

Son of Hamas Leader Turns Back on Islam

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Mosab Hassan Yousef is an extraordinary young man with an extraordinary story. He was born the son of one of the most influential leaders of the militant Hamas organization in the West Bank and grew up in a strict Islamic family.

Now, at 30 years old, he attends an evangelical Christian church, Barabbas Road in San Diego, Calif. He renounced his Muslim faith, left his family behind in Ramallah and is seeking asylum in the United States.

The story of how his life unfolded is truly amazing, whether you agree or disagree with his views. Below is a transcript on an exclusive FOX News interview with Hassan as he tells firsthand how a West Bank Muslim became a West Coast Christian.

[Click here to view video of Mosab Hassan Yousef speaking out.](#)

[Click here to view video 'Renouncing Islam.'](#)

JONATHAN HUNT: Why, after 25 years, did you change?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: I believe that all those walls that [Islam](#) built for the last 1,400 years are not existing (sic) anymore. They don't recognize this. They built those walls and made people ignorant because they're afraid. They didn't want people to discuss anything about the reality of Islam, about the big questions of Islam and they asked their followers, the Muslims, 'Don't ask about those certain questions.'

But now, people have media. If the father closes the door for his daughter not to leave the house, she's going to go behind her computer and travel the world. So people easily can get information, knowledge, searching (sic) engines, so it's very, very available for everybody to study about Islam, about other religions. Not from the Islam point of view, but from other points of view.

So for the next 25 years this is for sure going to make huge change in the Muslim and the Arab world.

JONATHAN HUNT: You speak from a unique perspective, a man who grew up not just in an Islamic family but as part of an organization seen by many people around the world as an extreme force in Islam: [Hamas](#). What is the reality of Islam? You say people don't see the reality; What is the reality of Islam?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: There are two facts that Muslims don't understand ... I'd say about more than 95 percent of Muslims don't understand their own religion. It came with a much stronger language than the language that they speak so they don't understand it ... they rely only on religious people to get their knowledge about this religion.

Second, they don't understand anything about other religions. Christian communities live between Muslims and they're minority and they (would) rather not to go speak out and tell people about Jesus because it's dangerous for them.

So, all their ideas about other religions on earth are from Islamic perspectives. So those two realities, most people don't understand.

If people, if Muslims, start to understand their religion - first of all, their religion - and see how awful stuff is in there, they'll start to figure out, this can't (be) ... because most religious people focus on certain points of Islam. They have many points that they are very embarrassed to talk about.

JONATHAN HUNT: Such as?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: Such as Muhammad's wives. You will never go to a mosque and hear about anyone talking about Muhammad's wives, which is like more than 50 wives - and nobody knows (this), by the way. If you ask the majority of Muslims, they will not know this fact.

So they're embarrassed to talk about this, but they talk about the glory of Islam, they talk about the victory, the victories that Muhammad made. So, when people just like look at themselves and see they're defeated, they have ignorance, they're not educated, they're not leading the world as they're expected to do. They're think they want to get back to that victory by doing the same, what Muhammad did, but disregarding (sic) the timing. They forget that this happened 1,400 years ago and it's not going to happen again.

JONATHAN HUNT: Do they want to destroy Christianity?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: Islam destroyed Christianity from the beginning and Muslims don't recognize that they stabbed Christianity (in) its heart when they said that Jesus wasn't killed on the cross. They think that they honor him in this way.

Basically, any Christians understand that this way, (but Muslims) tell Jesus, okay, we don't care, you didn't die for us. Someone sacrificed his life for you, (but) you tell him, okay, you didn't do it!

This is what Muslims are doing basically. But they don't understand that this is the most important part of Christianity: the cross!

So, they are ignorant, they don't know what they are doing and it explains what an evil idea it is behind this Islam.

JONATHAN HUNT: What specific event or events began to change your mind about Islam?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: Since I was a child I started to ask very difficult questions, even my family was telling me all the time, 'You're a very difficult person and we were having trouble answering your questions. Why are you asking so many questions?' This was from the beginning, to be honest with you.

But I felt that everybody - and my father was a good example for me because he was a very honest, humble person, very nice to my mother, to us, and raised us on the principle of forgiveness, okay? I thought that everybody in Islam was like this.

When I was 18 years old, and I was arrested by the Israelis and was in an Israeli jail under the Israeli administration, Hamas had control of its members inside the jail and I saw their torture; (they were) torturing people in a very, very bad way.

JONATHAN HUNT: Hamas members torturing other Hamas members?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: Hamas leaders! Hamas leaders that we see on TV now, and big leaders, responsible for torturing their own members. They didn't torture me, but that was a shock for me, to see them torturing people: putting needles under their nails, burning their bodies. And they killed lots of them.

JONATHAN HUNT: Why were they torturing people?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: Because they suspected that they had relations with the Israelis and (were) co-operating with the Israeli occupation against Hamas ... So hundreds of people were victims for this, and I was a witness for about a year for this torture. So that was a huge change in my life. I started to open my (eyes), but, the point (is) that I got that there are good Muslims and bad Muslims. Good Muslims, such as my father, and bad Muslims, like those Hamas members in the jail torturing people.

So that was the beginning of opening my eyes wide.

JONATHAN HUNT: You talk about the good Muslims, like your father, yet you still now renounce the faith of your father. Could you have not been a good Muslim?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: Now, here's the reality: after I studied Christianity - which I had a big misunderstanding about, because I studied about Christianity from Islam, which is, there is nothing true about Christianity when you study it from Islam, and that was the only source.

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When I studied the Bible carefully verse by verse, I made sure that that was the book of God, the word of God for sure, so I started to see things in a different way, which was difficult for me, to say Islam is wrong.

Islam is my father. I grew up for (one) father - 22 years for that father - and another father came to me and told me, 'I'm sorry, I'm your father.' And I was like, 'What are you talking about? Like, I have my own father, and it's Islam!' And the father of Christianity told me, 'No, I'm your father. I was in jail, and this (Islam) is not your father.'

So basically this is what happened. It's not easy to believe this (Islam) is not your father anymore. So I had to study Islam again from a different point of view to figure out all the mistakes, the huge mistakes and its effects, not only on Muslims - (of) which I hated the values ... I didn't like all those traditions that make people's lives more difficult - but its effects also on humanity. On humanity! People killing each other (in) the name of God.

So definitely I started to figure out the problem is Islam, not the Muslims and those people - I can't hate them because God loved them from the beginning. And God doesn't create junk. God created good people that he loved, but they're sick, they have the wrong idea. I don't hate those people anymore but I feel very sorry for them and the only way for them to be changed (is) by knowing the word of God and the real way to him.

JONATHAN HUNT: Does it worry you that in saying these things - and given your background and your words carrying extra weight - there is a danger that you will increase the difficulties, the hatred between Christians and Muslims in the world right now?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: This could happen if a Christian person will go talk to them about the reality of Islam. They put Christians on the enemy list anyway, before you talk to them about Islam. So if you go to them and tell them, as a Christian, they will be offended immediately and they will hate you and this will definitely increase the vacuum between both religions - but what made someone like me change?

Years ago, years ago, when I was there, God opened my eyes, my mind also, and I became a completely different person. So now, I can do this duty, while you as Christians can help me do it, but maybe you wouldn't be able to. (Muslims) have no excuse now.

JONATHAN HUNT: How difficult a process has this been for you to effectively walk away from your family, leave your home behind? How difficult is that?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: Taking your skin off your bones, that's what happened. I love my family, they love me. And my little brothers, they're like my sons. I raised them. Basically, it was the biggest decision in my life.

I left everything behind me, not only family. When you decide to convert to Christianity or any other religion from Islam, it's not (enough) to just say goodbye and leave, you know? It's not like that. You're saying goodbye to culture, civilization, traditions, society, family, religion, God - what you thought was God for so many years! So it's not easy. It's very complicated. People think it's that easy, like it doesn't matter. Now I'm here in the U.S. and I got my freedom and it's great, but at the same time, nothing is like family, you know. To lose your family -

JONATHAN HUNT: Have you lost your family?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: My family is educated and it was very difficult for them. They asked me many times, especially for the first two days, to keep my faith to myself and not go to the media and announce it.

But for me it was a duty from God to announce his name and praise him (around) the world because my reward is going to be that he's going to do the same for me. So I did it, basically, as a duty. I (wonder) how many people can do what I can do today? I didn't find any.

So, I had to be strong about that. That was very challenging. That was the most difficult decision in my life and I didn't do it for fun. I didn't do it for anything from this world. I did it only for one reason: I believed in it. People are suffering every day because of wrong ideas. I can help them get out of this endless circle ... the track the devil (laid) for them.

JONATHAN HUNT: Have you spoken to your father recently?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: There is no chance to communicate with my father because he's in jail now and there is (sic) no phones in the jail to communicate with him.

JONATHAN HUNT: Have other members of your family told you how he's reacted?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: They've visited him from time to time. Till this moment, I don't know his reaction exactly but I'm sure he's very sad (over) a decision like this. But at the same time, he's going to understand, because he knows me and he knows that I don't

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make any decisions without (believing strongly in them).

JONATHAN HUNT: Is it making his life more difficult among fellow Hamas members?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: Definitely. My family, including my father, had to carry this cross with me. It wasn't their choice. It was my choice, but they had to carry this cross with me and I ask God - I pray for (my father), all my brothers and my sisters here in this church, praying all the time for them - 'God, open their eyes, their minds, to come to Christ. And bless them because they had to carry this cross with me.'

JONATHAN HUNT: Tell me about Hamas and the way it works. Is Hamas a purely Islamic religious organization as you see it, and that's where, in your eyes, its faults lie, or are there other parts of it which are a problem for you? Or is Hamas a good organization? What is Hamas to you?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: If we talk about people, there are good people everywhere. Everywhere. I mean, good people that God created.

Do they do their own things? Yes, they do their own things. I know people who support Hamas but they never got involved in terrorist attacks, for example ... They follow Hamas because they love God and they think that Hamas represents God. They don't have knowledge, they don't know the real God and they never studied Christianity. But Hamas, as representative for Islam, it's a big problem.

The problem is not Hamas, the problem is not people. The root of the problem is Islam itself as an idea, as an idea. And about Hamas as an organization, of course, the Hamas leadership, including my father, they're responsible; they're responsible for all the violence that happened from the organization. I know they describe it as reaction to Israeli aggression, but still, they are part of it and they had to make decisions in those operations against [Israel](#), (for) which there was the killing of many civilians.

JONATHAN HUNT: Do you believe Israel blameless in the conflict?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: Occupation is bad. I can't say Israel - I'm not against any nation. We can't say Israelis, we can't say Palestinians, we're talking about ideas. Israel has the right to defend itself, nobody can (argue) against this. But sometimes they use (too much) aggression against civilians. Sometimes many civilians were killed because those soldiers weren't responsible enough, how they treat people at the checkpoints.

My message even to the Israeli soldiers: at least treat people in a good way at the checkpoints. You don't have to look really bad and it's not about nations, it's about just wrong ideas on both sides and the only way for two nations really to get out of the endless circle is to know the principles that Jesus brought to this earth: grace, love, forgiveness. Without this, they will never be able to move on, or break this endless circle.

JONATHAN HUNT: You've seen your father jailed, you've been in prison yourself. You've seen Hamas carry out acts of terror against Israelis, and yet you say everybody needs to rise above that?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: Definitely. This is the only choice. Nobody has magic power to do something for the [Middle East](#). No one. You can ask any politician here in the U.S., you can ask any Palestinian politician or Arab politician, Israeli leaders; no one, no one can do anything. Even if they believe in peace now: they're part of the game.

They're part of the trick. They can't, even if you find a brave person, like Rabin, who was called by an Israeli to make peace with the Palestinians and give them a state, no one, even if you find a strong leader, they can't do this. You can't force an independent country to give another country independence. (Especially when) the other country wants to destroy it.

Everybody is hurt. Israeli soldiers, they lost their friends. Palestinians, they lost their children, their fathers. (There are) many people in prison still, and many people were killed. Thousands. So everybody will never forget this. If they want to keep looking to the past, they will never get out of this circle. The only way to start (is just by) moving on. They were born under the occupation as Palestinians.

The last two generations, it's not their choice. The new generations from Israel - if we say disregarding the existence of Israel is right or wrong, what's the guilt of those people who were born in Israel and they have no other country to go to? It's their country now, that's how they see it. And they are going to keep their resistance and defense against whomever. (They will) say, 'Get out of this land!' So the only way is for both nations to start to understand the grace, love and forgiveness of God, to be able to get out of this.

JONATHAN HUNT: Do you believe that Israel can ever strike a peace deal with Hamas?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: There is no chance. Is there any chance for fire to co-exist with the water? There is no chance. Hamas can play politics for 10 years, 15 years; but ask any one of Hamas' leaders, 'Okay, what's going to happen after that? Are you just going to

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live and co-exist with Israel forever?' The answer is going to be no ... unless they want to do something against the Koran. But it's their ideology and they can't just say 'We're not going to do it.' So there is no chance. It's not about Israel, it's not about Hamas: it's about both ideologies. There is no chance.

JONATHAN HUNT: Aren't you terrified that somebody is going to try to kill you for saying these things - which would be approved of according to parts of the Koran?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: They got to kill my ideas first, (and) that's it, they're already out. So how are they going to kill my idea? How are they going to kill the opinions that I have? ... They can kill my body, but they can't kill my soul.

JONATHAN HUNT: You're not afraid?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: As a human, you know, I can be very brave now, I'm not thinking about it at this moment and I feel that God is on my side. But if this will be the challenge, I ask God to give me enough strength.

JONATHAN HUNT: Have you been threatened?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: No, not really. Honestly, most Muslims and Muslim leaders here in the U.S. community, European communities, they are trying to get ahold of me. They are calling my family, my mother, and asking for my contacts. They are telling her, 'We want to help him.'

JONATHAN HUNT: They think you need help?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: Yeah, they think that Christians took advantage of me, and this is completely wrong. I've been a Christian for a long time before they knew, or anyone knew. I love Jesus, I followed him for many years now. It wasn't a secret for most of the time, and this time I just did it to glorify the name of God and praise him.

They're not dealing with a regular Muslim. They know that I'm educated, they know that I studied, they know that I studied Islam and Christianity. When I made my decision, I didn't make it because someone did magic on me or convinced me. It was completely my decision.

JONATHAN HUNT: Do you miss Ramallah?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: Definitely. You've been there and you know how a wonderful country (it is). Very, very beautiful. It's a very small spot and it has everything - this is why people are fighting for that piece of land. I definitely miss Ramallah. Jerusalem. The Old City.

JONATHAN HUNT: Do you believe you will ever be able to go back?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: I think I belong to that land, and sooner or later I'm going to go back, no matter what. If they want to kill me, they (will) do whatever they want to do. I have a family there, they love me, they completely support me now with my decisions. Maybe they don't want me to talk to the media but they believe that I made a decision that I completely believe in. So they support me, so I love my family. I'm going to go back there again one day. I love my town.

JONATHAN HUNT: Do you think you'll ever go back to a Middle East living in peace?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: There will be a 100-person peace when Jesus comes back, when he judges everybody. His kingdom's going to be 1,000 years and it's going to be completely peaceful and it's going to be the kingdom of God.

JONATHAN HUNT: What is your basic message to any Muslim listening to this right now?

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF: My message to them is, first of all, to open their minds. They were born to Muslim families - this is how they got Islam and this is just like ... any other religion, like growing up (in) a Christian family, or growing up (in) a Jewish family.

So my point is that I want those people to open their eyes, their minds, to start to understand and imagine that they weren't born for a Muslim family. And use their minds.

Why did God give them minds? Open their hearts. Read the Bible. Study their religion. I want to open the gate for them, I want them to be free. They will find a good life on earth just by following God - and they're also going to guarantee the other life.

By Jonathan Hunt
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