

Islam and Hizb ut-Tahrir's activities in Crimea¹, Ukraine

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The work highlights the role of Hizb ut-Tahrir, an international religious organization, in Crimea, Ukraine. The essay focuses on Hizb ut-Tahrir's contribution to the revival of Islam in Crimea. Within Hizb ut-Tahrir focus, the work gives general trends of modern Islamic developments in Crimea. It also reviews the rebirth of Islamic literacy among Muslims and the factors that affected further dissemination of Islam in Crimea. The author argues that such Islamic organizations as Hizb ut-Tahrir have influenced the increase in Islamic literacy among Crimean Muslims. Spiritual Administration of Crimean Muslims also plays an important role in keeping alive Muslim rituals and practices such as wedding and funeral traditions.

The paper is based on interviews with Crimean politicians and Crimean Muslims. The essay concentrates mainly on the importance of Islam among Crimean Muslims and the revival of Islamic fundamentalism in Crimea.

Unlike some of the European countries, Ukrainian legislature is quite liberal to Hizb ut-Tahrir and some other Islamic movements that are acknowledged as radical are not banned in Ukraine. The research examines the consolidation and rise of Islam among Crimean Tatars and at the same time, it reviews the opposite trend of Islamic radicalization and loss of democratic traditions in some of the Islamic movements.

Background of Islam in Crimea

Crimean Islam was revived after Crimean Tatars returned to their homeland. Prior to that all shrines were demolished or used for other purposes. The mufti of Crimean Muslims

¹ Crimea (Autonomous Republic of Crimea) is a peninsula in Ukraine. Three dominant ethnic groups that inhabit Crimea are Russians, Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars. Crimean Tatars are native people in Crimea that had their own state (Crimean khanate) that existed from 1441 to 1783. After Russian Empire's annexation of Crimea in 1783, Crimean khanate was exterminated. In 1944 Crimean Tatars were deported to Central Asia by Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin. Repatriation process commenced in late 1980-s.

claims that only forty-six out of two hundred and sixty-eight religious buildings have been returned to Crimean Tatars². However, the republican committee on religion asserts that almost all mosques have been given back to Crimean Tatars³.

Still a tremendous amount of Crimean Tatars does not understand the Arabic words of the prayers they memorize; many do not visit mosques and do not keep to obligation to do a ritual prayer *salah* five times a day. Nevertheless, a big number of Crimean Tatars is becoming more religious as Islam is a main consolidator during interethnic conflicts that occur in Crimea. Muslims catchwords as *Allah aqbar* (Lord is great) are reiterated during the protests and demonstrations. It is considered that Turkey is the country that affects most of all Crimean Islam⁴ but now other Islamic movements are becoming active in Crimea. There are a lot of different religious communities. Some are charitable like Ar-Raid^{5, 6} that has Sunday school and teaches Arabic language and introduction to Islam.

In Ukraine Islam mostly prevails in Crimea but it is also spread in other regions. There are four spiritual administrations of Ukrainian Muslims with the biggest one situated in Crimea. By May 1, 2007, there were three hundred and sixty-six various Islamic and four hundred and thirty-five orthodox religious organizations. During the period of Ukraine's independence, seventy-three mosques have been built in Crimea.⁷

There have been several tensions between Crimean Muslims and Crimean authorities. An acute conflict happened in November in the village of Golubinka. The orthodox community was going to construct an orthodox church on a hill but the remains of

² Interview with Crimean Mufti given to an American PhD student Bill Varettoni and to the author as an interpreter July 4, 2007

³ UNDP (United Nations Development Program) report on situation in Crimea, May 2007 – p.24-25

⁴ This stance was reiterated many times, for example, the speech of the leader of Crimean communists Leonid Grach at <http://www.regnum.ru/news/959626.html>

⁵ Ar-Raid is guided by sheikh Usuf al-Karavady, Feysal Maulavy and European research council. Ar-Raid has other important connections with some transnational Islamic organizations and with a number of charitable organizations of Persian Gulf countries that serve as donors. Ar-Raid is not a religious community or organization and it is not considered officially as an object of state policy concerning religious issues. It does not deal with the republican committee on religious issues. Ar-Raid distributes the most popular Crimean Muslim newspaper "Arraid" that is published in Russian with print run of 20,000 copies.

⁶ A.V. Bogomolov, S.I. Danilov, I.N. Semivolos, G.M. Yavorskaya. Islamic Identity in Ukraine. "Stilos", 2006 (A.B. Богомолов, С.И. Данилов, И.Н. Семиволос, Г.М. Яворская. Исламская идентичность в Украине. «Стилос», 2006 г.)

⁷ UNDP (United Nations Development Program) report on situation in Crimea, May 2007 – p.23

Crimean Tatar cemetery were found on this hill⁸. Therefore Crimean Tatars protested to prevent authorities from building a church on that sacred place.

Other conflicts include the issue of constructing the cathedral-like mosque in the capital city of Crimea Simferopol. The Crimean Muslims intend building a big mosque in the outskirts of the Crimean capital city of Simferopol but the piece of land was allocated in a different spot which caused protest among Crimean Tatars. The problem is still not solved.

The introduction of the course 'orthodox religion' in Crimean schools⁹ was disputed in the society and vandalism of at least two Muslim cemeteries has recently occurred.

In the end of the year 2008 the members of Crimean Parliament voted in favor of demanding Ukrainian government to give the permission to legalize a Muslim religious festival of Eid al-Adha, a festival of sacrifice or "Greater Bairam" in Crimean Autonomous Republic.

Crimean Muslims are unique – there are very strict believers who do not eat pork and moderate Muslims, who eat pork and joke that they asked God for forgiveness before eating it. There are Muslims who wear headscarves and those who openly state that they hate people in headscarves, and argue that it is an Arabic custom that is inappropriate for Crimean Tatars who are secular. There are those who pray daily and those who do not understand what praying is for. You can find those who fast only for several days and then give up, and those who fast during Ramadan plus additionally several times a month. For some Muslims Islamic traditions are alive only at weddings and funerals, for others Islam is a daily routine. Nevertheless, all described above types of people consider themselves Muslims, they call themselves proudly Muslims, and those who are still single, want to get married only to Muslims.

Sometimes one single family can consist of strict believers and moderate Muslims.

A Muslim French teacher, a woman in her mid-sixties, has a young son, who is a strict believer. A woman always complains that she cannot even drink wine in his presence,

⁸ Leonid Ivanov. Crimean authorities made up another way of blood-shedding in Bakhchesaray. - Ukraine today, - October 27, 2006 –

http://www.ua-today.com/modules/myarticles/article_storyid_4371.html (Леонид Иванов. Крымские начальники придумали, как еще раз пролить кровь на бахчисарайской земле).

⁹ Russkaya liniya. Eight thousands of Crimean high school students take the course "The basis of orthodox culture". - December 27, 2007 - <http://www.rusk.ru/st.php?idar=174921> (Русская линия. В Крыму восемь тысяч учащихся изучают курс «Основы православной культуры»).

and he asks her not to celebrate New Year. She, on the other hand, can't understand "How can I not celebrate New Year! It is such a great holiday". Her son does all the fasting not only during Ramadan but also several times a month; he does ritual prayer five times a day. But it does not prevent him from working, like it happens with some believers who manage to pray all day long and work only fifteen minutes a day. At the same time, a young man runs successfully his own business.

It has become popular among some Crimean Tatars to teach their little children surahs from Qur'an or duas, prayers of supplication. As a little kid, I myself learnt a dua by heart with the help of my uncle. Nine years later when I took my first Arabic class, I discovered that my pronunciation in Arabic was completely wrong, and what is more important, I finally found out what all those odd sounds meant in my native language. I could find out that the dua was about Allah's oneness, the concept that he has never given birth and was not born. Ten years later the same uncle taught his 4-year old grandson, whose name is Madjit, several duas. A young boy does not understand their meaning but it does not prevent him from joyfully reciting them in front of big audiences. Once Madjit spilled the beans telling me that there were angels around each person that take notes of his or her good deeds. Shortly after St. Nicholas day, he was very upset by the fact that St. Nicholas did not bring him any presents.

Hizb ut-Tahrir in Crimea, Ukraine

Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami, which means "party of liberation", was founded by Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, a judge of local Shariat Court of Appeals, in Jerusalem in 1953. Its current leader is Ata'abu Rishta. It claims to have about 1 million of members¹⁰. Its main goal is to create caliphate or a united worldwide Islamic state¹¹ (it concerns only states where Muslim population prevails, Ukraine falls out of this group).

¹⁰ Umm Mustafa. Why I left Hizb ut-Tahrir. New Statesman, - February 28, 2008
<http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2008/02/party-hizb-tahrir-members>

¹¹ The official website of Hizb ut-Tahrir in the UK - <http://www.hizb.org.uk/hizb/who-is-ht.html>

There are from seven to ten thousands of Hizb ut-Tahrir members and followers in Crimea according to the data of law-enforcement bodies.¹² However, the committee on religion's estimate of Hizb ut-Tahrir members is from five to six thousands. Mustafa Djemilev, the head of Crimean Tatar Mejlis¹³, thinks "There are 500-600 wahabis in Crimea. Among them 70-80 people are active members and the rest are gapers"¹⁴. Refat Chubarov, the first deputy head of Mejlis, also does not agree that there can be seven thousands of Hizb ut-Tahrir followers in Crimea.¹⁵

The number of people affiliated with Hizb ut-Tahrir gradually increases in the world as well. For instance, it is said that the organization has approximately from four to five people in every big German university¹⁶.

The organization was going to be registered as a political party in Ukraine ("hizb" means party in Arabic), which was strongly opposed by Crimean mufti Emirali Ablayev. It is still not registered but it is said to cooperate with "The Party of Ukrainian Muslims" which originates in Donetsk, an industrial city with large Muslim population in Eastern Ukraine. In addition, some Ukrainian and Crimean newspapers write that Hizb ut-Tahrir works "half-legally". This can be associated with the fact that instead of registering itself, the party registers religious Islamic communities that are in reality submitted to Hizb ut-Tahrir. However, Crimean Verkhovna Rada¹⁷ intends to ban this organization. The bill was going to be put on its agenda in April, 2008.¹⁸ However, Crimean government has no power to ban this organization as Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada did not delegate such authority to Crimea.¹⁹ Anatoliy Gritsenko, the head of Crimean Verkhovna Rada, asserts that the party is banned in more than forty countries of the world that's why such a radical organization should no

¹² Ivan Samohvalov. Crimean Members of Parliament suggest banning "Hizb ut-Tahrir". - Newspaper "Sobytia", - # 13 (155), April 4, 2008 (Иван Самохвалов. Крымские депутаты предлагают запретить «Хизб-ут Тахрир». Газета «События». - # 13 (115), 4 Апреля 2008)

¹³ Mejlis is a representative body for the Crimean Tatars

¹⁴ Interview with Mustafa Djemilev given an American PhD student Bill Varettoni and to the author as an interpreter July 26, 2007

¹⁵ Ivan Samohvalov. Op. cit

¹⁶ Claudia Dantschke. Unabh ngige Zellen ohne zentrale Steuerung, Die Welt. - Zentrum Demokratishce Kultur (ZDK), September 5, 2006 - www.zentrum-demokratische-kultur.de/_obj/5D22746F-5C9A-428C-BFEF-1672D6E61789/outline/hizbut.pdf

¹⁷ Verkhovna Rada – is a unicameral parliament in Ukraine, Crimean Autonomous Republic has its own Verkhovnaya Rada.

¹⁸ Ivan Samohvalov. Op.cit

¹⁹ Valentina Samar. Issue on "jihade of the word". Newspaper "Dzerkalo Tyzdnia" # 13 (692) April 5-11, 2008 (Валентина Самар. Справа про «джихад слова». Дзеркало тижня № 13 (692) 5-11 квітня 2008 р.)

longer exist in Crimea²⁰. Although Mejlis opposed this organization as well, its first deputy head Refat Chubarov insists that Crimean authorities do not fight against extremism, in reality they merely want to increase their own popularity.²¹

Hizb ut-Tahrir and Spiritual Administration of Muslims in Crimea

The party does not need the permission of the Crimean Mufti for the registration as republic committee on religion can legalize it²². The Spiritual Administration of Muslims in Crimea considers it a wahabi organization and strongly opposes it. So do the Ukrainian Security Services that have had the history of persecuting the Hizb ut-Tahrir members (among them there were students who study in one of Simferopol universities). In August 2004 Spiritual Administration of Crimean Muslims fired Mustafa-efendi (Ruslan Mustafayev) - a 23-year old imam of Kebir-Djami mosque in Simferopol for his alleged cooperation with Hizb ut-Tahrir.²³ Arabic language tutor from Islamic community "Battal Chelibi" that works under the auspices of Crimean Mufti institution was also fired due to his alleged affiliation with Hizb ut-Tahrir.²⁴

Crimean mufti Emirali Ablayev has had a long history of tensions with three other Spiritual Administrations. Some conflicts are affiliated with receiving invitations for obligatory to all Muslims pilgrimage. He does not acknowledge Ahmad Tamim, the head of Spiritual Administration of Ukrainian Muslims, calling him a foreigner and illegitimate Mufti as he was not elected and approved by all Muslims of Ukraine, he represents only one part of Ukrainian Muslim population. Emirali Ablayev deems necessary to hold an all-Ukrainian congress where a genuine Mufti will be elected to unite all Muslims, and all Spiritual Administration would be accountable to him. Crimean Mufti strongly opposes Hizb ut-

²⁰ Ivan Samohvalov. Op. cit

²¹ Op. cit

²² Unlike Muslims communities, Orthodox religious organizations must receive Crimean Bishop's approval before registering as a religious community.

²³ Igor Rudenko-Minih. Who creates Crimean Caliphate? –

http://www.business-politika.net/halifat_in_crimea.php (Игорь Руденко-Миних. Кто строит крымский халифат?)

²⁴ Arzy Emirova. Private communication – April, 2008

Tahrir²⁵: "Hizb ut-Tahrir is a political party, not religious. There is no such a thing as a political party in Islam. They just use the name of Islam. It is interesting that the authorities do not consider Hizb ut-Tahrir a threat or a harmful organization. The mufti institution was against its registration but when these people registered in the republican committee on religion, they did not say they were members of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Some of the Crimean politicians are interested in increasing Hizb ut-Tahrir's popularity. We wanted to make a law that would prohibit registering such radical groups but we have no right to do this. Hizb ut-Tahrir publishes a newspaper called "Vozrojdenie" ("Renaissance"). We wrote a letter to the committee on information and mass media where we asked not to register this newspaper. We filed a lawsuit but Crimean Public Prosecutor's office sent in an appeal. Our imam worked in the mosque in Alushta. This imam graduated from our madrasah, and then unexpectedly we found out that he was a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir. After the mosque was restored, the members of Hizb ut-Tahrir changed the keys there. We also had a photo of them breaking the door, we sent it to the police but they did not take any actions because they know what kind of organization Hizb ut-Tahrir is. We know that the law enforcement bodies neither support, nor defend us."

This speech proves that the Spiritual Administration of Muslims in Crimea not only opposes Hizb ut-Tahrir calling it an extremist organization but it also accuses the law enforcement bodies of not undertaking necessary actions against this party, although law-enforcement bodies do persecute the members of this radical organization, as a result they have to hide, most of its members do not reveal openly their membership, they are afraid to be interviewed, and they have to conduct their activities half-legally.

Crimean journalist Valentina Samar argues that Hizb ut-Tahrir exists in Crimea in order to destabilize the interethnic situation in Crimea²⁶: "Hizb ut-Tahrir is always active before the elections. Its activities affect Crimean Tatars as then anti-Tatar forces declare that Crimean Tatars are dangerous extremists".

In reality Hizb ut-Tahrir does appear every time right before the elections. The organization steps out and there is no news about it for some period of time and then after

²⁵ Interview with Crimean Mufti. Op. cit

²⁶ Interview with Valentina Samar given an American PhD student Bill Varettoni and to the author as an interpreter, July 30, 2007

some hiatus it turns up to be the main newsmaker. As it happened in 2004 during the Presidential elections when Hizb ut-Tahrir's notorious press-conference took place in Simferopol during which it condemned the abuse of Muslims rights in the U.S. After the press conference, Abduseliam Seliametov, the member of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Crimea was detained and accused of violating some administrative rules. There is also a widespread perspective that Russian government pursues its own interests by using Hizb ut-Tahrir's destabilizing potential and it might even fund and support this party politically. Refat Chubarov, in his interview to news agency "Kontekst-media", Chubarov asserts that some foreign country funds the organization, he even assumes that financial assistance comes from Russia²⁷.

Hizb ut-Tahrir does not reveal its leadership and sometimes the members of one cell do not know the members of other cells, which is favorable for the party's security as it is illicit in many countries. Abduseliam Seliametov can be probably called informal leader of this organization in Crimea as he is the one who usually makes public speeches and gives interviews. He was also brought to trial after one of the Hizb ut-Tahrir's press conferences. He has been reiterating for a long time that Hizb ut-Tahrir does nothing else except enlightening people in Crimea.²⁸

Mejlis opposes radical Islam

Mustafa Djemilev, the head of Mejlis is also concerned that Hizb ut-Tahrir might cause instability in Crimea:²⁹ "First of all wahabis and Hizb ut-Tahrir threaten stability in Crimea. A lot depends on their funding. I can't say that their influence is increasing due to Mejlis' efforts. They tried to take over the mosques by appointing imams who were members of their party. Mejlis had to make an announcement according to which all

²⁷ Crimean news. Refat Chubarov thinks that financial assistance for Hizb ut-Tahrir's activities in Crimea comes from Russia – April 7, 2008 - <http://news.allcrimea.net/news/2008/4/7/1207553836/> (Рефат Чубаров считает, что деятельность исламской партии «Хизб ут-Тахрир» финансируется из России).

²⁸ Novy region. The party Hizb ut-Tahrir was plotting seizure of hostages in Tumen region. – October 25, 2004 - <http://pda.nr2.ru/crimea/6393.html> (Новый регион. Партия «Хизб ут-Тахрир готовила захват заложников в Тюменской области»).

²⁹ Interview with Mustafa Djemilev. Op. cit

mosques submitted to Mejlis and Mejlis appointed imams along with the Spiritual Administration of Crimean Muslims. Recently Hizb ut-Tahrir has had a conference, their arguments and speeches were not sound. The speakers were not competent and well educated, according to them Muslim rights were violated after caliphate had been dissolved. It is ridiculous. Caliphate was dissolved after the Kemal revolution, due to which Turkey became an independent state. Members of Hizb ut-Tahrir have no logical thinking; they interpret things as they want. Creating caliphate is nonsense nowadays. They do not recognize such things as nation, ethnicity, and native language. Caliphate implies having Arabic language as official. We just got rid of Russian imperialism and they want to enforce caliphate.”

Despite the fact that half of the female students in Oriental Languages Department in one of the biggest universities in Crimea wear headscarves, in many cases, most of the young women in hijabas hardly have any education except high school diploma. Consequently, they are unemployed, first of all, because of not having a university degree, and secondly, although Ukraine is a religiously tolerant country in contrast to some other countries, even employers, who are unbiased and tolerant toward a Muslim woman in European clothes, are not likely to hire a woman in a headscarf in first place. Generally, such women have more than two children, therefore they tend to stay at home and be housewives. But there are rumors that these women simply do not need to work as they are paid for wearing a hijab. Nevertheless, many of them still engage in learning Arabic language at such Arabic centers as Ar-Raid. Mostly a family, marriage or environment influence a woman’s decision to wear a hijab Centers similar to Ar-Raid may also affect such a decision. Ira, 22, is a Ukrainian from Donetsk, who converted into Islam after getting married to a Lebanese. However, she did not wear a hijab until she first found herself in Ar-Raid to get enrolled to an Arabic class. All women were wearing headscarves and she felt very embarrassed without a head cover. That day she had only a small scarf that she tried to put on her head to reveal her embarrassment. Now adheres to all Islamic laws, such as wearing a headscarf, she buys and eats only halal³⁰ meat, and complains that the woman

30 Halal in Arabic means things that are permissible to use according to Islamic law

who sells halal meat insists on being a Muslim without wearing a headscarf, which is the main reason why she sells bad meat.

Conference: "Islam: yesterday, today and tomorrow"³¹

Every summer Hizb ut-Tahrir and Crimean Muslim organization "Davet" that is accountable to Hizb ut-Tahrir and might even be one of its cells organize annual conferences. One of them took place in summer of 2007 in Simferopol.

The goal of the conference was to discuss establishing world caliphate and negative influence of western values on individual people and humanity.

About six hundred people participated in this conference, plus there were newspaper and TV-journalists. It is important to draw attention to gender segregation during the conference itself and after it – during the press conference. Male and female participants, which include journalists as well, were separated. All men were sitting in the very front right opposite the stage and all women were located in the back.

Not long ago a popular joke circulated in Baku, Azerbaijan, which said that even Osama bin Laden would not be able to put yashmak on an Azeri girl. But after the head of the Spiritual Administration of Azeri Muslims proclaimed that former President Geidar Aliev is God and Prophet,³² the situation can dramatically change. You will not see a lot of women wearing veils in Crimea but it is also important to emphasize on the number of women, young women who were wearing hijab during the conference. Almost every woman at the conference except female journalists was in this traditional Muslim clothing that covers your head and body. Those without hijab were standing out among these women in headscarves. Some men even scorned women who were wearing ordinary clothes on a hot 30 degrees Celsius summer day.

It was even more surprising that such a gender segregation happened during a secular press conference as well. The same situation – male journalists were in the front while their female counterparts had to take their seats in the very back of the room. A few

³¹ Conference took place in Simferopol, Crimea on August 12, 2007

³² Sergey Markedonov. Azerbaijan: Islamic threat to a confessional harmony, - May 29, 2008 - <http://www.polit.ru/author/2008/05/29/azerb.html> (Сергей Маркедонов. Азербайджан: исламистская угроза конфессиональной гармонии)

men joined in protest their female colleagues in the back. Hizb ut-Tahrir and Davet representatives immediately condemned this action. It seemed as if they were going to force these men to take their proper seats. But they did nothing and the press conference continued.

Three speakers made speeches during the conference. All speeches were quite emotional, the speakers condemned Western values, democracy and freedom. They made negative comments on capitalism and Western world, which "does everything to harm Muslims and Islam". The organizers also showed an impressive movie on how Muslims have been oppressed throughout their history. It contained intense video shots of Balkan, Iraqi and Afghanistan wars where thousands of Muslims were killed. It affected spectators, some women were even sitting and crying.

Here is a brief summary of what the speakers were talking about during the conference.

"Dissolution of caliphate will result in the following: capitalist states will colonize poor countries. It is true for all people – both Muslims and non-Muslims. Capitalist countries rob third world countries and cause conflicts there. The equality of men and women, different kinds of freedom are the most important values in the west. At the same time, western countries oppress Muslims in Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. Western ideology harms and causes misery.

Non-existence of caliphate resulted in perversity, immorality and vice. Western values are recognized as the only right values. This idea causes much suffering. Individual freedoms, freedom of speech, democracy are considered to be the right values in western states, which proves that these countries have become even more narrow-minded than animals.

Establishment of caliphate will result in unity of all Muslims. Establishment of caliphate is an obligation for all Muslims." (Ayazov Fazyl – alumnus of Azovski madrasah)

"The main criterion of fairness in capitalist countries is making good things and not harming people. But people have different criteria for good things. You can not say exactly what is good and what is bad. Western countries cause many troubles. Alcoholism, drug

addiction has always been part of capitalist societies.” (Kantuganskiy Ruslan – doctor, member of Hizb ut-Tahrir)

“Islamic ideology does not imply colonizing other people or countries. When Muslims reigned in Jerusalem, Jews practiced their own religion. Muslims collected taxes from Jews in order to defend them. Before the war with Byzantium, Muslims returned all taxes to Jews, saying that they could defend them no longer. Jews asked them to win the war with Byzantium and to come back, because the Byzantine government would never be so fair and would never return them their money.” (Kadyrov Elvin – imam of Ukrary-Djami mosque)

During the conference, the presenters mentioned an Islamic development project in which there is room both for Muslims and non-Muslims. In other words this Islamic development project is another form of caliphate that should be established in Ukraine as well, according to Hizb ut-Tahrir. Although the leadership asserts that the organization is interested in keeping peace in Crimea.

It is understandable that Hizb ut-Tahrir does not acknowledge itself as a Wahabi organization. But it is still not clear whether it positions itself as a Sunni or Shii. At the conference, they stated that Muslims should not consider themselves Sunni or Shii. They should not be separated on such bases. For Hizb ut-Tahrir Muslims are equal, they should be united. All these Sunni and Shii things are political games, affiliated with confrontations in Muslim countries.

Although Hizb ut-Tahrir was initially founded as a political party, it is not going to run in elections because Ukraine is not a Muslim country, although Hizb ut-Tahrir is a political party that has supporters and headquarters in the whole world. According to the party rules, it can ally with all organizations. But Crimean hub is not going to do so as their main weapon is thoughts and ideas. Politics in Islam is different from politics in democratic countries. There is no other God except Allah. It means that no one has a right to legislate. Hizb ut-Tahrir activities comprise activities in Muslim countries and non-Muslim ones where they only enlighten people and do not intrude into politics. The organization acknowledges the rights of other people, for according to Qur'an non-Muslims have right to live in Muslim countries, they have the same rights as Muslims do.

In spite of allegedly being a peaceful enlightening organization, the members expressed their attitude toward jihadi fighters as positive. In Islam a jihadi fighter is a person who innocently dies for his/her religion, protecting Islamic values. Islam forbids harming other people but it allows defending propriety and honor. Therefore Hizb ut-Tahrir approves of jihadi fighters actions.

Conference “Allah Messenger’s *Hijra*”³³

This conference took place in Simferopol in March, 2008. As well as 2007 conference it was carried out by Crimean Muslim community “Davet” that is said to be affiliated with Hizb ut-Tahrir. During the conference, the following presentations were made: “The purpose of Allah messenger’s *hijra*”, “Allah messenger – a politician”. And also another documentary film called “Uyanuv” (“Awakening”) was shown. Unlike the previous film, this one was produced in Crimea. After watching this movie, it seemed like Hizb ut-Tahrir has changed their strategy in Crimea. If the previous movie shown at last year conference was mainly about establishing Caliphate, this one is mainly on development of Islam in Crimea and history of Crimean Tatar people. Last year movie was in Russian; in some parts it contained English subtitles, whereas this year movie is completely in Crimean Tatar language with Russian subtitles. Like other religious Muslim movies, it starts with sura from Qur’an. After it, a man is shown sitting on the hill and thinking about plight and hardships of Crimean Tatars. He wonders why his people have lost their religion, language, culture. Then Crimean Tatar protests of 1990-s in Bakhchesaray, Yalta and Simferopol are shown. Then go the clashes at Bakhchesaray market place (summer 2006). After which goes the Ay-Petry conflict of 2007 when Crimean Tatar houses built on squatted land were damaged by law enforcement bodies. The movie states that Crimean Tatars have experienced deprivation, hardships for two centuries. Nowadays the threat of assimilation jeopardizes their existence. The movie gives flashbacks of Crimean Tatar history going back to the times of Ottoman

33 A migration of Prophet Muhammad and some of his supports to Medina in 622.

Empire and Crimean Khanate. It asserts that Crimean Tatars experienced the worst times during Russian Empire. The movie-makers blame one of the last Crimean khans Shagine-Guiray (reign 1776-1778) for his desire to live as a European. They also state that Crimean Tatars are Muslims, so European lifestyle and values are not applicable to them. The authors of the movie scornfully quote Refat Chubarov's speech on democratic development of Crimean Tatars. The authors deny democracy arguing that it causes only degradation and loss of values. They condemn young girls who "go out half-naked, wear short skirts, drink alcohol".

It is also stated that 150,000 Crimean Tatars left Crimea for Ottoman Empire in 1917 because living in Caliphate was the only way of protecting Muslims religion. The other reason was that *mullahs* and other Muslims who taught Islam were arrested or forced to teach Communism instead.

Conclusion

Not long ago the author of the essay read an article about former soviet Muslim country Tajikistan³⁴. A family accidentally ran into something that looked like word "Allah" carved in Arabic language on the rind of the tree. Within several days, the same writing was found engraved on the asphalt near some school. Religious leaders assure that it is a Divine sign. Tajik authorities took the situation so seriously, that now it has become the subject of police investigation. The Tajik people faithfully perceived miracles news. The author told several Crimean Muslims about this miracle in Tajikistan. Two of them said they saw the name of "Allah" in Arabic in the sky (the cloud formed word "Allah") and one said that his friend's daughter had been born with the word "Allah" written on her ear.

This example may be used as demonstration of the fact that Islam's popularity is gradually increasing in secular Crimea and that Islam in such a naïve and medieval appearance infiltrates a live tissue of folk life.

34 <http://www.regnum.ru/news/970885.html?forprint> – p. 11, March, 18 2008

If you go to NGO "Ar-Raid", you will see a lot of young Muslims (there are even special groups for little children) who want to learn Arabic and study Qur'an and Islam. This is also evidence that Islam is being disseminated among young Crimean Tatar Muslims.

Ar-Raid is located in Simferopol. Along with this organization there are other religious organizations that have Sunday schools with Arabic, Crimean Tatar languages and Islam.

Unlike Christianity where the believers go to church and pray, Islam totally controls Muslims infiltrating all spheres of their lives. The hadiths of the Prophet say what a person should utter when he or she enters the mosques, somebody's house, goes to the bathroom, talks to a sick one, before he or she showers, takes off and puts on clothes, goes to bed, reads Qur'an, wakes up etc³⁵. There are experts on Islam who also argue that *"... religion and life are inseparable in Islam. Islam is a comprehensive law and way of life which does not imply division into secular and religious. If in the Christian (or western) concept formula "Render unto Caesar... render unto God..." reigns, then in Islam other formula is approved - "all renders unto God".*³⁶

Islam is still not revived totally in Crimea. Its presence can be fully experienced at funerals and some weddings. But these features of Islam taking over one's lifestyle can change and revitalize Islam in Crimea in a short timeslot like it happened in Northern Caucasus during the last decade.

Although Hizb ut-Tahrir's goal to establish caliphate does not seem viable, it is important to underscore that wahabism and Hizb ut-Tahrir, in particular, may cause cleavage not only in Crimean Tatar community (as it is divided into those who find their ideology appealing and follow wahabi ideas and those who oppose them) but also friction in Crimean community. Hizb ut-Tahrir's activities may only leverage political instability and interethnic tensions in Crimea. On the other hand, religion may become the factor that underlies the consolidation in Crimean Tatar community. *But Allah knows better.*

³⁵ An-Naavi, Muhyi-d-din Abu Zakariya bin Sharaf ad-Dimashki ash-Shafi'i. Allah's prayers. "Umma", 2006 – 766 p. (Ан-Нааави, Мухйи-д-дин Абу Закарийа бин Шараф ад-димашки аш-Шафи'и. Поминания Аллаха. «Умма», 2006 г. – 766 стр.)

³⁶ Ruslan Sinbarigov. Vatican urges Muslims to clear away mention of Jihad from the Qur'an, - Kavkaz Center, May 31, 2008 - <http://kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2008/05/31/9689.shtml>