

Al-Shabab Video Presents the Role of Media Deception in the War Against the Islam



Al-Kataib, Al-Shabab's media wing, has released a video titled, "*So Leave Them and Their Lies, part1*" on March 15, 2023. It portrays the Western media as an enemy whose job is to extinguish the light of Islam with their mouths. The video shows clips

where the term, “...*Islamic terrorists*...” is continually used to demean not only the Muslims but also Islam as a religion. Al-Shabab considers the propaganda warfare against it as a feeble attempt to suffocate the truth, and when it comes to Islam, the neutrality is no longer valid. It seems that the Western media are running out of options by resorting to character assassination tactics and by smearing Al-Shabab with negative name tags.

At the third minute, it features Amin Qamuriya, an author and political analyst, who expressively pointed out that the Western media’s obsession in labelling the Muslims as ‘*terrorists*’ is not solely limited to the media but a wider crusade led by political organizations whose interests lies in distorting Islam. Also, he questions why the media constantly refers the Muslims as, “*Islamic extremists*” but when an attack takes place like the one in New Zealand, it merely calls it, “*an act of terrorism*” without mentioning that the perpetrator is a Christian. Similarly, Dr. Abdalla Dhash, the editor of Arabnews, has identified the Jewish Zionists as the biggest beneficiary of this campaign.

The theme of this video is that the U.S. is powerless in subduing the Al-Shabab growing influence, therefore, it turned into misinformation to offset it. And in the video, there are plenty of evidences that show that the U.S. has gone in the direction. At the fifth minute, appears the slain clerk Anwar Al-Awlaki reading an article written by David E. Kaplan, the author informs that the U.S. government is engaged in a “...*campaign of political warfare*...” by plowing it with substantial amount of money whose aim is “*to influence not only the Muslim societies but Islam itself*” Similarly, the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, has published a report advising the U.S. government to fund a campaign that “...*focus on turning the Muslim public opinion against the Jihadis*...” , adding that the U.S. should use the cold war strategies. Equally, Lawrence Wilkerson, a former State Department official, proudly explains how to make your version of the story as the official story by manipulation the media.

Approximately, at the 10th minute, the video shifts to media training seminars for local journalists provided by African Union (AU) and different institutions of United Nations (UN). Foreigners are incapable to communicate the locals due to linguistic barrier, therefore, they use the local journalists as a launchpad to convey their message, and

the video explains the nature of that message. According to a report issued by the U.N. titled, *“Countering Al-Shabaab Propaganda and Recruitment Mechanisms in South Central Somalia”* The UN pledges training and support for the local journalists to engage in defaming Al-Shabab and to highlight the *“Reign of Terror”* Most of the local journalists are unlettered. As Yusuf Abukar said, in Somalia, journalism is the only profession that does not require a prior education. The video accuses the local media as collaborator in this war, and by doing so, they have fallen into the nullifiers of Islam making them a legitimate target. So, how reliable is Somali Media? According LandInfo, Norway based institution has characterized it as *“...defamation, misinformation, gossip, and propaganda abound,”* that does not have code of ethics or guidelines. Similarly, FreePress categorized the Somali Media as, *“...biased and distorted...”*

At the 28th minute is the most gruesome part of the video showing intensely chilling attacks, death captured in high definition video, unveiling in my opinion, so self-evident truth that requires no further illumination. A VBIED rammed into a targeted building, blowing armed vehicles with IEDs, fleeing AMISOM and SNA troops, etc., and Al-Kataib has remarkably won the media battle over the competitors. A reporter, Roben Krill, has stated that the AMISOM, the UN, and members of the international community were unable to challenge Al-Shabab's media, and it has become *“...relatively free, unchecked, and unchallenged...”* making it the only reliable source on Somali news.

The video ends with the President of Somalia, Hassan Sh. Mohamoud, at a meeting with the council of Somali scholars, pleading them to issue a fatwa (religious decree) against Al-Shabab. Unlike Al-Shabab, the Somali government does not have religious direction causing eternal disputes amongst the politicians, and this theological hollowness has denied the SNA soldiers the courage to remain at the battlefield. As for politically-inspired fatwa, the phrase, *“terror”* had lost its effectiveness, its magnetism to rally, its hot steam to sway public opinion, and in Al-Qaeda world, the term, *“terrorist”* has received a new merited status: a badge of honor.

This 37-minute-long video is about the battle of winning the hearts and minds, and in this war, the truth and falsehood are undistinguishable. Al-Shabab depicts itself as the guardians of the faith hoping to gain supporters among the Muslim viewers, suggesting

that it operates at higher code of integrity than the adversaries. Though the purpose of this video was to demolish the enemy's blatant lies with video-based truths, it implicitly caters for the viewers hoping them to conform with their ideological precept, and it expects them to validate their struggle. They are unconsciously recruited not so much as a manpower but as hibernating giants whose religious passion will eventually lead them to join the caravan.

