

The Muslim Brotherhood Operative on Facebook's Content Oversight Board (Part 2)

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Tawakkol Karman is a supporter of Qatar, the Arab world's staunchest supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood, and of Turkey, which under President Erdogan has become the other main promoter of the Brotherhood's agenda..

In recent years, Karman's utterances have tended to hew closely to the party line of her two leading patrons, Qatar and Turkey, while being reflexively critical of the actions of Saudi Arabia.

For instance, in an interview with the Saudi daily Al Riyadh in 2015, Karman praised the Arab coalition and its role in restoring the UN-backed government in Yemen.

She called it a "savior" and posed for a picture with President Abd-Rabbo Mansour Hadi, who she described as "the legitimate leader of the country."

At that time she was supporting Saudi Arabia and UAE in the help they gave the internationally recognized government in Sana'a, led by Abd-Rabbo Mansour Hadi. But that did not last long.

A few years later, she suddenly changed her tone to accuse Saudi Arabia and the UAE of committing war crimes in Yemen, and demanded the toppling of regimes in Egypt and Bahrain.

It was no coincidence that all the four countries she denounced happened to have cut diplomatic ties with Qatar on June 5, 2017, for its refusal to abandon support for extremists.

She turned on Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Bahrain for the same reason: all four had cut ties to Qatar, because that state had consistently shown support for the extremist Muslim Brotherhood, whose cause was also dear to Tawakkol Karman's heart. Had Facebook known of her passionate attachment to the MB, would they have had second thoughts about naming her to the Content Oversight Board? One likes to think so.

"Karman's loyalty to, and association with, governments that flout all norms of democracy, such as Qatar and Turkey, deprives her of any claim to neutrality and objectivity," Nasira said.

Her political rhetoric encourages extremism, divisiveness and shunning of those who disagree with her current loyalties.

Numerous posts on her Twitter handle and Facebook page attest to her desire to see specific Arab governments destabilized and toppled.

She has called on Bahraini, Algerian and Tunisian citizens to revolt against their governments, and accused the Egyptian army of being full of terrorists.

Again, Karman is consistent in her support of the Muslim Brotherhood. Bahrain, Algeria, and Tunisia have all come down hard on the MB, and therefore, in her view, the people of those countries must overthrow their governments, and the rulers she deems insufficiently "Islamic" in their views. The Egyptian army, which is engaged in an endless battle with MB, is described – in Karman's customary hyperbole – as "being full of terrorists." The Egyptian army is ruthless, all right,

in its pursuit of MB members, but no one could fairly describe it as “being full of terrorists.”

“Saudi Arabia should be worried. All the Gulf countries should be scared, except for Qatar,” Karman can be heard saying in an undated video clip broadcast by Yemen TV.

The Gulf Arabs should be “worried” about what? Karman means they should be worried about popular uprisings, for according to her, except for Qatar, they have lost the support of their people. No evidence is presented for this. There have been no popular protests against the governments in Saudi Arabia (save for a small group of Shi’a, who briefly rioted eight years ago), the Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, or elsewhere among the Gulf Arab states. There have been violent protests in Qatar, however, in 2019, by the migrant workers who could no longer stand the abuse they endured from their employers, nor could they tolerate the widespread practice of employers withholding their wages. Qatar’s reputation for such mistreatment apparently doesn’t bother that Nobel-winning “rights activist” Tawakkol Karman. As long as Qatar supports the MB, its abuse of foreign workers doesn’t concern her. Besides, those discontented foreign workers in Qatar are not Arabs, and Tawakkol Karman is both an Islamist and an Arab supremacist.

Karman’s unrelenting hostility towards Saudi Arabia and the UAE has made her almost a natural choice for stewardship of the Qatari-funded and Turkey-based Belqees TV station.

The consensus view of many Middle East political observers is that Karman is an Islamist activist who is firmly embedded within regional and international networks backed by Qatar and Turkey.

“Karman is an extremely divisive figure whose judgement is severely impaired by her many years of (harboring) extreme political bias,” says Nuseibeh.

As for Facebook, the company “has only one choice to make and that is to sever all ties” with Karman, he told Arab News.

“If it doesn’t, Facebook would be on the side of promoters of hate speech, extremism and anti-Semitism.”

Facebook likely had no knowledge of Tawakkol Karman’s connection to Qatar and to the Muslim Brotherhood when it offered her a position on the Content Oversight Board. It’s a company worth \$600 billion, but it couldn’t spare the money or take the time to conduct due diligence on Karman before appointing her to such an important post. It might have taken a Facebook employee five minutes – no more – to conduct an online search that would have revealed the disturbing sympathies of Tawakkol Karman for the Muslim Brotherhood. The company had decided it would be a good idea to have a Muslim and, even better, a Muslim woman – More Diversity! More Inclusivity! – on the Content Oversight Board as one of Facebook’s internal censors. Karman fit the bill. And she had won a Nobel Peace Prize. Mark Zuckerberg knows that Nobel Peace Prize winners are, by common consent, among our Great and Good. Yes, I grant you, there is Arafat... That’s all Facebook knew about her – Muslim, female, Nobel winner – and that was apparently all it needed to know. Muslim, female, Nobel winner – what’s not to like?

As an unswerving supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood, Karman certainly is a promoter, as Ghanem Nuseibeh says, of “hate speech, extremism, and antisemitism.” Simply take a look at the best-known MB website, that of Hamas, which is the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, for prompt confirmation of its “hate speech, extremism, and antisemitism.” Or consider Tawakkol Karman’s warm meeting in Doha with Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, whose fatwas call for suicide bomb attacks and who praises Hitler for “punishing” the Jews.

Is that what Mark Zuckerberg wants on his Content Oversight Board? Someone who admires a man who calls for suicide bomb attacks and praises Hitler for “punishing” the Jews? Or will there be signs of sanity yet, and an invitation withdrawn, from the head office at 1 Hacker Way in Menlo Park?

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