

AKRAMIA: A BRIEF SUMMARY

By Bakhtiyar Babadjanov

Founder – Akram Yuldashev

The founder of Akramia, Akram Yuldashev, was born in 1963 in Andijan, Uzbekistan. After graduating from high school and serving in the Soviet Army, Yuldashev worked at a textile factory, where he became a candidate for the membership in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In 1985-1990 he studied at the Andijan Institute of Cotton Agriculture. According to his fellow students, Yuldashev showed a special interest in social studies and the humanities, in particular, history and literature. One of his fellow students at the Institute was A. Qasimov,¹ appointed *Amir* (Head) of the very first Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islam cell in Uzbekistan. By 1991 Kasimov persuaded Yuldashev to join Hizb-ut-Tahrir. According to Qasimov, he was impressed by Yuldashev's skills as a speaker and as someone capable of leading the provincial intellectuals, who comprised the middle and higher ranks of the local Hizb-ut-Tahrir group. Moreover, Yuldashev appeared to have some entrepreneurial skills as well, profitably investing funds of the local branch of the party treasury.

In a little more than a year, Yuldashev announced his departure from the Hizb-ut-Tahrir and established his own group, to be later known as Akramia (other names – *Iymonchilar*, *Khalifatchilar*).² In 1993 Yuldashev was arrested and sentenced to two and a half years in prison for establishing an unauthorized underground organization, but in a year he was given amnesty and released. Thus, the majority of this group's activities took place in 1995-1996. In 1999 he was arrested again on charges of continuing his illegal activities, convicted and sentenced to nine and a half years. At present, Yuldashev is serving his sentence at a correctional facility in Tashkent region.

Structure

Yuldashev created a unique community that was optimal for local conditions and consisted of small and medium-size industrial and commercial enterprises. Workers of these enterprises were members of Akramia. Trusted members of the organization (*Itoatchilar* – “subordinates”) searched for appropriate candidates to fill vacancies. These candidates (*Yollanma ishchilar* – “hired”) would go through a number of preliminary interviews and be offered lump-sum financial assistance. Then, should an *Yollanma ishchilar* seem to be inclined to adopt the ideas of the organization and pass vigorous background checks, he became an *Itoatchi* - a regular member of the organization. Inside an enterprise, workers were divided into *khalka* (“cells”) of 3 to 7 people, led by *Peshqadamlar* (“leaders”). The *Hos moddiy ma'su* (“supervisor”) was in charge of

¹ Abdurashid Kasimov, born in 1960, became a member of Izb-ut-Tahrir in 1989 and immediately became its first local leader (*amir*). In 1999 he was arrested and sentenced to twelve years in prison for establishing an illegal religious organization. Kasimov was given amnesty and released in 2004, after he had written a letter of remorse, addressed to the President of Uzbekistan.

² *Iymonchilar* is the title of an essay written by Yuldashev. *Khalifatchilar* – represents Akramia's main objective of establishing a *Khalifate* (Caliphate).

production, while the *Hos ruhiy ma'sul* (“supervising religious leader”) was responsible for ideology.

Religious Context

Yuldashev outlined ways for achieving a “righteous life according to Islam” in an essay, entitled “Iymonga yu'l” (“A Path to the True Faith”). The main idea of the essay is the promotion of ways to “get rid of logical thinking” when we speak about “what is written in the Qur'an and the Sunna.” While Yuldashev’s descriptions of specific actions necessary for realizing “Allah’s orders” are rather murky, one particular path stands out, and that is the “jihad (or a battle) on the path of Allah.”

The following passages are especially interesting:

In “Lesson” 11, the author discusses the harm of logical thinking related to “future deeds” and writes that “...as a result of logical thinking about future deeds, an overly confident man might say that ‘I would have done it, if I had had an opportunity.’” And this (considering, instead of realizing it) is an extremely hideous thing...” The author cites the 2nd and the 3rd ayats of the “as-Saff” Surah (61) and the 77th ayat of the “an-Nisa” Surah (4) to support his rather foggy idea, and suggests careful reading of the “al-Hujurat” Surah (49). Although Yuldasehev’s approach of allegories and hints appears harmless, the “future deeds” should be interpreted exclusively as jihad in its absolute militaristic meaning.

Evidence:

1. The 2nd and 3rd ayats of the “as-Saff” Surah, cited by the author, can be understood only in the context of the 4th ayat, which is the conclusion of a call: “O ye who believe! Why say ye that which ye do not? It is most hateful in the sight of Allah that ye say that which ye do not. (ayat 2-3) Lo! Allah loveth those who battle for his cause in ranks, as if they were a solid structure.” (Ayat 4). The 4th ayat is being purposely or cautiously omitted by Yuldashev. However, in March 2005, long before the Andijan tragedy, he writes a commentary to the same “as-Saff” Surah in a more direct and exclusively militaristic spirit, as an open call for jihad. His commentary proves the fact that Yuldashev interpreted these three ayats together and cited his “Lessons” (the “Iymonga yu'l” essay) as an open call to “fight against aggression” (*hujumli kurash*). The jihad in Yuldashev’s interpretation is an armed uprising against the government, and therefore the following conclusion can be made. Yuldashev developed the idea of jihad, although in a veiled form, as early as in 1992, from the moment he wrote the Iymonga yu'l essay and establishing the first cell of the Akramia organization.

2. In another “Lesson” of the “Iymonga yu'l” essay Yuldashev wrote: “It is natural, for example, that there are many times in our lives when people, who have experienced the truth of the religion, call to it (*da'vat*). However, they have yet to understand the truth of our religion. Therefore, while you have not confirmed the rightness of your actions, you must think “This action seems right, but it might be bad.” This is human nature that people do not like what is good for them, and vice versa. The glorious Qur'an says: “...it may happen that ye hate a thing which is good for you, and it may happen that ye love a thing which is bad for you. Allah knoweth ye know not.” (The Qur'an, “al-Baqarah” Surah, 216). This ambiguous script becomes clear if we look at the beginning of this ayat, that had been purposely omitted by the author: “Warfare (*al-qatalu*) is ordained for you, though it is hateful unto you.”

3. The 77th ayat of the “an-Nisa” Surah, also cited by the author, reads: “Hast thou not seen those unto whom it was said: Withhold your hands, establish worship and pay the poor-due, but when fighting was prescribed for them behold! A party of them fear mankind even as their fear of Allah or with greater fear, and say: Our Lord! Why hast Thou ordained fighting for us? If only Thou wouldst give us respite yet a while! Say (unto them, O Muhammad): The comfort of this world is scant; the Hereafter will be better for him who wardeth off (evil); and ye will not be wronged the down upon a date-stone.” (The Qur'an, “an-Nisa” Surah, 77).

This ayat is also a part of summons of previous ayats 74 through 76, that clearly and unambiguously state that one should not fear to “fight in the way of Allah,” and that those who “be slain” “in the way of Allah,” in modern terminology, those who become shahid, “on him We shall bestow a vast reward.” (The Qur'an, an-Nisa Surah, 74).

Therefore, Yuldashev’s vague approach to this ayat is also aimed at understanding in the context of previous ayats that had been purposely omitted by the author. Therefore, Yuldashev’s hazy and ambiguous term of “future deeds” should be understood as jihad (fighting) in an exclusively militaristic sense. It should also be mentioned that these ayats (among others) are often used in the literature of practically all radical and terrorist movements and parties of the Islamic world, including the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, to substantiate “universal jihad.”

In Yuldashev’s other essay - his commentary on the as-Saff Surah of the Qur'an, written in March 2005, he claims that Akramia is in the process of waging “jihad against oppressors and infidels.” He calls on Muslims to not be afraid of death, but look for it, as “death of a shahid is a dream of a Muslim,” and that death “in the way of Allah” is “not death but return to your Lord.” Yuldashev attempts to ground his assertions in the ayats of the Qur'an (The Qur'an, “as-Saff” Surah, 22:39, 61:5, 61:6, 9:13-15, 2:154, 41:30).