

The Jihad Doctrine of Abdallah Azzam

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This paper examines the jihad doctrine of Abdallah Azzam (d. 1989), the Palestinian scholar who led the mobilization of Arabs to the 1980s Afghan jihad. I ask what Azzam actually said about jihad and where he fits in the intellectual history of modern jihadism. First I review Azzam's biography and bibliography; next I describe the content of his writings on jihad, distinguishing between three dimensions of his thought: his views on *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello*, and strategy respectively; and finally I compare his views to those of other prominent ideologues. I show that for Azzam, jihad was primarily about liberating occupied territory, and secondarily about Islamizing states. He had a more restrictive view on tactics than many subsequent militants, but did not accord absolute immunity to non-combatants. His strategic vision was unsophisticated and unrealistic. His main contribution is to have articulated a doctrine that commanded legitimacy by being close to the classical tradition, while at the same time facilitating non-state activism by denying governments the legal power to prevent their citizens from fighting abroad. Ultimately, Azzam paved the way for the rise of al-Qaida by emphasizing the need for a transnational military effort to repel non-Muslim interventions in the Muslim world.