

• [Sheik Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi](#) (1928 - 2010) - Was Grand Imam of Al-Azhar University, Cairo 1996-2010. [Grand Mufti](#) of Egypt 1986-1996. Head of the Tafsir (Koranic Commentary) Department of the University of Medina, Saudi Arabia 1980-1984. In 11/2009 The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Center in Jordan and Georgetown University's Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding released a book featuring the world's [500 most influential](#) Muslims where Tantawi was #5, but note 1, 3, and 4 are not sharia scholars or jurists, they are politicians, so you could say he is the 2nd most influential sharia scholar or jurist in the world, or highest Sunni:

"A group of researchers investigated who are the most visibly influential Muslims out there," said Professor John Esposito, who co-authored of the book. "The issue is not how orthodox they are. The criterion is how influential these people are in their particular area."

- 1) Saudi King Abdullah
- 2) Iran's Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei - (Shia)
- 3) Jordans King Abdullah II
- 4) Turkish Premier Erdogan
- 5) Al-Azhar Grand Imam of Al-Azhar University, Sheik Tantawi (Sunni) (died 2010).
- 6) Sheik Qaradawi (Sunni)
- 7) Egyptian Grand Mufti Ali Gom'a (Sunni)

[BBC said](#) he "is acknowledged as the highest spiritual authority for nearly a billion Sunni Muslims". Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's [press statement](#) after he died praised him as "an important voice for dialogue among religions".

With the clueless Bush 2 advisor Karen Hughes [in 2005](#), 2 years after he ruled for martyrdom operations against all Israeli men, women, and children, and Coalition forces in Iraq:



1966 - Tantawi's wrote his 700 page Ph.D. thesis, *Banu Israil fi al-Quran wa-al-Sunnah* (*Jews in the Koran and the Traditions*), was published around 1970, then reissued in 1986/87. In it he said:

"Qur'an describes the Jews with their own particular degenerate characteristics, i.e. killing the prophets of Allah, corrupting His words by putting them in the wrong places, consuming the people's wealth frivolously, refusal to distance themselves from the evil they do, and other ugly characteristics caused by their deep-rooted lasciviousness... only a minority of the Jews keep their word....All Jews are not the same. The good ones become Muslims, the bad ones do not." (*Qur'an 3:113*) [Legacy of Islamic Antisemitism](#)

Also in his thesis "*The Sons of Israel in the Koran and in the Muslim Hadith Tradition*," Tantawi explains the Jews' transformation into apes and pigs in the Koran. He devotes a chapter to the various ways Allah punished the Jews, among them changing their form. In explaining Koran verse [5:60](#), Tantawi says that the Jews asked the Prophet

Muhammad what prophets he believed in. The Prophet enumerated Abraham, Ishmail, Isaac, Jacob, the tribes [sic], Moses, and Jesus, and said that he did not differentiate between them. At the mention of Jesus, the Jews denied his prophecy, saying: "We do not believe in Jesus or anyone who believes in Him [that is, Muhammad himself], and we do not think our religion is worse than yours." Against this backdrop, the Koran clarified the evil of the religion of the Jews, whom "Allah cursed and against whom He was wroth, and He turned some of them into apes and pigs." (Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, *"The Sons of Israel in the Koran and Muslim tradition,"* Cairo: Dar Al-Shurouq, Second Edition (2000), pp. 695-697.) ([MEMRI](#))

1997/98 - That scholarly 700 page work was part of the resume that got him appointed Grand Imam at Al-Azhar U. Shortly afterwards, he met in Cairo with the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Israel Lau. Here is an example of Tantawi's responses in a Q & A to the Muslim criticism directed against him afterwards:

Question: "Why didn't such a meeting take place in the past? Why did the former Sheik of Al-Azhar refuse to hold such a meeting, but you agreed?"

Tantawi: "By doing what I did I followed the way of the Prophet [Muhammad] who met with the Jews and held a dialogue with them. So when I am telling you about the Prophet, don't talk to me about 'so-and-so'. The Prophet's stance, which is my own stance as well, was that anyone who avoids meeting with the enemies in order to counter their dubious claims and stick fingers into their eyes, is a coward. My stance stems from Allah's book [the Koran], more than one-third of which deals with the Jews. You should know that you are interviewing a person who wrote a dissertation dealing with them [the Jews], all their false claims and their punishment by Allah. I still believe in everything written in that dissertation." [his Ph.D. thesis]

Question: "What is your position regarding the religious ruling from 1966 by the Islamic Research Center that forbids meeting with the rabbis of the Jews?"

Tantawi: "I have the right to oppose this. I think that whoever refuses to meet the enemy in order to slap him on the face is a coward, as long as the meeting in question serves Islam. I met with him in order to answer his dubious claims and tell him that Jerusalem is Arab."

Question: "Are the Jews convinced by these arguments?"

Tantawi: "When he [Rabbi Lau] said to me: 'In our holy book Jerusalem is mentioned five hundred times,' I answered: 'And our book [The Koran] also—more than one-third of it deals with the Israelites, exposes their false claims, their atrocities, and the punishments Allah imposed on them for their oppression and wrong doing.' All this I told him."

"The meeting with Lau cannot be seen as normalization because normalization means our surrender to the enemy. However, when the Sheik of Al-Azhar meets with them [the Jews] he influences and is not influenced, he orders and is not being ordered. When I

meet the Rabbi or someone else my purpose is to stress the fact, that Jerusalem is Islamic and Arab, no matter what they do. Jerusalem will remain Islamic, with Allah's help. ([MEMRI](#))

4/2002 - In a weekly sermon called the Jews "the enemies of Allah, descendants of apes and pigs." ([MEMRI](#))

4/4/02 - Al-Azhar report: Sheik demands to intensify martyrdom operations against any Israeli, including women, children, and teenagers:

"The great Imam of Al-Azhar Sheikh Muhammad Sayyed Tantawi, demanded that the Palestinian people, of all factions, intensify the martyrdom operations [i.e. suicide attacks] against the Zionist enemy, and described the martyrdom operations as the highest form of Jihad operations. [Tantawi] says that the young people executing them have sold Allah the most precious thing of all. emphasized that every martyrdom operation against any Israeli, including children, women, and teenagers, is a legitimate act according to [Islamic] religious law, and an Islamic commandment..." ([MEMRI](#))

3/2003 - After the invasion of Iraq, Tantawi and the Egyptian Information Minister made a series of confusing statements about suicide operations and jihad against Coalition forces in Iraq. His last in a series of statements left no doubt:

4/5/2003 - Tantawi called on the Iraqi people to

"continue its Jihad in defense of religion, faith, honor, and property, because Jihad is a religious law of Islam aimed at opposing aggressors. It is the right of the Iraqis to carry out any operation in defense of their homeland, whether martyrdom operations [i.e. suicide operations] or [by] any other means." Sheikh Tantawi encouraged volunteers from Arab and Islamic countries to go to Iraq "to support the Jihad..." (full report: [MEMRI](#))

4/6/2003 - Tantawi again called for Jihad against the allied forces:

Jihad is an obligation for every Muslim when Muslim countries are subject to aggression. This is an obligation applying to the nation now, in order to respond to the aggression..."

8/19/2004 - "Anyone who ... blows himself up amongst these aggressive soldiers, is a Shahid" ([MEMRI TV](#)) ([alternate link](#))

9/14/2011 - Tantawi gives this ambiguous statement after 9/11:

“Attacking innocent people is not courageous, it is stupid and will be punished on the day of judgement. ... It’s not courageous to attack innocent children, women and civilians.” (more ambiguous statements by others [here](#))

What is the meaning of the word innocent? He already said women and children in Israel are not innocent.