

## **Al Azhar and Vatican against terrorism. The ambiguity of the international community**

Bernardo Cervellera, *AsiaNews*, 27 June 2015, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Al-Azhar-and-Vatican-against-terrorism.-The-ambiguity-of-the-international-community-34631.html>

*The influential Sunni university denounces "heinous" violence of the Islamic state and demands the world defeat this group "through every possible means". Vatican: terrorism is a threat to all humanity. France claims to fight terrorism, but then sells weapons, aircraft, and helicopter gunships to Saudi Arabia, which supports Islamic fundamentalism. Kuwait tolerates Salafis who support the Nusra Front and the Islamic state. Turkey against the Kurds; the United States against Iran, Russia and China.*



Faced with the bloodshed in Tunisia, Kuwait, France, Somalia (and we might add Syria and Iraq), there is a clear common vision between al-Azhar, the most prestigious and authoritative university in the Sunni world, and what the Vatican has been saying for over a year now, that is that terrorism is a global challenge and must be addressed with an all-out campaign. On the contrary, it is increasingly clear that many countries - including the very nations that are victims of terrorism - prefer the distinctions of ambiguous alliances, focusing particularly on mere economic interests.

In the aftermath of the attacks on the beach in Sousse, the Shiite mosque in Kuwait and the beheading near Lyon, al-Azhar condemned has condemned what it defines as the "heinous" violence as "violation of all religious and humanitarian norms ". It has also called for "the international community to" defeat this terrorist group [the Islamic state-ed] through every possible means ".

This appeal to the "international community" is not rhetorical and is in complete harmony with the calls that Pope Francis, the Vatican Secretariat of State, the nuncios to the UN in Geneva and New York, the Eastern patriarchs have all launched this year: namely that the international community must confront and combat this threat to all of humanity, not wash their hands or worse, attempt to circumscribe it in regions far from their own country: the dead are now many nationalities and Europe, just like America has become an almost daily target.

Even Tunisia, the only country where the Arab Spring has been successful, has been targeted by the attacks, and is appealing - in the words of its president Essebsi - not to be left alone to fight the terrorist threat, calling instead for "a unified global strategy ".

The "unified strategy" is necessary for France - also affected by terrorism - which continues to exploit the divisions in the Middle East, supporting al-Nusra Front (al-Qaeda) against Assad and claiming it was an enemy of the Islamic State in Iraq. But meanwhile Paris sells weapons, aircraft, and helicopter gunships to Saudi Arabia which are used to fight the Houthis in Yemen and encourage Sunni fundamentalists of al Qaeda and the Islamic State.

A "united strategy "is also important for Kuwait, where the presence of Salafis has been tolerated for years implicated in massacres of Shiites in Syria and accused of supporting

organizations linked to al-Nusra Front and the Islamic state.

And it is also important for Turkey, which in order the creation of a Kurdish State, is willing to compromise with the Caliphate militants allowing the traffic of new recruits and oil smuggling to flow through its porous borders.

The United States also needs to commit to a "unified strategy and global" given their unambiguous support to the Nusra Front in the fight against Bashar Assad, and in the ongoing battle against (which in reality is merely containing) the Islamic State in Iraq, selling weapons to ' Saudi Arabia and the Kurds, accusing Iran of terrorism and closing a blind eye to the Qatar and Riyadh.

The fight against terrorism can no longer rely on the decisions of "willing" partial players, it now must be taken on by the United Nations which, with the cooperation of all - also of Iran, Russia and China – puts a halt to the funding of militias and shares information and strategies.

What is happening in Syria and Iraq, in Mosul and in Raqqa, affects the entire international community.