

YOU WILL NOT REST
PEACEFULLY IN THE LANDS
OF ISLAM

As for the American administration, headed by the bearer of the banner of the cross, Bush—we say to him and to his followers, the Jews, the Crusaders, the Rafidite Shi'ites, the apostates, and others: You will not rest peacefully in the lands of Islam. By God, your life will be unbearable as long as blood flows in our veins and our eyes can see. . . . And today, with the grace of God, you seek the help of East and West, confused, exhausted, and broken, like someone whom "Satan has prostrated with his touch" (Qur'an 2:275).

"NEW VIDEO BY AL-QAEDA COMMANDER IN IRAQ ABU MUS'AB AL-ZARQAWI: SPECIAL DISPATCH SERIES NO. 1149." MIDDLE EAST MEDIA RESEARCH INSTITUTE. AVAILABLE FROM [HTTP://WWW.MEMRI.ORG](http://WWW.MEMRI.ORG).

Our [U.S. military's] own focus on Zarqawi has enlarged his caricature, if you will—made him more important than he really is, in some ways. . . . The long-term threat is not Zarqawi or religious extremists, but these former regime types and their friends.

COL. DEREK HARVEY, UNITED STATES ARMY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER, 2004. IN RICKS, THOMAS. "MILITARY PLAYS UP ROLE OF ZARQAWI," *WASHINGTON POST*, 10 APRIL 2006. AVAILABLE FROM [HTTP://WWW.WASHINGTONPOST.COM](http://WWW.WASHINGTONPOST.COM).

Shi'ite civil strife in Iraq through vicious attacks on Shi'ite civilians. Finally, his fight against the Americans and high-profile association with al-Qa'ida ironically served to stiffen the resolve of the American government to keep its forces in Iraq to prevent it becoming the breeding ground for a new generation of jihadists.

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Michael R. Fischbach

ZAWAWI, OMAR BIN ABD AL-MUNIM (1930–)

Omani businessman and political consultant Omar (Umar) bin Abd al-Munim Zawawi, one of the wealthiest private individuals in the Middle East, has been a leading figure in the economic development of the Sultanate of Oman since 1970 and a personal adviser on foreign policy matters to Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id Al 'Bu Sa'id since 1974.

PERSONAL HISTORY

Zawawi was born around 1930 in Karachi, British India (now Pakistan), where his father Abd al-Munim bin Yusuf served as purchasing agent for Sultan Sa'id bin Taymur, ruler of Masqat and Oman. His early education was in Bombay (now Mumbai), and his schooling continued in Beirut and then at Cairo University where he earned his medical degree. Upon graduation he practiced medicine for a time in Saudi Arabia. He later studied medical economics at Harvard University. Zawawi returned to Saudi Arabia where he turned his attention to business, establishing a close association with the prominent Saudi businessman Ghassan Shakir. Meanwhile, his younger brother Qais went to Kuwait, where he worked for the British Bank of the Middle East and then the British embassy before becoming regional manager for Pepsi-Cola in Dubai in the 1960s. Qais returned to Masqat in 1967 to reestablish the family business in Oman. Omar returned to Oman in 1971 to join his brother in the family business. The Zawawis, operating under the umbrella of the Omar Zawawi Establishment (the Omzest Group) holding company, quickly developed a wide range of businesses that played an active role in the economic development of Oman in the wake of the 1970 coup that brought Sultan Qaboos to power.

Zawawi's government service career began officially in 1974 when he became the sultan's special adviser for external liaison, a position that he continues to hold. He has also served on Oman's finance committee.

Despite his many successes, Omar has experienced some tragedy in his life. In July 1992 he overcame colon cancer, following surgery and subsequent chemotherapy at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. He also survived a September 1995 automobile accident in Dhufar when a car driven by Sultan Qaboos was struck by another vehicle. His brother Qais died in the accident, in which he and the sultan were both injured.

INFLUENCES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Zawawi's principal influence has been the Zawawi family tradition of commercial activity in combination with service to the Al 'Bu Sa'id royal family of Oman. This

BIOGRAPHICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Name: Omar bin Abd al-Munim Zawawi (Umar)

Birth: c. 1930, Karachi, British India

Family: Wife; one son, Walid; two daughters, Reem and Areej

Nationality: Omani

Education: India; Lebanon; Cairo University (Egypt); Harvard University

PERSONAL CHRONOLOGY:

- Earns medical degree, Cairo University
- Practices medicine in Saudi Arabia
- **1971:** Joins family business with brother
- **1974–present:** Special adviser to the sultan for foreign affairs

association dates perhaps to the early nineteenth century when a Muhammad al-Zawawi took up residence in Masqat, a refugee from the Sa'udi conquest of Hasa in eastern Arabia. Zawawi's grandfather, Yusuf bin Ahmad al-Zawawi, came to Muscat from Mecca in the later nineteenth century. He became one of the principal merchants of that port, a personal adviser to sultans Faysal bin Turki (1888–1913) and Taymur bin Faysal (1913–1932), and a supporter of religious works with the construction of the Zawawi mosque. His international contacts often resulted in his acting as an agent of the government abroad, most notably when he accompanied the Omani delegation under Crown Prince Taymur to the Delhi Durbar in December 1911 to celebrate the accession of King George V of England. Yusuf died in Ta'if, western Arabia, in 1927. Zawawi's father Abd al-Munim continued the Zawawi business interests, settling in India where he served as commercial agent for both sultans Taymur and Sa'id bin Taimur (1932–1970). He often accompanied Sultan Sa'id on his foreign travels.

Zawawi business interests grew rapidly with the economic development of the sultanate following the coup of 1970. During the 1970s and into the 1980s, Zawawi economic activities focused on distribution, construction, and management. Two Zawawi-owned companies, Zawawi Trading Company and Waleed Associates, held exclusive distribution rights for a number of important product lines, including Mercedes-Benz, General Electric, Mobil Oil, Xerox, 3M, IBM, Microsoft, major defense contractors Vosper Thornycroft (shipbuilding) and McDonnell Douglas (aeronautics), and hundreds more.

Zawawi also owned Qurum Contractors, which became one of the largest construction companies in Oman. Zawawi companies built the first schools, hospitals, the color television and the electrical and telephone systems in Oman. Zawawi also played a leading role in the formation of the companies that operated Oman's port and airport.

Zawawi's banking and finance activities date to the formation of the Oman Arab African Bank in January 1979 in partnership with the Cairo-based Arab African Bank (AAB). He served as deputy chairman of the board of that bank. In 1984 he bought out the AAB shares of the Oman Arab African Bank as well as fourteen branches of the British Bank of the Middle East in Oman to form Oman International Bank (OIB), the first wholly Omani-owned bank in the sultanate. He served as chairman of the board of OIB until 1996.

In addition to OIB, Zawawi financial services also included the Muscat Finance Company, which provides consumer loans, and Oman Securities Portfolio Company, founded in 1989 to provide stockbrokerage services. The latter was one of Zawawi's few failures as the company suffered major losses in Oman's stock market in 2001 and ceased operation in early 2002. Another Zawawi financial services company, Oman Insurance Company, founded in 1995, has been far more successful.

Manufacturing has become an increasingly important part of Zawawi business activities. As Oman began developing import replacement industries in the late 1970s, Zawawi's investments included Oman Flour Mills Company and Raysut Cement Company, followed by textile, footwear, glass product, paint, vegetable oil, battery, detergent, agricultural, and paper product factories. In 2003 Omzest undertook a major industrial development projects with the Oman Methanol Company in Suhar.

Zawawi has also been active in the service sector as well. Early activities included Meزون Travel and Waleed Pharmacy and then expanded to catering and business services. Most recently, he established Waljat College of Applied Sciences to provide technical training to the Omani workforce.

Zawawi business interests became international in 1992 when Omzest opened an office in Beijing to coordinate its business ties with China. The company also has holdings in Egypt in flour mills, in Methanol Holdings (Trinidad), the major producer of methanol in the Caribbean, and in 2006 formed a joint venture with the German electrical engineering and communications company Siemens.

THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE

Zawawi's international reputation derives only in part from his business interests. His brother Qais entered the Omani cabinet in December 1973 as minister of state for foreign affairs, and played a prominent role in government economic planning. Zawawi was appointed to

the finance committee, but quickly became the principal adviser on foreign affairs to the sultan. Even before becoming special adviser, he was instrumental, as a result of his relationship with Ghassan Shakir, in gaining recognition of Sultan Qaboos's government by the Saudis after the 1970 coup.

As special adviser, Zawawi has continued the family tradition of serving as the sultan's personal envoy when dealing with critical international issues. He accompanied Sultan Qaboos on his first visit to the United States in 1975, was responsible for negotiating diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in 1978, and in that same year led talks with the neighboring United Arab Emirates that eventually resulted in the settlement of long-disputed borders. Subsequent missions included trips to Egypt in the wake of President Anwar al-Sadat's peace treaty with Israel in 1979, which resulted in near universal condemnation in the rest of the Arab world; to China in 1990 in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait; and to Japan and Iran. Zawawi represented the sultan at the Arab foreign ministers' summit in Egypt in 2001 on the second Palestinian intifada. He has often represented Oman in talks with strategically and economically important countries.

LEGACY

Zawawi is a controversial figure. For some he is a primary example of the corruption at the highest levels in the Omani government, where state officials have parlayed their positions into lucrative contracts for their personal business interests. For others he has been the consummate public servant who has served the state well in representing Oman abroad and advising the sultan on international matters, while leading economic development in the country. Zawawi business interests do profit from both Zawawi brothers' connections with the government, and when conflict-of-interest statutes were implemented in the mid-1980s, Zawawi resigned from those positions deemed to be in potential violation. His business interests have brought great wealth. In 2004 the journal *Arabian Business* reported Omar's worth at \$415 million, making him the richest private individual in Oman and the forty-third richest man in the Middle East.

Perhaps Zawawi's greatest legacy will be the continuing role that his family will play in Omani affairs, as his three children all continue the family tradition of public service and economic development. His son Walid is a brigadier general in the Omani army and served as director of moral guidance for the armed forces, in addition to his involvement in Omzest's various operations; daughter Reem was the first woman to head a major Omani corporation when she became the chairperson of the board of Oman International Bank in 2002, and she serves on a

number of other boards. His daughter Areej earned a doctorate in education and directs a school in Jordan.

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ZINDANI, ABD AL-MAJID AL-(1938–)

Abd al-Majid al-Zindani has long been a key religious and political figure in Yemen. He is usually referred to as a "shaykh" in the religious sense of the term, and was instrumental in establishing the Yemeni Reform Grouping (al-Tajammu' al-Yamani li'l-Islah), better known simply as Islah, in 1990. He has also headed the party's Consultative Council since it was established that same year, and from 1993 to 1997 he was a member of the Republic of Yemen's ruling five-man presidential council. In 2004 the United States officially listed him as a terrorist for his alleged role as a terrorist recruiter and financier.

PERSONAL HISTORY

Al-Zindani was born in 1938 near the village of Ba'dan, east of the city of Ibb, 193 kilometers south of San'a, in what was then the Arab Republic of Yemen (North Yemen). Most of Ibb's inhabitants in the 1930s were Sunni Muslims of the Shafi'i school, unlike the Shi'ite Zaydi dynasty that then ruled the country. Al-Zindani claims to be a *naqili*, a scion of the northern Zaydi tribes that moved south with the Qasimi imams in the seventeenth century. This claim is significant in that it allows him superior status in Yemen's social hierarchy.

Al-Zindani spent his primary years in school in Ibb, before moving to the southern port city of Aden, then under British rule, to continue his studies. This was a fairly common practice during the 1940s and 1950s, as a host of Yemeni intellectuals, students, and workers moved back and forth between the two areas. In the mid-1950s he traveled to Cairo to pursue a degree in pharmacology at Ayn Shams University. But like many students at the time, he soon gave that up in favor of Islamic studies at al-Azhar in the late 1950s. He returned to Yemen, before completing his studies, soon after the revolution broke out in 1962. He never pursued another academic degree. This lack of qualifications is sometimes used by his better-credentialed religious colleagues to smear him in the Arabic press.