

The Anti- Bin Laden

(working title)





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“Amr Khaled is the anti-Bin Laden that Americans don’t know, because he ought to be as big a hero in this country as he is to his thirty million followers...” Jim Clifton, CEO, Gallup Polls
INTRODUCTION:

How did an Armani-wearing accountant from a wealthy Egyptian family become one of the Middle East’s most popular Muslim televangelists (The Joel Osteen of Islam)? And why do both the Egyptian government and religious leaders fear his power and influence among Muslim women and youths? Can his brand of moderate preaching prevent Egypt’s growing religious conservatism from becoming the next Iran or Afghanistan?

“The Anti-Bin Laden” explores the complex mission and ministry of Amr Khaled, an Egyptian businessman who uses a lighter version of traditional Muslim sermons to preach a gospel of economic development to both Middle Eastern and Western audiences. Walking the fine, often controversial line between technology and tradition, he has managed to spend the last decade teaching women and young people to seek both religion and prosperity. This has never been done in Islam.

His efforts have gotten him exiled from his home country, but, thanks to the internet, made him an extremely popular leader of young Muslims throughout the Middle East. Both Time and Newsweek magazines have cited him as one of the world’s most influential people.

His influence is certainly felt in his homeland. Egypt, once known for its western sensibilities not just in religious tolerance and social ideals, but also in dress, is now more visibly conservative. For example, 20 years ago, Egyptian women rarely, if ever, wore the hijab, or veil. Now, more than 60% of the women, especially those under 30, wear them. Trendy Egyptian women, in homage to their teacher, wear a Spanish, sideways-tied scarf, nicknamed the “Amr Khaled veil.”

As much as this documentary is a story of Amr Khaled, it is also the story of Islam and Muslims’ roles in the Obama-era West. The purpose of this film is to tell the compelling story of how the growing Muslim revolution may move forward, through the life of this particular foot soldier. As Egypt, America’s long-standing ally in the region, prepares for an eventual change in its political infrastructure, Western observers will be watching the new leaderships emerge. Amr Khaled is poised to be one of the voices vying for the microphone.



Project History

Throughout 2007 – 2008, Egyptian Executive Producer Mohamed Gohar, Director Mick Csaky and Field producer Zahra Mackaoui followed Amr Khaled through Egypt, Yemen, Birmingham UK, New York and Los Angeles as he preached his message to Muslims and their supporters. The crews shot over 100 hours of HD footage and conducted casual and formal interviews with him, asking questions about his motivations and ideological underpinnings. This was not as simple a task as it sounds. In part because of the nature of his teaching (moderate presentation with conservative overtones) and the fact that his core audience is female (not done in Islam), Amr Khaled is a controversial person in his homeland. Arab-speaking newspapers over the years have reported that the Mubarek government has a modified ban on his appearances and most of his followers do so by his broadcasts, CDs, out-of-town appearances or on his website. The project's field producers were challenged by a lack of cooperation from the Egyptian government, as well as by Amr Khaled's own circum-spect revelations about his relationship with the government and traditional Muslim leaders.

Emmy-Award winning producer Eugenia Harvey was contracted in 2009 to re-write and produce a rough cut which would illuminate Amr Khaled's potential as a burgeoning figure in Egypt's political landscape. She is the US-based producer for the project.

The Producers

Executive Producer | Mohammed Gohar, VCS Chairman | Bio

Mohamed Gohar: Chief Executive Officer, Video Cairo Sat .Throughout his 3 decades of accomplishment in the broadcast industry, Mohammed Gohar has held fast to a core set of ideals that set his initiatives apart in the region. Beginning his career as a cameraman for the American network NBC in the early 1970s, he has since established partnerships with a diverse and comprehensive line-up of worldwide broadcasters and agencies, acting as collaborator with and bridge between Western and Middle East media interests. Currently, Video Cairo Sat is one of the leading independent news production and gathering agencies in Egypt and the Middle East. As Chief Executive Officer, Mohammed Gohar, continues to direct VCS to providing quality services as well as the latest technology to international clientele.

Throughout his nearly four decades of work in the broadcast industry, Mohamed Gohar has held fast to a core set of ideals, embracing independence, editorial freedom and impartiality, principles which continue to set him apart in the region. Gohar obtained a BA in Applied Arts and a degree in Cinematography and was an amateur photographer before beginning his professional career in 1971 as a cameraman and producer for Egyptian television and film. In 1974, he began providing local production services for several international Hollywood films. From 1973 to 1981, Gohar worked closely with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat as his main producer covering most of his local and international TV appearances. In 1974 he was the local producer on Sadat: Action Biography, Sadat's first interview with a media broadcaster from the West, co-produced for ABC by the late Peter Jennings. Gohar joined NBC/New York staff as a cameraman and producer in 1976, and worked for several other news agencies as early as 1971, including Reuters and WTN. In 1973, Gohar began covering wars and conflict zones in the Middle East, Africa and Southern Europe. He has since devised a methodology capitalizing on the power of the media as catalyst for change to fight terrorism. Gohar has produced programs featuring on shows hosted by the first generation of highly rated American anchors and producers such as Barbara Walters, John Chancellor (NBC), and Walter Cronkite (CBS), to name a few. He has established partnerships with a diverse and comprehensive line-up of worldwide broadcasters and agencies, including NHK (Japan) and throughout much of Europe, including the BBC, for which he produced the documentary *The Gun and the Veil* (1993). In 1973, he single-handedly established Video Cairo as an independent media production company in the Arab world. He played a key role in establishing several satellite and independent television stations in the Middle East including Dream TV, Mehwar in Egypt and Al Nahrain TV Channel in Iraq. In 1983 he established the first Arabic TV news services in Jerusalem.

Current job position as CEO of Video Cairo Sat, Mohammed Gohar employs over 100 employees trained and skilled in operating modern broadcast facilities. With extensive experience in producing content to fill an entire programming grid for Arab satellite channels, Gohar has proven to be a forerunner in encompassing diverse media genres: from news and current affairs, to documentaries and drama, working with an impressive array of global broadcasters, including Al Jazeera, supporting their launch and providing broadcast services through VCS from 1996 and to 2001. In 2008, Reuters selected VCS to run its global news support services from Cairo, Video Cairo Sat Support Services (VCSS). Gohar oversees and upholds the vision of VCSS to be a model for healthy news rooms in the region promoting news standards and providing impartial, accurate and instantaneous coverage to a global audience.

Media for social change Gohar has always believed in pursuing socially responsible media through partnerships between local media and international commercial and non-profit media initiatives. In 2007 he co-produced The Bridge- a reality based documentary- with Common Ground Productions (CGP) to bridge the growing divide between American and Arab Islamic societies, counter misconceptions and stereotypes and reveal the common humanity of both cultures. VCS also co-produced The Station, the first Egyptian TV drama series to deal with controversial socio-cultural issues ailing contemporary Egyptian society. Gohar's belief in the power of media to impact change in society inspired him to launch the Civic Media Unit (CMU) in 2008 focusing solely on media action for social change. The Unit pursues partnerships with development, humanitarian, and civil society organizations. Gohar has trained generations of broadcast journalists throughout his career. His commitment to the development of broadcast journalism was entrusted to the CMU which develops and provides customized media and new media training to young journalists, civil society organizations, young community coordinators and students.

Honorary Positions

Associate member of the Adham Center for Journalism and Mass Communication in the American University in Cairo (1981-2008), as well as their first lecturer on Broadcast Journalism.

Long time affiliate of Search for Common Ground, Washington.

Member of the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee at the US Islamic World Forum.

Board Member of the Arab Media Forum (2001-2008).

Current Board Member of C-100, the Council of 100 Leaders for West-Islamic World Dialogue.



Producer | Eugenia Harvey | Bio

March, 2010

Eugenia Harvey is a multiple award-winning producer with extensive experience at several television networks and web-based programming. A graduate of both the University of Georgia and Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, she began her career as a researcher at CBS News. After working in both live morning television and the network's political unit, she opted to pursue long-form storytelling.

Eugenia spent the next few years first as a field producer at PBS' MacNeil-Lehrer productions, then at ABC News PrimeTime Live with Diane Sawyer and Sam Donaldson, where she was one of the original staff members tapped to help develop the award-winning program. As a young producer there, she was personally chosen by Diane Sawyer to be a member of her production team. While at PrimeTime, Eugenia's work earned her two nominations and an Emmy Award for Investigative Reporting and the Grand Prize Robert F. Kennedy award, presented by his widow, Ethel Kennedy at their home in Hickory Hill, VA. She has also received awards from the Society of Professional Journalists/SDX, Investigative Reporters and Editors, the Ohio State University, CEBA, The NY Association of Black Journalists, The National Association of Black Journalists and other journalism, civic and professional organizations.

Eugenia is a prolific producer, and following her years at ABC News, she returned to CBS News' Street Stories with Ed Bradley and subsequently CBS'48 Hours. Her work there received the attention of Tom Johnson, then-chairman of CNN. She returned to her home state of Georgia, as a Senior Producer of special projects at CNN where she developed series, specials and pilots. Also at CNN, Eugenia produced a series of specials and documentaries from South Africa, most notably profiling outgoing President, Nelson Mandela. As a producer/writer/director, Eugenia has produced international projects in Italy, France, Haiti, Bahrain, Dubai and Egypt.

In addition to her broadcast work, Eugenia wrote and produced a Christian theatrical work, "My Father's Will", an urban Passion play based on the Seven Last Words of Christ. For seven years, the play was performed at Aaron Davis Hall at City College, to enthusiastic acclaim of New York audiences. The cast and crew consisted of several Broadway

performers including Peter J. Fernandez, Denise Micklebury Fernandez, Iris Little Thomas, Leonard Thomas, Valerie Macklin and Rae Ross-Sandifer.

In 2000, Eugenia entered the programming and development side of television at Women.com, a division of Hearst publications and the progenitor of iVillage. As Director of Television and Broadband programming, Eugenia developed multi-platform programming for both broadcast and web viewers. In 2007, Eugenia was Executive Producer of BET's Meet the Faith, a news and cultural affairs program produced by BET News. She recently developed and Executive Produced a music variety show newly created Gospel Music Channel, and is titled Bobby Jones Next Generation. Eugenia recently re-wrote and produced a documentary in Egypt, (working title "The Anti bin Laden"), about Muslim televangelist Amr Khaled and his role in Egypt's growing religious conservatism. She is also Executive Producer of CaffeineTV, a New York-based web television program currently in development.

For interviews with the film's producers, contact:

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THE GLOBAL ELITE

48: Amr Khaled

Egyptian televangelist

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Amr Khaled

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Witty and soft-spoken, Khaled is sometimes described as the "anti-bin Laden," a tolerant accountant turned televangelist whose feel-good brand of Islam calls for dialogue over destruction. His sermons are broadcast worldwide—on YouTube and four Arab satellite stations—and his message of self-improvement through hard work and prayer is more Joel Osteen than Moqtada al-Sadr. But the same Western-friendly style that has endeared him to millions of liberal Muslims has angered hard-liners, who forced Khaled into exile in Britain in 2002. There he has reinvented himself as, in the words of one Arab newspaper, a "Pied Piper" for young European Muslims who are following his conciliatory tune.

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HEROES & PIONEERS

Amr Khaled

By ASRA NOMANI Thursday, May 03, 2007



Amr Khaled
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Amr Khaled is not a household name in the West. But for a segment of the Islamic world, the 39-year-old Egyptian is a rock star. At a time when conservative clerics have become primary arbiters of power, Khaled, a layman, has one of the Arab world's most popular websites; regular shows on Iqra, a Saudi-owned religious satellite channel; and an influence that prompts comparisons with everyone from Dr. Phil to Pat Robertson. But Khaled may be most like Rick Warren, who has built an empire around his "purpose driven life" philosophy. Khaled's model, "life makers," encourages Muslims to implement action plans for transforming their lives and communities through Islam. It also urges them to get along peacefully with the West.

What really put Khaled on the world stage was his decision to host an interfaith conference in Copenhagen in March 2006, after the controversies over the Danish cartoons mocking the Prophet Muhammad. Muslim clerics criticized him for extending an olive branch to the Danes. But Khaled didn't back down. An accountant by training who favors Hugo Boss shirts and designer suits, he maintains some traditional views—he believes women should wear headscarves, for example—but Khaled is a needed voice for moderation from within the Muslim world. "[Osama] bin Laden is saying he is talking on behalf of Muslims," he says. "Who asked him to talk on behalf of us? Nobody."

Nomani, a journalist and author, wrote Standing Alone in Mecca



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