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ISLAMIC WORLD

REMARKS BY AMR KHALED

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Welcome and Introduction:

ROBIN WRIGHT

The Washington Post

Featured Speaker:

AMR KHALED

Iqra Television

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P R O C E E D I N G S

SPEAKER: On behalf of the Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, we are very pleased to host today Amr Khaled. Mr. Khaled is not necessarily a household name here in the West, but for many segments of the Islamic world, he is akin to a rock star. He runs the Arab world's most popular website, he has regular shows on Iqra, the Saudi-owned religious satellite channel, and has an influence that prompts comparisons with everyone from Dr. Phil to Pat Robertson. His model of Life Makers encourages Muslims to implement action plans for transforming their lives and their communities through Islam. He also urges them to get along peacefully in coexistence with the West.

Along with Mr. Khaled, we are equally pleased to have with us today Robin Wright who is as many know a veteran "Washington Post" reporter who has covered for many years the Middle East, has been a commentator of everything from ABC News, NBC News, CBS News, CNN, PBS, the "NewHour," and on and on. She has

traveled with U.S. officials from six administrations ranging from President Carter to President Bush, and from Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, to Secretary of State Colin Powell. In January she has a book coming out, she is the author of a number of books, but in January she has a book coming out entitled "Dreams and Shadows: the Future of the Middle East" in which she refers to Mr. Khaled.

I should also mention that assisting Mr. Khaled today we have the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World's good friend and partner Dalia Mogahed, a senior analyst and Executive Director of the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies, who was a star at our recent U.S.-Islamic World Forum in Doha, Qatar. She has been helping arrange his trip but is also available to him should he need any assistance with any difficult English phrases. Without any further ado, let me turn the program over to Robin Wright. Thank you, Robin.

MS. WRIGHT: I was told to introduce Amr Khaled and Steve has already done that, so I will just

add a couple of remarks. I first heard about him in January last year when I was covering the Palestinian elections and I was talking to some of the people I know and respect, academics in the territories, and I asked, "Who is the most interesting person in the Arab or Islamic world today?" and universally I was told Amr Khaled. People described the Pied Piper effect that he had on particularly the young and women. I have been trying to meet him ever since, so I am delighted that I finally have the opportunity.

I think that Amr Khaled's importance is reflected in that he addresses the two most important trends and quests in the region today. The first is the desire for reform, the idea of making Islam relevant to the modern world, and the second is the pressure of globalization. I think the Amr Khaled phenomena would not have taken off 25 years ago as it has today. As has been pointed out in a number of articles, his website gets more hits than Oprah's.

Brookings has a new book out by one of its recent visiting fellows Akbar Ahmed in which he did a

survey of the wider Islamic world and he asked people who was the most interesting voice, the most dynamic force, and I wanted to quote from it because I think it is so interesting. He said, "Amr Khaled needs no introduction in the West. His popularity in the Arab world is unrivaled, selected by about half of our respondents in each Arab country as one of the most credible voices. Amr Khaled appears to be popular because he presents Islam in a manner perceived to be accurate, sincere, moderate, and relevant to contemporary issues for the youth. He is also able to instill pride and happiness in people for being Muslim and has helped strengthen faith in Islam at a time when it is thought to be under assault by Westernization, secularism, and nationalism." He calls him a contemporary icon, and this is the kind of language I heard when I continued to ask about him throughout the Middle East.

Amr Khaled has a very unusual background. He is an accountant by training, graduated in 1988, and went on to work for one of the largest accounting

companies in Egypt where he had the accounts for Pepsi and Colgate Palmolive. He quickly gained popularity after he began giving talks in social clubs, in homes, and then in mosques. He is not trained as a traditional Islamic scholar, and as you will notice, he does not tackle some of the thornier issues of Islamic law. He is truly an Islamic televangelist, and it is true that his style, if you go to his website or see any of his tapes, reminds you of some of the Christian evangelicals in the kind of message and in the way he delivers it. It said that there are thousands and maybe even hundreds of thousands of young women who have returned to hijab as a result of his preachings. I call him the phenomena of the pink hijab in that he offers women a message of returning to their Islamic faith, but adapting to modernity.

He is preaching Saturday night for the first time in the United States and I notice that at the end of the invitation it says there will be an Islamic hip-hop band playing afterwards, and that is a term I thought I would never here. So with no further ado I

will introduce Amr Khaled. He is going to speak for about 15 minutes, and then we will open it up to a conversation with all of us. Thank you.

MR. KHALED: Hello and good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Actually, it is an honor for me to be here amongst you, and thank you to Brookings to invite me and give me this opportunity.

Actually, my message in my life is to support youth and women in the Middle East, to give them the hope, to make developments in this area of the world. I am doing that based on the values of faith. This is the message.

And I can say that there are three parts to my message: faith, development, and at the same time, when I am conveying this message I am trying to create the culture of coexistence between the Arab and Muslim youth. I want to build bridges between them and the other cultures. So again, three words, faith, development, coexistence. This is what I am doing.

It is like a puzzle that I started with faith for 3 years, then development, and then

coexistence. Each one of these three pieces is in a very important relationship with democracy and the political situation in the Middle East and I will tell you how and why. First, the faith. I started to present Islam and to present how you can practice Islam without conflicts with modern life and I started to tell the youth new ideas. It is from Islam, but unfortunately for the last 200 years nobody was talking about these ideas.

For example, there is a verse in Islam called (Arabic), men have worship and faith and (Arabic) means doing the good deeds in their lives. So I started to tell them your faith means that you are going to do the good things, good manners, looking for the society, what does society need. We need your faith like that. This is your faith. And I told them there are three dimensions for your faith. The first dimension is to worship, and unfortunately all Muslim people are looking for only this dimension, but there are two other dimensions there, good manners is another dimension, and success in your life.

So I tried to transfer the meaning of religion between the youth. To put it in this way, your faith means that you are going to do the good things, and try to do it. This is very important as a political point. Why? Because I started to put another shape in front of the extremist ideas. Because when I am going to tell them going this way, this is your faith, to try to help the society and doing what I am saying is here is extremism because youth going to mosques and going to pray and going to worship and after that what are they going to do? Nothing. Because there are no activities in our countries unfortunately the youth and they have a lot of energy and no one can give them the solution where they can put their energy.

So I started to tell them what is the meaning of your faith. It is for doing anything good in this society, and to also be sure that your religion is not in conflict with modern life. And you can be a good Muslim and at the same time living life and enjoying your life good happy in your life. This

is what I did for the first 3 years, to change the meaning of faith. We cannot ignore that faith is the root of this. For the people in the Middle East it is faith. So to say please don't talk about faith, because some people are saying (Arabic) faith more stronger. Maybe yes. But at the same time, I take the faith to this way, this is the way of the faith and to say we don't need faith that means you are going to give extremism a chance to be more stronger. In the Middle East, faith is a must, so this is the first step in what I did and this is why the youth started to listen to me.

The second step is development. So after faith I tried to tell the youth now you have to do something for your society. And by the way, I never talk about democracy in our countries. I never. Anyway, this is another subject. I never talked about democracy. But look what I am doing. Youth now in the Middle East is withdrawn from the public life. They said no one will ask us about our opinion. No

need for our opinion actually. No need for us. So they said we are out of the public society.

I am not going like many other voices to say you have to be in the society. In my opinion, it will not work for many reasons you know. But I did something else. I started to open projects and talk about faith that your faith means you have to do something for your society. I don't know if you got the idea what I did or not. You have to do something. It's your society and God will ask you you have to do something good for the society. Don't say I'm negative. You have to be positive and that's it. I did nothing more.

But I started to make a program for 2 years weekly, the title of "Life Makers." The aim of the program, without saying democracy, is to give them the chance to do something. And I started the philosophy of projects to not clash with the governments in the Middle East. This is the philosophy. What are the projects the youth will do? So I found development

because I believe our countries in the next 20 years will be a disaster.

So I tried to encourage youth to do something. So I started to ask them what is your dreams for your countries for the next 20 years? Please send me your dreams. And after 2 weeks nobody sends anything because nobody asked them something like this before. It was the first time to ask the youth in the Middle East to give me your dream.

Actually, I am so sorry, unfortunately, there are no dreams. So I started to tell them try and I made a weekly one month program to tell them how you can get the dream. I told them Dubai was a dream. The channel between London and Paris was a dream. America when they sent to the moon it was like a dream. Please put the dreams and the dream after maybe 20 years your countries will be like your dreams. And I put them in my website about 26 categories of projects, health, economic, education, many sectors, and I asked them to put their dreams under this and we got 700,000 dreams in 2 months.

Some of them coming from a girl 7 years old and some of them coming from a judge in the court in Egypt. He sent me this is my dream for the courts in Egypt in the next 20 years and sends something like that to me.

And I took those dreams and I asked them now I want you to take a vote on my website to make the priorities of these dreams. You know what I'm doing? I engage the youth to do something and faith encouraged them to do this. We do this because we believe this is our role in our life. And I told them I need 1 million replies to make this dream not Amr's dream, it should be our dream. Less than 1 million, that means it's my dream. And this is not my way to say this is a dream, I need your dreams. And I put a counter to get how many sent and we got 1 million replies and they make a rank on the priorities of the dreams.

And the first dream was to get jobs, the unemployment issue. So I found myself thinking I have to do something. So after that we did a survey. Now millions started to work. Now you can say youth in

the Middle East is ready to be positive, but they need the chance without a clash because we cannot afford the clash. This is what I did without saying any political agenda. It's like that.

Robin asked me a lot what is your political agenda. I told her my problem is much stronger than that. I want to speak, not to talk to the people, and you are talking to me about a political agenda and I can say to her now this is my political agenda. This is the second part. We did a survey to ask youth about the small business, are you ready to start a micro and looking for the microfinance, and we go deep because this is mouth of the youth and my message to support youth and women in the Middle East.

So we got for this survey and Gallup -- we showed Gallup this survey and we received for this survey 1.4 million replies of youth. I can say now this youth said we want to build, not to destroy. I am talking now on behalf of 1.4 million youth. The majority of the youth in the Middle East wants to build and not to destroy, and please if you listen to

the minority who wants to destroy, I am telling you about the majority. So this is the message after we did these jobs. And some of them send to me please give us jobs because we want to respect ourselves. This is the second part of Amr Khaled's message.

The third part and last part is that we start to talk about coexistence. Why? What is the relationship between the three? Faith without development will be extremism, and development without coexistence, you need partnerships, you need to extend your hand to say who will help us to do this development. So we need coexistence for our sake, and because I believe in coexistence, because I believe in Koran. I believe in coexistence because I believe in Koran and Koran very clear verse in Koran, Koran said God created you in difference languages, colors, cultures. Why? To know each other and to exchange benefits, knowledge, and the good things.

This is what the Koran said and I started to explain this to the people and make and create this culture of coexistence through this verse. And I

started with coexistence in three steps. First I went to Denmark after the cartoon crisis. I know you know about what happened. So I thought, I said to myself now you have to talk about coexistence. Here is a test. Do you have enough courage to face all the traditional scholars and people and go to say dialogue even if you're talking about our role model Mohammed, our prophet? We went with 40 of our team, youth boys and girls, and we went there and we said to them we are coming for dialogue. And we sent at that time 10,000 emails to the Danish Youth Association. We make an agreement that the youth in the Middle East, I will ask them to send emails and you send to him emails to introduce each other, and we did that before I am going. And once I got 10,000 emails from our site sent to the Danish youth, we went to them and it was a big problem, but I am happy that I did that because I believe in that.

The second step, what I am doing now. I am doing now a program in four channels, not religious channels, but Abu Dhabi and (inaudible) four channels

to give the people the culture of coexistence. The main of the program entitled "Call to Coexistence." And who are the Arabs and Muslims who watch this program? This program is about 20 million now watching this program in the Middle East "Call to Coexistence" and gives them the basic ideas about to accept the difference, to accept the other ideas, to accept the other cultures, to expect all religions, Islam and Christianity and Jewish, you accept all. And we are doing that through stories from our history because people when they listen to stories from our own history, so coexistence is part of our religion? That is what I am doing now.

I am not talking in this program of our coexistence between the West, now I am talking about ourselves, our neighbors, to put the culture.

And the third step will be in January 2008 for the coexistence that we are going to make a big conference in the U.K. This conference in title of "Towards Culture, Against Violence and Injustice." This is the third part of my message.

I'm not presenting you myself as a preacher, as a scholar, as a mufti. I am not presenting myself as a media star. I am not one of these. I have a message for a better future for the youth and women in the Middle East because I believe there is injustice for women in the Middle East, unfortunately, on the name of Islam, and Islam didn't say that. And I am trying to empowerment women through many projects. This is a big issue. And we get some conference in 2005 in London with the (inaudible) Foundation because they are interested in something like that and we are trying. This is my message.

Before I finish I would like to introduce in 1 minute, sorry Robin, 1 minute, can I?

MS. WRIGHT: Yes. Go ahead.

MR. KHALED: Three of my team who is working with me in the development issues. Dalia, introduce yourself.

MS. MOGAHED: Hi, my name is Dalia Mogahed (inaudible) I specialize in international development

and I work very closely (inaudible) microfinance and economic development.

MR. KHALED: Thank you very much. And Chowkat Waresh.

MR. WARESH: Good morning. My name is Chowkat Waresh (inaudible) ideas that Amr just was talking about, empowerment (inaudible)

MR. KHALED: Thank you. And Magda?

SPEAKER: Hello. My name is Magda

MR. KHALED: And finally for sure it is an honor to me that Dalia and Gallup helped me a lot, and thank you for them. This is my message, and I am so happy to be with you and it is an honor to me, and I am waiting for your questions.

(Applause)

MS. WRIGHT: Thank you very much for that sweeping analysis of your program. I want to begin with asking a very basic question. It was very striking that you said that you talk about projects and efforts that amount to democracy but you don't use the word democracy. What does that say about how

democracy is perceived in the Middle East? And many in this audience I think are here today because we are really interested in seeing what specific recommendations, and I stress specific, you have to try to bridge the deepening gap between the Islamic world and the West. We want you to speak in English. Your English is wonderful.

MR. KHALED: I will try, but sometimes I need Dalia to help me. Is my voice okay? First of all, you asked me about democracy in the Middle East, why you are not talking about. What are you talking about, Robin, I am coming from the Middle East and I don't know if you can understand the situations in our countries or not. I can't imagine if I started my program "Life Makers" and talked to the youth about democracy. After the second episode --

MS. WRIGHT: No, finish that sentence, "After the second episode" what?

MR. KHALED: It's very clear there is no any -- all these stories what I told you, there is nothing because I will not be able to carry on with this

program. It's very clear. Is that clear for you or not?

MS. WRIGHT: No. I need you to finish the sentence. Is democracy perceived so badly in the Middle East today that even someone of your stature cannot use the democracy even though that's what you're all about?

MR. KHALED: Actually, there's two things. First people, the masses cannot understand what is the meaning of democracy, first of all, because they want to eat. They want jobs. What is democracy? For what? Is it it will give us some money to eat? Is it will give us jobs? This is the priorities of the people in the Middle East now, what are you talking about, and why is democracy -- because they didn't taste it. They haven't the taste. Taste is correct? The taste of democracy. They don't know what that means. How important democracy, they don't believe in this word.

So what Amr Khaled is doing, that I am not talking about theories and give the theories. I am a

practical man and I know how to deal with them. So I started through faith to tell them you have to be positive. Not talking about democracy. They will not understand. They only turn the channel and say Amr is talking about something coming from America. What is this? So I am trying to give the idea from indirect way that first be positive, and second, to be sure, Robin, I'm individual. I'm working, yes, I have a team, and, yes, there is consultants and I'm proud of them between -- one of my consultants, Mr. Mossen, he is a banker in Chase Manhattan and he is between us and maybe we will need some of his advice, but still I am a working individual.

And all of my achievements in the past, it is to be honest with you. I am still trying to do something, but I am alone. And when I'm trying to talk about all these huge things like democracy and so and so and so, I need partnerships, I need a lot of people. I extend my hand to say who can help me. Gallup said yes, imagination (inaudible) said yes, but I am still looking for partnerships from the West and

the East because for the sake of this youth. So did I give you the answer or not?

MS. WRIGHT: Pretty much.

MR. KHALED: But the other point, what you can do, what America can do for us, I can say to be very honest with you, you have to give the hearts and minds of the youth from the Middle East and you have to work for the sake of the people in the Middle East, not for the sake of the governments. Is that clear?

MS. WRIGHT: But how do we do that?

MR. KHALED: Actually there is two points, something in the short-term and something in the long-term. For the short-term, I can say that you have to look for the NGOs and civil society in the Middle East and try to support them. I am talking about experience. I am talking about experts. I am talking about systems for development, systems for the microfinance, systems, something like that. You need to do that in the short-term.

You need to stop the war in Iraq if you want to get a good relation with the people in the Middle

East. People in the Middle East is very sensitive for the war in Iraq. It's very clear. It makes the moderate people in a very critical situation that we are talking about coexistence and people think why are you doing that? Look for Iraq. You have to do something in Iraq. You have to leave Iraq. This is what you can do in the short-term.

In the short-term you have to help us economically. I am not talking about the governments. I am talking about what happened in India that in India they started the NGOs in India and the civil society and the private sector, they started a project for the ITS 15 years ago and the youth for these projects, and Microsoft was coming from America to say can we engage, can we find the (inaudible) between you and us to work together in this area, and did a good job. Why not to find some products in the Middle East and say this youth can do it and we will help them not for open markets, to give expertise and experts. This is the short-term.

But when we are talking about the long-term, I am talking about you have to go back to the founding fathers -- because the values of America, something like when America started to give the world the ideas and the values of freedom, the American Constitution was something unique between the constitutions in the world. These things make America like a dream for the youth not only in the Middle East, everywhere, and the people say we know we want to go to America. It's a dream for the new world. You need to go to the founding fathers. This is my reply.

MS. WRIGHT: I have one last question before I open it up. You talk about coexistence between East and West. One of the things that is so striking about the Middle East today is the tension within the Islamic world itself between Sunni and Shia which we see play out inside Iraq but with a spillover throughout the region.

MR. KHALED: Yeah, this is part of my program now. My program now "Call to Coexistence," I am using the stories coming from the past about how

Sunni and Shia in the past can walk together, can talk together, and some scholars and youth scholars deliberately, some scholars in the past from the Sunni are going to take knowledge from the Shia scholars, and some of the Shias took and gave them evidence about this in the past to say why are you doing that. Please talk together. I am trying each episode. And I got a lot of calls coming from Iraq to say thank you for this.

And I am doing now a book. This book after each episode is talking about call to coexistence, I ask the people to send their feelings and their experiences about coexistence to my website and I told them I will make a book from (inaudible) and now we will be finished in about 2 months. This program by the way will be for 1 year. It will be about 50 episodes. We have finished until now about 10 episodes or 12 episodes. And after each episode, we get weekly about between 20,000 to 25,000 emails and it is very clear. And many of them are coming from Iraq to say we understand and we are trying to do, and

some people send after the last episode I started to talk to my neighbors from the Shia and so on and so on. So this is what I am trying.

MS. WRIGHT: You didn't record with a live audience, so there is no audience?

MR. KHALED: No audience. Why no audience? Robin can tell. No, you tell. Because after I am going to Egypt I didn't say that Robin --

MS. WRIGHT: Let's open it up. Do we have a mike? I would ask everyone to please identify themselves and their organization. Let's begin here.

MR. HAGER: Yes, my name is Michael Hager and I am full of admiration hearing your speech. It is not surprising to me since my organization is dealing with job creation in Muslim-majority countries and primarily now the Middle East to hear you say that the youth want jobs because we know there is a youth bulge in these countries.

I was wondering what are your prescriptions? We are working with the private sector trying to identify where jobs are and then train for those jobs,

but we are looking for new ideas. What do you think is the answer beyond microfinancing and entrepreneurship?

MR. KHALED: Actually, we have in our team a full vision for the economic way in the Middle East and the Arab countries and Egypt in specific to help youth. One of these visions is the small business and the microfinance, and before I will give you the full vision, I will give you something about the microfinance what we are going to do or what we did.

We started in some areas of the Arab countries to build something unique that we got the money of Zakat. You know Zakat. Zakat is part of the charity in Islam and Muslims have (inaudible) it's like prayer (inaudible) and America now is very odd about the money of this charity because where it will go, it will go to the extremists.

So I got a solution that we can take the money from this charity to put it in the small business area and America will not be worried, and for the Muslims it is a good thing and Islamically it is a

great idea. So we did this idea as a pilot. We got some millions of this charity and we opened a charity to make training courses for the youth to choose between them who can be ready to start his small business. Because governments now in the Middle East got a fund from the U.N. and give it to the youth. You have a project? Take the money. He is not ready to open -- so the money going and nothing and he come back I failed. No.

We started with a system to choose who will be ready after this 2 months training courses for these youth. For example, 1,000 come, we choose 200 and these 200 we start to tell them that this area needs the needs of the area to market themselves, not to ask them to make the products and give it to me, I will market. No. Do this project, and after they start to do this project we say to them next year if you get a profit for example, you will be the owner of the half of the project. Next year you will be the owner of the whole project. If you don't, we will take the project (inaudible) you understand? We are

trying to extend this project in the Arab countries. This is what we are doing in the small business, and Dalia as she introduced herself is (inaudible) on this.

But when we're talking about the whole vision for the economy in the Arab countries I failed to introduce in 2 minutes my consultant, Mr. Mohsen to introduce to you what is our plan in 2 minutes. Please, Mr. Mohsen, could you? He is our consultant for the economic issues.

MS. WRIGHT: In really 2 minutes.

MR. Khaled: My name is Mohsen Khaled (ph). Actually what we have the team, Amr's team, looked at is how we can increase the per capital income in the Arab Muslim world over the next decade or two to get - the level right now if you look at the per capita income in the Arab Middle East is about \$3 a day excluding the oil revenues which is actually very, very like the sub-Saharan Africa. The need is to get that to be like \$10,000 a year per capita. To do that the Middle East needs to create a level playing field

in terms of commercial laws, antitrust laws, and I think that is where America can help with the NGOs that exist in the Arab Muslim world.

The second issue here is the saving rate. If you look at the M-1 money supply figures in the entire Arab Muslim world is not sufficient to sustain economic development and therefore you need to create the level playing fields for the multinationals who come in. And then on the other hand that is going to take time because if you get a Nike or Procter & Gamble, they are going to create maybe 1,000 jobs, but what you need to do is create grassroots microfinance through greater culture of microfinance throughout the Arab Muslim world where in the countryside the youth can really go and get the \$1,000 or \$2,000 but without having to pay 25 percent, 30 percent finance. That's why Amr's idea of relaying on Zakeh to eliminate the cost of funding is an excellent idea. That's it I guess.

MS. WRIGHT: Thank you.

MR. KHALED: Thank you very much.

MS. WRIGHT: Yes, in the back?

QUESTION: Thank you. I hope you were talking about me in the back.

MS. WRIGHT: That's all right. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Your key message, the faith, development, and coexistence, sounds very similar to the message that other Muslim movements in the Middle East are promoting as well. It sounds like a message of individual empowerment and motivating people to improve their societies. In many ways it sounds like the message of the PJD in Morocco, even the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and one could even say the social message of an organization like Hamas of empowering individuals and movements.

My question to you is, given that you focus so much on partnerships and coexistence, to what extent are you working with other Muslim movements in the region to spread your message and to mobilize people to improve their societies and do good deeds?

MR. KHALED: Actually, it's a very good question. Thank you very much. But let me tell you

something. I believe that the Islamic movements in the Arab and Muslim countries -- every time I need to talk it in Arabic, please, this question. Can I? I think it will be -- you can. She said you can. The Islamic movement in the Arab Muslim --

MS. WRIGHT: We can't hear you, Dalia.

MR. KHALED: The Islamic movement in the Arab Muslim world is not a concrete movement. It is an ever-evolving movement and it changes with time and it continues to change all the way from Mohamed Abu until now the Muslim Brotherhood. It has continued to change throughout time because current events force them to change and to evolve.

What I believe is what I am doing right now is what is needed for the current time (inaudible) ability to continue to evolve and be relevant is because he doesn't just focus on the theoretical so he is ready to take steps that are very concrete and very practical to fulfill his mission that maybe other aren't willing to. So sometimes it is hard to ask others to join you when they actually lack the zeal

for the same mission that you're working for especially when you have so much enthusiasm and at the same time the ability to execute.

Partnerships -- I am talking about partnerships with everybody and I said I explained with my hands (inaudible) is the other ready because his philosophy and his ideologies accept to going to Brookings and talk to the people and going to here and here and here and take initiatives and go to Denmark and open area for (inaudible) to put it here and to open this project, you can't talk theoretical issues and say they are saying, but I'm doing.

MS. WRIGHT: Now we go back to back here.

[Original pages 36-37 have been omitted from this public transcript]

MS. WRIGHT: The woman right here, curly hair. He wanted the answer to the second part of his question.

MR. KHALED: What is the second part?

QUESTION: (inaudible) meet officials here?

MR. KHALED: I didn't meet any official until now. As I told you, I have a message.

MS. WRIGHT: Someone else seems to have a message as well.

MR. KHALED: Another message coming from somewhere. I have a message and I am taking my message to the (inaudible) as I told in the last question, I am not talking, I am doing. By the way, I have only one message. Do you understand what I mean? I am not going to say a message there, a message here. I am not going to the Middle East to say a message and coming here to say another. I have only my own message. I said there is injustice. I said please Iraq. I said we need coexistence. I said I went (inaudible) I have one message and I will take it to everybody.

QUESTION: (inaudible) two things. One, I had the pleasure of listening to you yesterday at Georgetown, and today you made the same statement about the Islamic movement not being rigid and being

evolving and you mentioned in one bundle Hamed Abde (ph) and the Brotherhood. I am a little bit troubled by this connection because Hamed Abde's movement was merely an intellectual movement that meant to reexamine the platform of Islam to get Islam to enter the 21st century, whereas the Brotherhood's message is basically utilizing Islam as a vehicle to achieve political ends. What makes you think that these two movements are similar? The second question --

MR. KHALED: I didn't say that. I said change happens with the events in the world and the Islamic movements have responded each time to what happened in that time, but that does not mean that I accept what Mohammed Abdou says or the Brotherhood says and doesn't mean that I mean that the Brotherhood is an extension to what Mohammad Abdou said. No, something else. And this is not mean that an extension to the Brotherhood, but I am saying that I'm now talking about a message relevant to the needs of today. The others, you can go to ask the others.

QUESTION: The second question?

MS. WRIGHT: Quickly.

QUESTION: Quickly. You spoke about women's empowerment and you want to stay out of politics. Could you please at the social level give me specific what are the issues they were trying to empower the women in?

MR. KHALED: (inaudible) what is the meaning of (inaudible) circumcision?

MS. WRIGHT: Female circumcision.

MR. KHALED: I spoke about this in my program and the traditionalist callers after each episode you cannot imagine what happened to me. But I believe we have to do something like that, but I also need to say two things. First, don't push, don't push the Arab area to change today anything you think it's wrong because this pushing, take it step by step because this pushing will -- I will say it in Arabic "it's going to cause disruption to people's ability to understand." (End translation.) And it will not help. And it will not help. It will have the opposite effect.

So, again, yes, there are many things we need to change like what I said now, like, by the way, you can go to my website because I did a speech in Doha conference to put all the things we need to change, social, political, financial, even why not to find our women prime ministers, and I said all these things. By the way, I am not coming here to say something new. I just said I said that. So you will find all these things, and I'll give you an example of it.

But the second point is not to impose the culture on the Middle East. When we're talking about coexistence, you have to expect that we have our culture, because we accept your culture. And if you need the Arab countries to be a copy of your culture, this is not coexistence. This is (inaudible) coexistence means two parties will find (inaudible) how can we work together and talk together and we will respect your culture and you will respect our culture.

So, yes, there is a lot of things we need to change. I agree with you. I am trying step by step.

But at the same time, don't impose the culture because any trying to impose the culture will not work. And second, it will lead to more problems in the feeling of the people in the Middle East. So we need to do it in a wise way, how can we change the -- by the way, we are working now for a project to empower young women and give them the culture of how to succeed in life. We don't want you to be lazy, we don't want you to be negative, we want to empower you and work with you and you will find that most of my themes are about women - - and most of my audience, women, and I am proud of that. Because as I told you yesterday, I am the first one who is tried to talk to women a specific and give them the feeling that I respect your ideas and I need you to work with me. Can you accept that? So let me try. And don't ask me for what happened for the last 200 years to ask me to get solutions for it today and say what did you do in this. It's 200 accumulated problems. You want me to do it. It's not my problem, it's not my --

MS. NORQUIST: Samah Norquist with Global Partners. My question to you, you talked about -- let me back up. Last February Gallup polls showed when they asked Americans what are your favorite things about the Muslim world, the number-one answer was nothing, the number two answer was I don't know. There is a lot of ignorance about Islam and Muslims in the Arab world because of 9/11 exposure and the whole thing that happened with that. What are you doing in order to take your message to the American people in the Midwest, in the East, in the West, just like you did in Denmark where you sent emails talking about coexistence as expanding your message from the Muslims to non-Muslims?

MR. KHALED: Thank you. Actually, I have a lecture by the way tomorrow for the American Muslims I believe tomorrow night, and I am going to give them this message, two messages actually. The first message, yes, how to make a positive integration into American society, we are proud of them. You can do both of them. And second, please be a very good

representative for your religion through your manners and your success in this life to add to this society and to respect -- to make this society respect Islam through you. These are two messages I am here to give; I have addressed all over the European countries to meet the Muslims there and give them very clear everywhere, in London, in Copenhagen, in Germany.

MS. NORQUIST: My question was not about Muslims.

MR. KHALED: Yes, I am coming --

MS. NORQUIST: My question is about non-Muslim Americans.

MR. KHALED: Yes. Actually, many things I have to say it. I want to tell them, please, please, don't attack Islam in your media. Don't mix war -- against terrorists, terrorism, and extremism with attacking Islam. Don't because you beat our feeling. And Gallup did a survey about what the American media is saying about the Muslims. Can you say it, please?

MS. MOGAHED: It was actually not a Gallup survey, but it was a media content analysis done by a

company in Germany called Media Tenor, and what they did is they looked at the portrayal of Islam as well as Christianity in the Germany, British, and Arab media, as well as the American media, television media -- the most watched TV news media, so that's what it was.

MS. NORQUIST: In the U.S. it was Fox, right?

MS. MOGAHED: Not just Fox, no. Fox was one of them. Fox and then some of the -- and then the network TV.

MR. KHALED: How much negative?

MS. MOGAHED: The majority of the coverage on Islam was negative and very, very little was positive.

MR. KHALED: And the same report of Gallup, they found when they asked the youth in the Middle East, they said Muslims -- this is Gallup, not me, Muslims are more ready for the coexistence and they need it so first please don't attack Islam in your media. Our war against extremism mustn't lead us to war against Islam. This is the first point.

The second point, if you find someone with a good message not just for you, but for our world, you have to get a good partnership with these people without -- let me tell you there are many obstacles to do good things in the Middle East. For some one individual like me, many obstacles, many, many obstacles. Anyone can help to remove any of these obstacles will do a good job.

What I'm doing to give my message to you, that I'm --

MS. NORQUIST: But what about non-Muslims?

MR. KHALED: Yeah, I know. I understand. Sorry. This is why I am here, why I accept. It's an honor to me, but why I am here, why I coming to America. Yes, I got a award from "Time" magazine, but believe me, I am not coming for this with my honor to "Time" magazine, but actually I am coming for my message. I am coming to tell you this is a good message and please help on this message.

MS. MOGAHED: Just to add some what Amr actually does have, he is dubbing his show "Call to

Coexistence" into English. He also has his website translated into 12 languages?

MR. KHALED: Yeah, we do it. This is a project now.

MS. MOGAHED: So you can actually read transcripts in English of his show "Call to Coexistence" on his website. So he is making his work and his message accessible to English speakers as well as other languages.

QUESTION: (inaudible)

MR. KHALED: No, just the "Call to Coexistence" we are dubbing "Call to Coexistence" to English and French.

MS. MOGAHED: That's the only thing that's dubbed, but there is a ton of translated things on the website in terms of transcripts from other material. He has material on his stuff on worship, his stuff on the purification of the heart. All of that is actually translated on the website.

MS. WRIGHT: We are running out of time, so let me allow people to ask three questions, and then

you can answer all three of them. One, two, and three.

MR. MITCHELL: Thanks. I'm Gary Mitchell from "The Mitchell Report." I was struck by the notion of collecting dreams. It made me think about the importance of heroes and leaders for young people. In virtually every public opinion poll that I have seen including the ones that Shibley Telhami and Zogby do together, when you ask Arabs, and this is not just youth, who do they respect, the answer is Nasrallah, and in most polls Chirac.

I'm interested in whether that is an issue that you are paying attention to, and the question that I think that I really have is are there heroes and are there respected leaders in your culture?

MR. KHALED: You're talking about the present or you're talking about the past?

MR. MITCHELL: The present.

MR. KHALED: The present.

MS. WRIGHT: Let's ask the other two questions, and if we could do it in briefer form that would be great.

MR. ZARKUK: My name is Ali Ramadan Zarkuk from the Center for the Study of Islamic Democracy. You said you are extending your hand, and we are extending our hands. We are the only American Muslim organization that works for Islam and democracy. Just look at the title of this book, "Islam and Democracy: Towards an Effective Citizenship." We do appreciate your work, but we extend our hands to how to work together and that is the invitation is responded to positively.

MS. WRIGHT: No question?

MR. ZARKUK: No, that's it.

MS. WRIGHT: That's fine. And there was one in the back? Actually, you got a question yesterday. Let's finish up with a woman, how appropriate.

MS. IDRISI: I am Hanan Zarwani Idrisi with the National Endowment for Democracy. Thank you so much for your presentation. I am sure you learned

about the news from the suicide bombers who blew themselves in the middle of the street in Casablanca in Morocco. My question is what kind of message can you send to the youth in Morocco especially regarding the issue of suicide bombing? Thank you.

MS. WRIGHT: If you could answer those two.

MR. KHALED: Yes. First question again?

MS. MOGAHED: The first question was regarding heroes and leaders and we find that some of the polling that has been done that when asked who do you respect, the poll is saying Nasrallah. I just want to correct one thing quickly. The question actually isn't who respect, it's which political leader do you most admire outside your country. So it is actually focusing only on a political leader. When people asked like in Akbar Ahmed's work who do you most admire and it's open to anybody, in fact, 50 percent or a majority in Arab countries select this man right here, and not Nasrallah.

(Applause)

MS. WRIGHT: The question is who are people's heroes? Who do people have as heroes?

MS. MOGAHED: The second question was what do you say to the message to Moroccan youth about suicide bombings.

MS. WRIGHT: And what do you say about suicide bombings in general?

MR. KHALED: Yeah, actually --

QUESTION: (inaudible)

MR. KHALED: Yeah, I understand. Actually, I cannot imagine someone can kill seven people and saying this is Islam (inaudible) and I feel who can give him this idea and how, and is there a mind or heart can accept to kill the civil people?

Whatever anywhere in the world we are against this - killing civilians, it is something against the humanity. So I want to tell them this is not Islam. This is not our religion. This is not our prophet. This is not our values. This is the message.

And the second message, we need you to build your country. It's Morocco. It's your country. It's yours. It is not the government's country. It is your country. It is your country. Please build it even if you disagree about the government. By the way, you know when I told you about the dreams of the youth, the 700,000 dreams, you know what I did? I give it to the ministers in Egypt and other Arab countries to tell them this is the youth dreams. If you can't do something, I will do from the unemployment issue and so some projects. But if you can do, these are the dreams. I put it in your hands because I believe it is our countries. Even if I have a problem with you, I disagree about you, but if I can help in anything in my country, I will do it. So and believe me, this is what I learned from my prophet.

By the way, I want here to say something. Prophet Mohammed was staying in Mecca and he left Mecca to another country called Medina. City. Mecca, the non-Muslim still in a war with him. He is here in the city and they are in Mecca and a big war between

them. When he left Mecca and emmigrate to the city, not all the Muslims came with him to the city. Some Muslims stayed in Mecca. Here is something very important. I say that in my program in Ramadan about huge numbers of people listened to this. Did he use the people who stayed in Mecca to make troubles for the non-Muslims in Mecca? Never. You know why? Because he believed in citizenship. I am not going to destroy any society. We can go in a war, yes, but to destroy the society, there is -- he told the Muslims there you are a citizen in this country. You have to respect this country. I believe in that. This is my religion. That's it.

MS. WRIGHT: I want to thank you all very much for attending, and I want to thank you for a really fascinating discussion this morning. I think you have enlightened us all and helped us all figure out maybe how to take some of those steps to bridge the gap. Thank you again.

MR. KHALED: Thank you very much. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

DR. GRAND: One of the objectives of the Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World has been to bring to Washington and the attention to Washington policymakers and opinion leaders authentic voices from the region, and I cannot think of a more influential and important voice from the region than Amr Khaled. I want to thank you for joining us today. I want to thank Robin for really turning this into an interesting conversation. And thank Dalia for both her efforts today, but also her partnership and in the partnership with Gallup over the long-term. Thank you, and thank you all for coming.

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