



## Briefings



### Conflicting Arab Views on Carter's Meeting with Hamas

Al-Jazeera commented on today's London Times article on President Carter's meeting with Hamas in Damascus. The news media quoted a statement indicating that Hamas "would accept the right of Israel to live as a neighbor next door in peace." Although Carter's unofficial status precluded characterizing this as a breakthrough, Al-Jazeera emphasized it as a reliable indication of Hamas' position. Al-Jazeera also reported that the French foreign ministry encourages any steps that could lead to a change in attitude by Hamas. In contrast, columnist *Abdel Rahman Al-Rashed*, writing in *al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, ridiculed what he termed the gullibility of Carter, noting the about-face by the Hamas representative in Damascus who, less than twenty-four hours after the Carter's statement, denied that the Hamas would recognize Israel. *Al-Rashed* also reconfirmed the conventional wisdom, which holds that Hamas would only abide by a solution sponsored by Syria or Iran. Palestinian President 'Abbas, who was on his way to Washington, echoed that position and proclaimed the meeting with Carter a failure.

Sources: <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/11E7EB84-AB46-499D-8453-6EBF8D173EA4.htm> - 4/22/2008  
<http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/80A06C99-3864-4BEF-A229-7B5E0AEB735D.htm> - 4/23/2008  
<http://www.asharqalawsat.com/leader.asp?section=3&article=468111&issueno=10739> 4/23/2008



### Father's Conversion Disinherits Non-Muslim Children

Egypt: The highest authority in *Al-Azhar* ruled yesterday that non-Muslim children cannot inherit from their father if he converted to Islam. What was most peculiar about the case was the disconnect between the issue raised and the decision. According to '*Abdel Fattah al-Sheikh*, the representative of the committee of Islamic Jurisprudence, the question was simply whether the father had actually converted to Islam. The issue of whether his non-Muslim children could inherit was not raised; it was simply considered a given.

Source: <http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=102325> – April 22nd, 2008



### The Prophet Practiced Secularism

In an episode of a popular Television program to be broadcast this coming Friday on *Al-Arabiya*, *Sa'ad Al-Sowayan*, Professor of Anthropology at King Sa'ud University, declared that the Prophet Muhammad's actions were often secular in nature. In an unusual move, he used the Christian word "clergy" to attack the religious institutions in the Kingdom, noting that "clergymen" who presently try to control the Islamic society did not exist during the prophet's time. *Al-Sowayan* stated that separating religion from government by no means negates the existence of religion in the state. It simply delegates worldly matters to a secular framework. He also accused the clergy of wanting to control the entire society, including the government, for the benefit of their own power. He also criticized the educational system in the Kingdom for the influence of prevailing religious views and the absence of philosophical inquiry. There is no doubt that his remarks will ignite controversy because the religious establishment has always considered secularism anathema to Islam. Thus, portraying the prophet as a secularist would certainly be considered blasphemy in many religious circles.

Source: <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2008/04/23/48768.html> 4/23/2008

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