Reproach

We address it to our distinguished colleague *Al-Siyasa*, for it has exceeded all bounds in excess and recklessness. What are we to think of a wandering newspaper that pursues every rumor spoken about the scholars of Islam—the lamps of darkness, the guides of truth, the stars of the night, the heirs of the prophets—and publishes it without seeking certainty or verifying its truth, thereby offending the heirs of the prophets themselves?

And what offense could be greater than spreading evil stories about them and broadcasting scandal concerning them? What injury could be more severe to Muslims than portraying their spiritual leaders and protectors in the shameful image this newspaper has lately circulated?

Months ago it announced that one of the sheikhs of Al-Azhar had traveled second class while claiming reimbursement for first class travel, thereby appropriating money that did not belong to him but rather to God and the Muslims. The paper continued publishing and repeating this story, attacking and declaiming without end, until we became utterly weary of it and deeply disgusted by it.

At last we appealed to His Eminence the Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar to deny these reports, remove this disgrace, and compel *Al■Siyasa* to silence.

But His Eminence the Grand Sheikh was a man of immense patience and generosity. He ignored *Al■Siyasa* out of mercy and compassion toward it, confident that no reasonable person would believe such accusations. For who could imagine that one of the great lights of guidance, one of the stars of faith, an imam of Islam itself, would withhold from the state two small piastres—whether slightly more or slightly less?

Yet patience often encourages further wrongdoing, and forgiveness awakens greed. *Al■Siyasa* mistook the Sheikh’s patience for weakness, his forgiveness for helplessness, and his silence for surrender. How mistaken it was! The Sheikh is far above weakness, far stronger than helplessness, and far too dignified to surrender. But people are naturally tempted to exploit those who forgive them and to attack those who treat them kindly.

And now this same newspaper publishes another story even worse than the first, again without verification or certainty. A shining star among the scholars of religion, a pillar of Islam, a member of the Council of Senior Scholars whose task is to call people to the path of God and defend the faith—this

man is accused by *Al■Siyasa*, God forbid, of having presided over a society of scholars that collected money and later dissolved, leaving the funds entrusted to him for years upon years.

According to the newspaper, the scholars repeatedly urged him to spend the money on charity and good works, while he remained indifferent, behaving as though no one spoke to him or questioned him about it.

Such were the claims published this very morning by *Al■Siyasa*. And before God, before the scholars, and before all people, I declare myself entirely innocent of what the newspaper has said. I do not repeat these claims in order to endorse or record them, but rather to condemn them with the strongest possible denial.

I reproach *Al■Siyasa* severely for publishing them, and I call upon the Grand Sheikh to set aside his excessive patience and merciful forbearance and publicly deny these accusations. For part of defending the religion of God and calling people to His path is ensuring that the heirs of the prophets remain purer than purity itself and cleaner than spotless clarity.

And I call upon *Al■Siyasa* itself to erase what it has written, deny what it has published, and apologize to Islam and its lights, to the stars of the night and the signs of guidance, to the prophets and their heirs, for words that bring no benefit but only harm, and that do not beautify but merely offend.

Perhaps *Al■Siyasa* will not be angry if we speak harshly in reproach and sternly in blame. We have merely given it a small portion of what it deserves and repaid it with only the lightest measure of criticism.