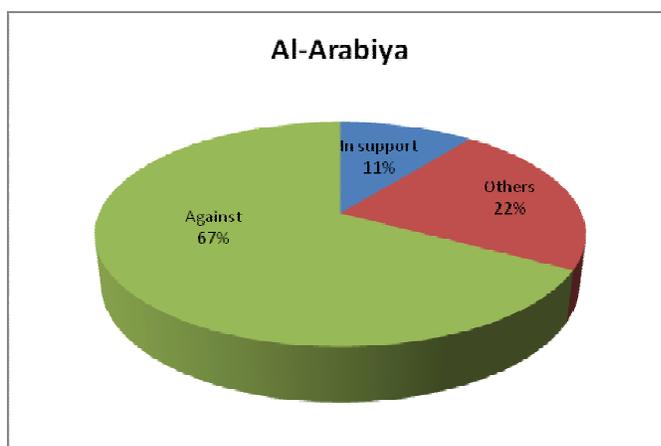
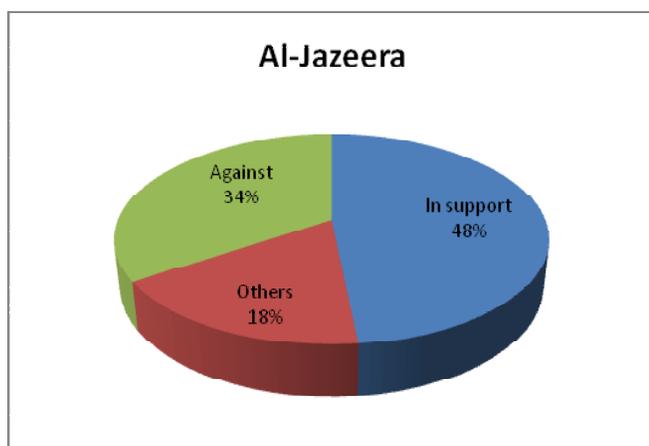
² 184 messages from *Al-Jazeera* and 255 messages from *Al-Arabiya*

American invention staged by a sound-alike. Some aimed their anger at *Al-Jazeera* for their partial broadcast of the audio, omitting earlier portions of Bin Ladin’s message that hard liners considered favorable to Al-Qaeda.

- Skepticism about the timing of the release of that message and its public broadcast were mentioned in many messages across all categories. Generally, these skeptics viewed the release of the tapes, which they believe have existed for some time, as a reaction to the current backlash against *Al Qaeda*.

PI Online Conclusion:

The tone and rhetoric of those supporting Bin Ladin seemed to reflect more frustration than conviction. In the past, supporting messages often referred to the accomplishments of the *Mujahidin*. In contrast, supportive reactions to Monday’s message were little more than brief religious slogans or condemnation of others. **PI Online** retrieved only three messages mentioning the *Mujahidin*’s accomplishments. Aside from few Al-Qaeda hardcore supporters, reaction on the street, even by those supporting Bin Laden’s message, seems to be emphasizing Muslim unity rather than *Jihadi* unity.



	support	against	other	Totals	support %	against %	other %
Al-Jazeera	89	63	32	184	0.48	0.34	0.18
Al-Arabiya	27	171	57	255	0.11	0.67	0.22
Totals	116	234	89	439	0.26	0.53	0.20

Sources: Al-Jazeera 10/22/2007 and Al Arabiya 10/23/2007
 url's: <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/A306E4E6-6310-4BE9-8DF2-D91094E29C54.htm>
<http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2007/10/23/40687.html>

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