

# Robert Azzi, Novahantonian Propagandist for Islam: How to Limit His Lie-Ability

by Hugh Fitzgerald



The comments below are based on some brief notes taken by attendees at three “Ask-A-Muslim” events recently staged by Robert Azzi, a Muslim who travels around New Hampshire to meet, at schools, town halls, churches, and other venues, with non-Muslims who are encouraged to ask him “anything at all” about Islam.

Here are three of those “anything-at-all” questions Azzi purported to answer at his two appearances in Laconia, and at a third one in Canterbury.

In Laconia, N.H., the first question he was asked related to

“The Explanatory Memorandum by the Muslim Brotherhood from 1991.” “Could you please, Mr Azzi, discuss this group, and that memorandum?”

In the memorandum, written in 1991 by Mohamed Akram Adlouni, a member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, **Adlouni outlined a strategic plan in the United States that involved “eliminating and destroying the Western civilization from within.”** Those who would prefer that you not believe in the authenticity of that document note that more than two dozen Muslim-American groups are listed under the heading “our organizations and the organizations of our friends.” They point out that, on the same page, the author wrote “imagine if they all march according to one plan,” which suggests that they were not then doing so.

Note that those “skeptics” do not deny the existence of the memorandum, nor of its author, nor of its contents. They merely interpret as a suspect contradiction the listing of “our organizations and the organizations of our friends” and the Egyptian author’s expressed hope that “imagine if they all march according to one plan.” But there is no contradiction. These organizations, 29 in all, are linked, as being sympathetic to one another, but they are not identical, which means there are still some differences. They may all share the same goal – “eliminating and destroying Western civilization from within” – but differ on the means chosen, and on the timetable, and on which group should be taking the lead. Some “organizations and the organizations of our friends” may think that terrorism is the only way to proceed; other groups may think terrorism is counter-productive, and put their faith in campaigns of Da’wa, Muslim migration (hijra), and in the West, deliberately outbreeding the infidels, all as part of a demographic Jihad. It makes perfect sense that there might be “organizations of our friends” who agree on ends, but who do not necessarily agree on means. Mohamed Akram Adlouni was merely expressing a wish – to wit, just “imagine [how useful

it would be] if they [these associated organizations] all [were to] march according to one plan.”

Azzi, asked about the memorandum, simply dismissed it. He treated it as having no validity, which is most peculiar since no one in the Muslim Brotherhood has ever denied the existence or the contents of the 1991 Memorandum, nor have any others, in the government, or in the mainstream media (including the New York Times, the Washington Post) done so. But Azzi doesn't want any of his listeners to think that there might be a Muslim group working in the United States to “eliminate and destroy Western civilization from within.” Having seemed in his initial answer to deny the document's authenticity, he then said that the writers and supporters of the document (so apparently he was recognizing its existence) were a “fringe” group in the Islamic world, and no attention should be paid to them or to the document.

Is the Muslim Brotherhood really a “fringe” group? And even if it were, since when do we pay no attention to a “fringe” group capable of inflicting great harm? Robert Azzi no doubt insists that Al Qaeda is a “fringe” group of “extremists.” Would he argue that we should consequently pay no attention to it? Of course not.

But in any case, no one could seriously call the Muslim Brotherhood a “fringe” group. For 90 years, it has been a group that Egypt's rulers had to contend with, trying repeatedly to wipe it out, in 1948, 1954, 1965, and 2013 after plots, or alleged plots, of assassination and overthrow were uncovered, but never succeeding. A few years ago, Mohamed Morsi, a member of the MB, won an election and became President of Egypt; only the military's iron fist could break the Muslim Brotherhood's hold on Egypt. In other words, the Muslim Brotherhood was for a while the most powerful political force in the most populous Arab nation. That is not a “fringe group.” The Brotherhood still exists in Egypt, and is still regarded as a powerful threat to the rule of General El-Sisi.

Branches of the Brotherhood, sometimes using other names, are now to be found all over the Islamic world, in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Kuwait, Qatar, Algeria, Somalia, and several dozen other Muslim states. The strongest group to oppose Ben Ali during the Arab Spring in Tunisia was Ennahda, a local branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas, that rules Gaza, is also a Muslim Brotherhood group. In Syria, the Muslim Brotherhood first established itself in the mid-1940s; in the 1960s, it constituted the most powerful opposition to the dictator Hafez al-Assad; his assault on the city of Hama was intended to destroy the center of the Muslim Brotherhood's power. In the 2011 civil war, the Muslim Brotherhood initially played only a small role inside Syria, but the most important opposition figures outside the country were mostly members of the Brotherhood, and the group gradually became more important in fighting Bashar al-Assad inside Syria.

The Brotherhood's power is also demonstrated in the fear it evokes in both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, countries that ferociously persecute Brotherhood members; both countries oppose Qatar in large part because of that country's financial support for the Brotherhood. The Brotherhood is considered a terrorist organization by the governments of Bahrain, Egypt, Russia, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. If it has been sufficiently threatening to be banned in so many countries, it can hardly be dismissed, as a "fringe" group. The Muslim Brotherhood is also active among Muslims in the West – through groups deliberately bearing different names – and, especially, in both Germany and the United Kingdom.

According to a 2004 article in the Washington Post, U.S. Muslim Brotherhood supporters "make up the U.S. Islamic community's most organized force" by running hundreds of mosques and business ventures, promoting civic activities, and setting up American Islamic organizations to defend and promote Islam. In 1963, the U.S. chapter of Muslim Brotherhood

was started by activists involved with the Muslim Students Association (MSA). U.S. supporters of the Brotherhood also started other organizations including the North American Islamic Trust in 1971, the Islamic Society of North America in 1981, the American Muslim Council in 1990, the Muslim American Society in 1992 and the International Institute of Islamic Thought in the 1980s.

Many attempts have been made in Congress, so far unsuccessful, to have the Muslim Brotherhood labeled as a terrorist organization under the Muslim Brotherhood Terrorist Designation Act of 2015. That bill identified three Muslim Brotherhood entities in the U.S., including the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), a non-profit group denounced by the UAE for its MB ties. This group is regarded by the Egyptian government as a Brotherhood lobby in the United States. The other two entities are the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT).

Yet with all this evidence of the Muslim Brotherhood's power, not just in Egypt but in Tunisia, Gaza, Syria, Qatar, Iraq, Somalia, and among Muslims in the West (Germany, Austria, the U.K., and the United States), Robert Azzi dismisses this hydra-headed organization, which goes by many different local names, as merely a "fringe" group. The governments of Egypt, Israel, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, among others, beg to differ. Azzi offers his taqiyya with such self-assurance that many of the uninformed will simply accept his remarks as true. Whenever he is confronted by a knowledgeable and unsympathetic questioner, he resorts to asserting blatant untruths and then quickly goes from "Ask-Me-Anything" openness to avoiding any further discussion with that particular questioner.

**He states, as fact, that "the Muslim Brotherhood is not a danger to America."** This would mean that not just the Muslim Brotherhood, but not CAIR, nor the Islamic Society of North

America, nor the American Muslim Council, nor the Muslim American Society, nor the International Institute of Islamic Thought, are a “danger to America.” There are those in the FBI who would beg to differ. So would some in the Department of Homeland Security. And so would the governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, and Israel.

In Laconia, Azzi was asked about the antisemitic remarks made continuously by Muslims worldwide. His questioner asked him “when will this stop”? Azzi didn’t hazard an answer to that question, but indicated that he himself “did not agree with these antisemitic remarks” and then added, at the very end of his reply, loudly and clearly, “there are no antisemitic statements in the Quran!” This elicited some rumblings of dissatisfaction. It’s a flat-out falsehood, and Azzi knows this perfectly well. At his future appearances, one hopes that there will always be someone in the audience who has come prepared to read the following two paragraphs, in which Robert Spencer has listed the many anti-Jewish verses in the Qur’an:

*The Qur’an depicts the Jews as inveterately evil and bent on destroying the wellbeing of the Muslims. They are the strongest of all people in enmity toward the Muslims (5:82); as fabricating things and falsely ascribing them to Allah (2:79; 3:75, 3:181); claiming that Allah’s power is limited (5:64); loving to listen to lies (5:41); disobeying Allah and never observing his commands (5:13); disputing and quarreling (2:247); hiding the truth and misleading people (3:78); staging rebellion against the prophets and rejecting their guidance (2:55); being hypocritical (2:14, 2:44); giving preference to their own interests over the teachings of Muhammad (2:87); wishing evil for people and trying to mislead them (2:109); feeling pain when others are happy or fortunate (3:120); being arrogant about their being Allah’s beloved people (5:18); devouring people’s wealth by subterfuge (4:161); slandering the true religion and being cursed by Allah (4:46); killing the prophets (2:61); being*

*merciless and heartless (2:74); never keeping their promises or fulfilling their words (2:100); being unrestrained in committing sins (5:79); being cowardly (59:13-14); being miserly (4:53); being transformed into apes and pigs for breaking the Sabbath (2:63-65; 5:59-60; 7:166); and more.*

*The classic Qur'anic commentators not do not mitigate the Qur'an's words against Jews, but only add fuel to the fire. Ibn Kathir explained Qur'an 2:61 ("They were covered with humiliation and misery; they drew on themselves the wrath of Allah") this way: "This Ayah [verse] indicates that the Children of Israel were plagued with humiliation, and that this will continue, meaning that it will never cease. They will continue to suffer humiliation at the hands of all who interact with them, along with the disgrace that they feel inwardly." Another Middle Ages commentator of lingering influence, Abdallah ibn Umar al-Baidawi, explains the same verse this way: "The Jews are mostly humiliated and wretched either of their own accord, or out of coercion of the fear of having their jizya [punitive tax] doubled."*

In Canterbury, N.H., his last stop in this latest round of Ask-Me-Anything meetings, Robert Azzi was just as he had been in his two performances in Laconia – friendly, soft-spoken, greeting those he had seen at previous events and, above all, aiming to please. It's an essential part of his shtick. It's easier to have your misinformation believed if you are as friendly as all get-out. He begins each presentation with 10-15 minutes of autobiographical information, how he is the child of Lebanese Christians, when and why he decided to become a Muslim, his deep satisfaction with that choice, his professional life as a photographer, specializing in the Middle East, his desire to share with others his own understanding of Islam, so as to clear up the many misconceptions, through these "Ask-A-Muslim Anything" meetings.

Then came the questions.

**He was asked to discuss women's rights under Islamic rule.**

Azzi focused on covering, saying there were no requirements for women's coverings at the time of the Prophet. He seemed to say that all of the body coverings for women came years later. It wasn't clear if that meant he disagreed with forcing Muslim women to cover, with everything from the hijab to the niqab and burqa. He then said that there were various signs of progress in the status of women in Islam. His sole piece of evidence was that there was now a women-only mosque in California. This does nothing to change the treatment of women in the hundreds of thousands of mosques where they are made to pray separately from the men, often behind partitions, or not admitted to the mosque at all. He mentioned none of that. He also said that women were beginning to read and interpret the Quran. As it had never occurred to anyone in the audience that women did not read the Qur'an, this claim did not make the favorable impression Azzi apparently thought it would make. He did not state whether women had been discouraged, or forbidden, from reading the Qur'an and, if they had, what would have been the reason. He steered clear completely of Qur'an 4:34, in which Muslim husbands are instructed that they may beat their wives if they suspect them of disobedience. He thus did not quote the part of that verse that mentions that men are the guardians of women because they are superior to them, which might have helped explain why women in the past had not been encouraged to read the Qur'an for themselves. Nor did Azzi discuss the fact that a daughter inherits half of what a son does. He also failed to mention something that would undoubtedly have been of great interest to his audience – that a woman's testimony is worth only half that of a man, and that the reason for this, as Muhammad states in a famous hadith, is "because of the deficiency of her intelligence." Azzi thus gave an answer that would satisfy those who came knowing nothing about the misogyny of Islam, but was



completely unsatisfactory for those who did know something about Islam's misogyny, and wanted him to dilate upon the subject, and help them to comprehend the reasons for it.

Robert Azzi has been giving his novahantonian q-and-a's for a few years, but recently, I have been told, more and more of the well-informed about Islam are showing up at his events, ready to ask difficult questions and to challenge his sanitized version of Islam. Three of the answers he gave recently at events in Laconia and Canterbury – about the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic antisemitism, and the treatment of women in Islam – were clearly mendacious. “War is deceit,” said Muhammad. Why should Azzi think any differently? He dismissed the Muslim Brotherhood as a “fringe” group, and insisted it was not a threat in this country. He insisted that there is no antisemitism, none whatsoever, in the Qur'an, when there are at least two dozen verses that would not be out of place in **Der Stürmer**. Finally, in discussing the treatment of women in Islam Azzi concentrated on questions of cover (hijab, niqab, chador, burqa) and left out much more important matters. These include' the physical mistreatment of a wife (including beating); the unequal treatment of women in inheritance laws, and in weighing of testimony; polygyny, and the divorce that the husband can obtain merely by uttering the triple-talaq, both of which devalue women; finally, there is that description by Muhammad of men as “superior in intelligence” to women.

Judging by reports, Azzi is being worn down by those who show up to ask questions he cannot possibly answer truthfully, and still leave listeners with a favorable impression of Islam. He is being forced to utter untruths to protect his precious Islam, and he is now more aware that he is in the sights of people, novahantonians all and no fools, who have learned entirely too much about Islam, from his point of view, and are prepared to deploy the knowledge that they have acquired about the Qur'an and Hadith, in order to keep Robert Azzi, if not on

the straight and narrow, at least more limited in his liability.

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