

The Fourth News Conference

As usual, after an hour the journalists and correspondents were called to participate in a combined news conference for both the prosecution and defense teams. At the specified time, the representatives of the prosecution and defense teams each stood in front of a special podium in preparation to receive questions from the journalists and correspondents. A signal was given to start the questioning:

Correspondent: My question is to the defense. What are you preparing for rebuttal in the next court session in response to the evidences which the prosecution presented?

Defense: You can wait till Thursday comes when the next court session is held and you will hear our responses and I promise you a surprise soon God-willing!

Correspondent: Question to Mr. Prosecutor. Do you have new surprises too for the court trial?

Prosecution: Very sad surprises, unfortunately they are far away from humanity. All of them are episodes that are part of a countless series of crimes, pain, tears, and grief...

Journalist: My question is directed to both the prosecution and defense. How does the high number of jurors which is about 100, in addition to 12 judges who will all participate in voting for or against conviction...how will that affect your mission? There was never such great number in any court trial in the past. So how does this number affect your work and your ability to present your evidence in front of such great crowd?

Prosecutor: Without a doubt, this makes the job tougher especially for the prosecution team. As a matter of fact, I believe that this great number is in favor of the defense team and increases their hopes for division and difference in opinion since conviction requires a unanimous vote from all jurors and judges. So it is easy for the defense team to bring division by convincing only one person to impede a guilty verdict.

As for us, it makes our mission much harder. It is certainly a greater challenge to explain the details and present the evidence in front of 112 persons and to keep their focus and attention, each and every one of them throughout the long court trial sessions. We pray that Allah (SWT) gives us success in this

mission because it is not easy at all.

Defense: I disagree with Mr. Prosecutor. The high number of jurors makes our job also difficult, especially considering the manner in which the prosecution tries to affect the emotions and feelings of the jurors. These emotions spread quickly among the jurors and their big number is advantageous in that regard. Dealing with that is difficult; however, we are trying our best to clarify the truth to them and to remove the emotional influence on them which accompanies this tragedy.

Correspondent: My question is for Mr. Prosecutor. How do you explain the celebrations of joy in all the cities which the caravan of captives passed by until it reached Damascus? And what is the reason for these celebrations?

Prosecution: There are three main reasons: ignorance, propaganda, and the political authority. There was a general ignorance with what happened in Karbala, the identity of the victims, and the reasons which led to its occurrence. Then there was the Umayyad propaganda which depicted the captives as Khawarij / outlawed ones who rose against the legitimate Caliph. They gave the impression that the members of the Ahlul Bayt (as) [family of the Prophet (S)] are callers of mischief (*fitna*) and rebellion against the legitimate government.

Furthermore, the political authority issued direct orders to organize these celebrations and processions in every city and village in order to give the false impression that the whole nation supports the First defendant Yazid in what he committed against Al-Husayn (as) and his purified prophetic family.

This is typically practiced by any oppressive regime by initiating rallies and processions supporting it to give a false impression that the people are supporting that regime until today.

Another correspondent: Question to the defense. Sir, do you agree with me that your job is very difficult and maybe even impossible in defending the defendants, especially the First and Second defendant as the evidence against them is overwhelming and cannot be refuted? How do you deal with this tough and challenging mission?

Defense: We are convinced of the innocence of the defendants, and this belief is what facilitates our mission, and we are confident that we can explain the essence of this case to the jurors. Those whom the prosecution calls as defendants are in reality from 'Al-Salaf Al-Saleh' (the righteous ancestors) and from the true believers who abide by the limits of Islam.

We will never accept their incrimination or any offense against them and our job is to clarify that to everyone in the courtroom and in the world. As much as we regret what happened to the family of the Holy Prophet (S) in Karbala, but what happened was only due to bad luck, poor judgment, and misunderstanding which the enemies of Islam contributed to.

Correspondent: My question is to the Defense lawyer. Sir, I am a Sunni Muslim and I don't understand

your statement that the defendants are from Al-Salaf Al-Saleh. They are surely not from the 'companions'. Also, not everyone who is from Al-Salaf (ancestors) is righteous or sanctified. So how do you ignore all these historical facts which were presented in the court and are cited the Islamic history books and which the Sunni world is considerably ignorant of?!

Yet you insist that the defendants are innocent?! If you continue to be stubborn on your position, then you are surely losing track of this case to the benefit of the prosecution! So what do you say about that?

Defense: Wait and you will see who will be victorious, for I am certain that we are on our way to victory! We do not claim that Al Salaf (ancestors) are the 'companions' of the Prophet or that they are infallible. However, we say that they are religious people even if some of them made a mistake, but it was not done intentionally.

Verily, no one is perfect and what happened in Karbala was due to mistakes and poor judgment from all, which led to that bloody scene. But it was not deliberate and so there was no crime committed nor do they deserve to stand as defendants! Nonetheless, mistakes did happen and those people with evil intentions took advantage of these mistakes to spark fire of war, mischief, and bloodshed which is to the benefit of the enemies of Islam.

Prosecutor: Allow me to say: leave this matter for the judges and jurors to make their judgment. Will they really accept this argument from the defense and ignore all the proofs, letters, and correspondences presented at court which clearly indicate a premeditated conspiracy to commit the crimes, or rather, the massacre in Karbala?! Here, I do not want to engage in a debate with the defense team outside the courtroom, but I only intend to leave this matter for the judges and jurors to decide.

Correspondent: My question is to Mr. Prosecutor. Sir, I agree with you totally regarding what you said in the courtroom about the order of the First defendant Yazid to send the women and children captives along with the severed heads of the martyrs to him in Damascus. This deed has no like in the history of humanity even with the most worst of criminals in history! But the question is: how did the nation accept that and how come they did not take a position against Yazid?

Also, what was the position of the rest of the companions of the prophet who were alive at the time? Why do we not see the majority of the Muslims today condemning Yazid for that decision?

Prosecution: Sir, that is due to oppression and the ruling authority which implements the policy of "the Ironed Fist" . Verily, all those who oppose or object will be prone to the wrath of the Caliph. And so any opponent would be killed, or persecuted, or denied his grants from the treasury house. Or his property would be confiscated or he would be assassinated.

This was the policy of Yazid's government which was similar to the government of his father before him, but with higher degree of aggression, less clemency, and recklessness that has no limit. Many of the

companions of the Prophet objected to the actions of Yazid, but it was a weak objection due to fear of aggression from the tyrant, especially after what he did with Al-Husayn (as) and the household of the Prophet (S).

As to the last part of your question, the Defense representative answered you when he stated that they consider them to be from Al Salaf Al Saleh (the righteous ancestors), and some of them even consider the First defendant to be from the companions of the Prophet!!

So how can they condemn him in anything when they have given him a guaranteed pass of innocence in advance from committing any crime or sin?! I will stop here since we have a lot of work ahead of us and I don't know if Mr. Defense representative would like to continue or not?

Defense: I agree with you, my colleague, we'll stop here and thank you all.

Wasalamu alaikum wa rahmatullah wa barakatuh...

(Everyone departs the conference hall while side conversations and discussions were taking place among the attendees).

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