

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

May 3, 2011

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President Obama Calls Death of bin Laden an Act of Justice

By Jeff Baron
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama says the death of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden allows the world to tell the families of bin Laden's victims: "Justice has been done."

U.S. forces killed bin Laden in a firefight, part of a raid on his compound in Pakistan early on May 2, Pakistani time. In announcing the death, Obama called bin Laden "a terrorist who's responsible for the murder of thousands of innocent men, women, and children."

Obama recalled the images of September 11, 2001: hijacked planes, the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Virginia, just outside of Washington, and the deaths of nearly 3,000 people. But he said that "the worst images are those that were unseen to the world: the empty seat at the dinner table; children who were forced to grow up without their mother or their father; parents who would never know the feeling of their child's embrace."

On Monday, the president said it was "a good day for America." Speaking at a Medal of Honor ceremony for two soldiers killed in the Korean War, the president made reference to bin Laden: "Our country has kept its commitment to see that justice is done," Obama said. "The world is safer; it is a better place because of the death of Osama bin Laden."

Capturing or killing bin Laden had been a U.S. goal even before the 2001 attacks. He declared war on the United States and its allies in 1996, and al-Qaida was considered responsible for the 1998 bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and the 2000 suicide attack against the USS Cole in Yemen. Obama said he made the capture or killing of bin Laden the top priority for the Central Intelligence Agency.

The president said the fight against the Islamist extremist group will continue, but that "the United States is not — and never will be — at war with Islam." "Bin Laden was not a Muslim leader; he was a mass murderer of Muslims," Obama said.

Although the move against bin Laden went ahead without prior word to the Pakistani government, Obama said that Pakistan's cooperation "helped lead us to bin Laden and the compound where he was hiding." The president, who called Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari after the raid, added that Pakistani officials were pleased that bin Laden had been found and killed.

John Brennan, the president's chief counterterrorism adviser, said bin Laden clearly must have had a "support system" in Pakistan to live comfortably there with his family. Brennan said the United States will take up the issue with Pakistani officials.

Senior administration officials offered some details of the early morning May 2 raid on the compound, about 35 miles from Islamabad. It involved two helicopters with members of the U.S. Navy special forces who entered the large compound, which was thought to house three families: those of bin Laden and two brothers who were his trusted aides. In the gunfight that followed, five people died: bin Laden, the two aides, bin Laden's grown son and one of bin Laden's wives, who was used as a shield by one of the men who died. No Americans were injured.

At the end of the attack, one of the two American helicopters could not take off and was destroyed. The attack force left with bin Laden's body in the other helicopter. They had been in the compound for less than 40 minutes.

U.S. officials said bin Laden's body was positively identified and was treated in accordance with Islamic custom before being buried at sea within 24 hours of the raid.

Obama and the senior officials praised the teamwork and effort that went into the operation against bin Laden: four years ago getting information from captured al-Qaida members identifying an aide who served as a courier for bin Laden, then in August 2010 finding the compound where he and his brother lived. Months more of intelligence-gathering showed that the compound also sheltered "a high-value target," probably bin Laden.

The killing of bin Laden brought praise from U.S. lawmakers of both parties, both for Obama and for the intelligence services and Navy SEALs involved in the operation.

A statement from Senator John McCain of Arizona, Obama's Republican opponent in the 2008 election, said he was "overjoyed" with the news. "The world is a better and more just place now that Osama bin Laden is no longer in it," McCain said. "I hope the families of the victims of the September 11th attacks will sleep easier tonight and every night hence knowing that justice has been done."

The chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Democrat John Kerry of Massachusetts, said in a statement that the 10-year manhunt for bin Laden "was in search of justice, not revenge."

Former presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush also offered statements of praise and congratulations. "This momentous achievement marks a victory for America, for people who seek peace around the world, and for all those who lost loved ones on September 11, 2001," Bush said. Clinton said, "I congratulate the president, the national security team and the members of our armed forces on bringing Osama bin Laden to justice after more than a decade of murderous al-Qaida attacks."

Secretary Clinton: Bin Laden Dead, "Justice Has Been Done"

By MacKenzie C. Babb
Staff Writer

Washington — Al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden is dead "and justice has been done," Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says. But bin Laden's death is not the end of the international war on terrorism, and the United States will continue to fight violent extremism around the world, she says.

"As we mark this milestone, we should not forget that the battle to stop al-Qaida and its syndicate of terror will not end with the death of bin Laden. Indeed, we must take this opportunity to renew our resolve and redouble our efforts," Clinton said from the State Department May 2.

Her remarks came less than 12 hours after President Obama announced May 1 that U.S. military forces had launched a "targeted operation" against a compound in which bin Laden was hiding in Abbottabad, Pakistan. Obama said a small team of Americans carried out the operation with "extraordinary courage and capability," and that after a firefight, the forces killed bin Laden and took custody of his body.

Clinton praised the "broad, deep, very impressive effort" by Americans who "have worked tirelessly and relentlessly for more than a decade to track down and bring Osama bin Laden" to justice.

The United States went to war with al-Qaida after the group launched attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people in New York, Virginia and Pennsylvania on September 11, 2001. Al-Qaida was also responsible for the 1998 bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and the attack on the USS Cole in Yemen in 2000. The terrorist organization has also claimed responsibility for killing innocent civilians around the globe in attacks on markets, mosques, subway stations and aircraft.

"These were not just attacks on Americans, although we suffered grievous losses. These were attacks against the whole world," Clinton said. The group is "motivated by a violent ideology that holds no value for human life or regard for human dignity."

Clinton said bin Laden's death marks an opportunity for people all over the world to look to a more peaceful and secure future "with growing hope and renewed faith in what is possible."

She offered her condolences to the thousands of families whose loved ones have been killed in bin Laden's "campaign of terror and violence," and she expressed hope they could find comfort in knowing justice has been served.

The secretary said the United States will continue to fight al-Qaida and its Taliban allies in Afghanistan while working with the Afghan people as they build a stronger government and begin to take responsibility for their own security. As U.S. forces work to implement the NATO-approved strategy for transition, the United States supports "an Afghan-led political process that seeks to isolate al-Qaida and end the insurgency."

In a message to the Taliban, Clinton said the group "cannot wait us out" and "cannot defeat us," and she called on its members to abandon al-Qaida and participate in a peaceful political process.

She said the United States is committed to supporting the people and government of Pakistan as they defend their own democracy from violent extremism.

"All over the world we will press forward, bolstering our partnerships, strengthening our networks, investing in a positive vision of peace and progress, and relentlessly pursuing the murderers who target innocent people," Clinton said. "The fight continues, and we will never waver."

U.S. Muslims React to bin Laden's Death, Stand Against Terrorism

By M. Scott Bortot
Staff Writer

Washington — In the wake of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden's death at the hands of U.S. forces in Pakistan on May 2, Muslim-American civil society groups say that terrorism's hateful message continues to be irrelevant.

"In light of the widespread democratic protests sweeping the Middle East which have demonstrated the power and effectiveness of peaceful protests to enact political change and realize the aspirations of the people, bin Laden and al-Qaida's pro-violence messages have been exposed as bankrupt and misguided," said a statement from the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), a group that encourages Muslims in America to engage in civic life.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), America's largest Muslim civil liberties organization, said

bin Laden has never represented Muslims.

“As we have stated repeatedly since the 9/11 terror attacks, bin Laden never represented Muslims or Islam,” said a CAIR press release. “In fact, in addition to the killing of thousands of Americans, he and al-Qaida caused the deaths of countless Muslims worldwide.”

Salam Al-Marayati, president of MPAC, echoed CAIR’s sentiment on al-Qaida’s culture of violence and said that bin Laden’s senseless acts showed a disregard for humanity.

“His actions and those of al-Qaida have violated the sacred Islamic teachings upholding the sanctity of all human life,” Al-Marayati said. “His acts of senseless terror have been met with moral outrage by Muslims worldwide at every turn in the past decade.”

The Islamic Society of North America, one of the country’s largest Muslim organizations, praised President Obama for his anti-terrorism efforts.

“The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) joins all Americans in thanking President Obama for fulfilling his promise to bring Osama bin Laden, leader of al-Qaida and perpetrator of the 9/11 attacks, to justice,” said an ISNA press release.

Imam Mohamed Magid, president of ISNA, said Americans are standing together against terrorism and in defense of the country’s principles.

“We will turn to each other today, united, and emerge tomorrow with an even stronger resolve to take every action necessary to protect the precious ideals of our nation that bin Laden attempted to destroy on 9/11: peace, tolerance, respect and freedom for all,” Magid said.

The Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago, a group advocating Muslim community interests, welcomed President Obama’s statement that America is not targeting Islam during his speech that announced bin Laden’s death.

“We thank President Obama for overseeing this operation and his reiterating that ‘the United States is not – and never will be – at war with Islam,’” said Ahlam Jbara, associate director of the council.

Kiran Ansari, the council’s director of communications, said Muslims in America are optimistic that bin Laden’s death will usher in a new age of understanding.

“We hope that this moment will be the start of a new era of hope, interfaith cooperation and peace,” Ansari said. “We are united as one American family as President

Obama said and we hope this is a turning point away from the dark period of the last decade.”

Arab-American Scientist Discusses Water Issues in Jerusalem

By Sonya F. Weakley
Staff Writer

Washington – From Gary Paul Nabhan’s perspective, a serious public health problem will, at some point, transcend even the deepest political divides, and fixing it will require serious cooperation.

That is one of the messages Nabhan – a nationally known Arab-American writer, lecturer, food and farming advocate, folklorist and conservationist – will share as he visits Jerusalem April 30 to May 5 through a speaking program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State.

Nabhan, a member of the Arab-American Writer’s Guild, has authored or edited 24 books and achieved numerous awards for his works on food culture, conservation and ethnobotany (how plants are used across different cultures). He holds a doctorate in arid lands resources from the University of Arizona, where he is a social scientist at the Southwest Center of the university’s Institute of the Environment.

In Jerusalem, Nabhan is talking about using rainwater harvesting to conserve and improve water, and then storing the harvested water above and below ground. He says contaminants, including endocrine disruptors and antibiotic-resistant bacteria, are leaking into the Mountain Aquifer, one of the area’s main water sources, that lies primarily under the West Bank.

Nabhan says the harmful microbes come from pesticides and other contaminants that reside in reservoirs of recycled sewage used for crop irrigation. Sewage that is not applied to crops leaks into the aquifer, causing serious health issues for Israelis and Palestinians alike. “The way I see it, the health problems from endocrine disruptors are so severe that the cost of not cooperating is greater than the change in behavior that would need to take place,” Nabhan said.

Nabhan, who lives in Patagonia, Arizona, grew up around Arab grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins in a family that started coming to the United States from Lebanon more than a century ago. In his book *Arab/American: Landscape, Culture, and Cuisine in Two Great Deserts* (2008), he writes about convergences in the landscape ecology, ethnogeography, agriculture and cuisine of the Middle East and the Southwest desert.

Nabhan lives on a 2.23-hectare farm where he demonstrates how diverse desert agriculture can be

grown using water conservation systems to display climate-friendly food production. The farmstead is named Almuniya de los Zopilotes (Private Experimental Farm of the Turkey Vultures), in honor of a 1,000-year-old practice of developing private experimental farms called almuniya to try new farming activities.

Nabhan grows chili peppers, and his most recent book, *Chasing Chiles: Hot Spots Along the Pepper Trail* (2011), is a collection of essays about the effects of climate change on pepper farming around the world. Drought, he writes, is driving Middle Eastern pepper farmers out of business. "Global warming affects what they grow," he says. "They need to make food systems more healthy and sustainable."

In his research work, Nabhan has collaborated with Israeli and Palestinian scientists. "I have great respect and empathy for both sides," he says. "I offer a message on the basis of science and the utmost concern for the health of the society."

He said the contamination issues "are reaching tragic proportions. If the cost of continuing the status quo is that both populations lose their health, I don't see any choice but to cooperate."

Nabhan says civil society should lead water conservation efforts such as rainwater harvesting. His message includes examples of how nongovernmental, community-based organizations have resolved water-related conflicts in the United States and have brokered other types of issues in the Middle East.

He expresses hope that the Mountain Aquifer water issue would serve as an opportunity for collective problem-solving efforts that could improve cross-boundary and cross-cultural relationships in the area. "They deserve all the support that can be mustered to work on things that have lasting benefits for both peoples."

Getting Ready to Start an NGO

By Hilary Binder Aviles

Aviles is a senior specialist and director at Mosaica, a multicultural nonprofit that helps community-based organizations in the United States and internationally become more effective and sustainable.

Solutions to large global challenges often start with small actions at the local level. Whenever you see a need or a problem in your community, you can make a difference by standing up and taking action. For example, an artist may see youth in his neighborhood with nothing to do after school and start an informal art program. An educator may see young girls from poor families who don't attend school regularly and set up a tutoring

program for them on weekends. A nurse may see that women in her community lack information about basic health services and organize informational workshops.

When you find yourself moved to take action — no matter the challenge or opportunity you choose to address — you will be able to do more when you have more resources and involve more people. That is why you might decide to start a nongovernmental organization (NGO).

Starting an NGO requires many different kinds of support, from volunteers, to people who can provide resources, to advocates who believe in your efforts. It is up to you to find these people and convince them to join your cause. Start with people you know — your friends, neighbors, colleagues and local business owners. Explain why your cause is important and why they should help do something about it. When you speak with passion and show people what can be done, they will begin to believe in it too.

Once you have a small team who share your belief and are willing to help establish an NGO, you need to decide on a shared vision and develop your mission. A vision is a statement about the long-term changes you seek. It describes how people's lives will be better thanks to your work. For example, let's say the educator who started the tutoring program for girls gets others involved and they start an NGO called Knowledge for All Girls Now. Their vision statement might be "A community in which all girls are educated and empowered to reach their full potential." Your vision statement should be big and bold.

Then define the NGO's mission. Think of your mission as the unique way your organization will contribute to the broader vision. Research how NGOs in your area already work to address the problems and issues that you want to work on and find a gap that needs to be filled. Think about how you can complement rather than compete with existing NGOs. Perhaps the educator finds that other NGOs focus on providing girls with quality secondary education, but none support younger girls. So the mission of Knowledge for All Girls Now might be to ensure that all girls in a particular city or region attend and complete primary school.

Once you have a clear vision and mission, decide how your NGO will carry them out. It is good to start small. Rather than trying to do everything at once, choose a few projects or activities and do them well. For example, Knowledge for All Girls Now could carry out its mission by educating the community about the importance of sending girls to school, by providing resources so poor families can send their daughters to school and by building schools for girls in rural areas. Your NGO could start with an awareness campaign, using street theater

skits to educate the community. Or it could start by getting donations to help families in a particular neighborhood buy books and uniforms for their daughters.

Start by identifying the resources you already have – the people, skills, expertise and relationships you can tap into. Then think about what you will need to carry out your first projects and activities. Keep in mind that many NGOs start without any formal grants or long-term sources of funding. They get volunteers and startup donations for projects and seek funding from foundations, government agencies and the general public once they have results to show for their efforts.

Once you have a plan for what the NGO will do, you will need to develop a structure for getting the work done. Define roles and responsibilities for each member of your organization and set up a reporting structure to keep people working on mission and on schedule. For example, Knowledge for All Girls Now could create an Awareness Committee to coordinate the street theater project and a Donations Committee to raise funds for books and uniforms. One of the founders might agree to serve as the volunteer executive director, providing guidance and support to the committees and building relationships with more supporters. Then they would need to set up the formal board of directors, write the rules to govern the organization and register the NGO with the relevant government agency in their country.

Starting an NGO is a powerful way to turn your passion for an issue into lasting change for your community. It is a way to mobilize others to get involved and build something bigger than just one person. It is also a long journey and a lot of work. It may take many years and many different kinds of skills, resources and relationships to build an effective and professional NGO. If you begin with a committed team, establish a clear vision and mission and successfully carry out a small number of projects and activities that make a difference, you will have a strong foundation on which to grow.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov>)