

TO: Usama bin Ladin
FROM: Abu Musab al-Suri [Mustafa Setmariam Nasar] and Abu Khalid al-Suri [Muhammad al-Bahaya]
VIA: Ayman al-Zawahiri
FOLDER: Incoming Mail—From Afghanistan
DATE: July 19, 1999

Noble brother Abu Abdullah [Bin Ladin],
Peace upon you, and God's mercy and blessings.
This message [concerns] the problem between you and *al-Amir al-Mu'mineen* [the Commander of the Faithful, i.e. Taliban leader Muhammad Umar] ...

The results of this crisis can be felt even here in Kabul and other places. Talk about closing down the camps has spread. Discontent with the Arabs has become clear. Whispers between the Taliban with some of our non-Arab brothers has become customary. In short, our brother Abu Abdullah's latest troublemaking with the Taliban and the Commander of the Faithful jeopardizes the Arabs, and the Arab presence, today in all of Afghanistan, for no good reason. It provides a ripe opportunity for all adversaries, including America, the West, the Jews, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, the Mas'ud-Dostum [Northern] Alliance, etc., to serve the Arabs a blow that could end up causing their most faithful allies to kick them out ... Our brother [Bin Ladin] will help our enemies reach their goal free of charge! ...

The strangest thing I have heard so far is Abu Abdullah's saying that he wouldn't listen to the Commander of the Faithful when he asked him to stop giving interviews ... I think our brother [Bin Ladin] has caught the disease of screens, flashes, fans, and applause ...

The only solution out of this dilemma is what a number of knowledgeable and experienced people have agreed upon ...

Abu Abdullah should go to the Commander of the Faithful with some of his brothers and tell them that ... the Commander of the Faithful was right when he asked you to refrain from interviews, announcements, and media encounters, and that you will help the Taliban as much as you can in their battle, until they achieve control over Afghanistan. ... You should apologize for any inconvenience or pressure you have caused ... and commit to the wishes and orders of the Commander of the Faithful on matters that concern his circumstances here ...

The Commander of the Faithful, who should be obeyed where he reigns, is Muhammad Umar, not Usama bin Ladin. Usama bin Ladin and his companions are only guests seeking refuge and have to adhere to the terms laid out by the person who provided it for them. This is legitimate and logical.

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Source: Alan Cullison, "Inside Al-Qaeda's Hard Drive", *The Atlantic*, September 2004, available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2004/09/inside-al-qaeda-s-hard-drive/303428/>.