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Briefings



Reaction to the Pope's Baptism of a Converted Muslim (Most Popular article) – 3/24/2008

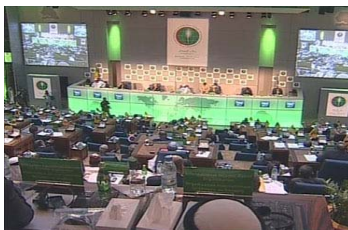
PI Online analyzed more than 900 comments made on several Arabic sites in reaction to an article on the religious conversion of Italian-Egyptian journalist *Magdi 'Allam* from Islam to Christianity. He was baptized by the Pope this weekend. The article was the most read on *Al-Arabiya* and the one which drew the most commentaries. The vast majority of the comments (more than 95%) were negative towards *'Allam*, regardless of whether the newspaper on which they were posted leaned toward the moderate or the conservative end of the spectrum. Most commentators thought the event was given too much importance, even though the article's popularity with readers suggests to the contrary. Many also considered *'Alam* a traitor, an instrument of the West or Israel [*'Allam* published a book in 2007 entitled: "Viva Israel"] and some considered the action of the Pope as open war on Islam. The majority considered that *'Alam's* conversion is not a loss for Islam and several suggested that he was not a Muslim in the first place. Responding to comments on Sunday concerning his security, *'Alam* said: "My life is in more danger but I am not regretful. I shall confront my destiny with pride and the power of conviction." The papal baptism illustrated a lack of sensitivity that Muslims consider unhelpful in promoting dialogue between Islam and other religions, and which they consider confrontational. Thus, some observers saw the Pope's action as unfortunate and of little redeeming value considering how desperately the West desires to eliminate the current culture of confrontation within Islam.

Sources:

http://www.aafaq.org/news.aspx?id_news=4729 – 3/24/2008 – 98 comments -

<http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2008/03/23/47304.html> - 3/23/2008 – 615 comments

<http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/24CDEF0E-2940-4DB7-A7D4-8F29BC4B2E6D.htm> - 3/23/2008 – 247 comments.



Review and Analysis of the Eleventh Islamic Summit *'Abdel Aziz Al-Tuwajri* – *Al-Hayat* – 3/24/2008

A forum or summit can be a place where there are many slogans and little action. This is particularly true if a large number of countries participate, as in the case of the eleventh Islamic Summit.

Nevertheless, the forum provides a glimpse at changes in the internal dynamics of the members. [PI Online](#) covers *Al-Tuwajri's* review today in *Al-Hayat* Newspaper in which he examines the accomplishment of the summit which took place in Dakar March 13-15.

Al-Tuwajri notes that the agreement reached at the summit reflects a new vision of Islam which is based upon moderation, tolerance and dialogue between civilizations. It is perhaps telling that two terms that appeared in earlier agreements are missing from the new agreement. The first is "Islamic solidarity", although the text does call for the member countries to be guided by Islamic principles and to cooperate. The second is the singular term "Muslim Nation", which has been

replaced by the pluralistic terms “ Muslim countries” or “member countries”. [PI Online](#) believes that both changes seem to indicate a deliberate attempt to shed the ideology of distinction and separation between the “One Islamic Nation” and the rest of the world and move towards adopting principles and values shared with other non-Muslim nations. *Al-Tuwajri* also notes that the summit recognized the importance of certain international principles, including human rights, basic freedoms, the supremacy of the law and the democratic process.

While supporting the principles of the United Nations and international law, the summit concluded that there should be no intervention in the proper internal affairs of a country. He notes that three separate statements addressing human rights, women rights and racial discrimination were mentioned, although no formal agreements on these subjects were reached. The summit did, however, establish a permanent post for a Human Rights representative in preparation for establishing a permanent organization for Human Rights, although a cautionary note was added insisting that human rights issues should not be employed to undermine the Islamic *Shari'a* or influence the internal affairs of a country.

The summit also rejected what they identified as the internationalized cultural hegemony by which industrialized countries try to impose their will and principles on developing nations at the expense of their cultural identity. To address those issues, the summit established “The Non-Aligned Center for Human Rights and Cultural Diversity.” The summit also emphasized the importance of adopting a legally enforceable international agreement prohibiting religious, cultural discrimination and ensuring respect for all religions.

It remains to be seen whether all of the principles adopted in the agreement receive the support necessary to translate them into concrete results. It is, however, a good step in the right direction.

<p>Source: Alhayat newspaper – Reviewer: ‘Abdel Aziz Bin-‘Uthman Al-Tuwajri – Date: 3/24/2008 http://www.alhayat.com/opinion/ideas/03-2008/Item-20080323-dcb77098-c0a8-10ed-017c-43242eb0e82b/story.html</p>

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