



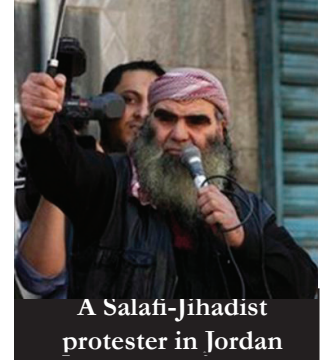
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In-Depth Analysis of the War on Terror

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A Salafi-Jihadist protester in Jordan

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LIBYAN BERBERS DEFY REGIME THAT DENIES THEIR EXISTENCE (PART ONE)

In the remote mountains that range along Libya's western border with Tunisia, North Africa's indigenous Berber tribes are locked in a life-and-death struggle with Mu'ammarr Qaddafi's Arab-supremacist regime. Though they were among the first to rebel against Qaddafi's government, the Berbers are poorly armed and severely short of food and fuel with loyalist forces in the plains cutting off supply routes. Direct military intervention by NATO warplanes appears to the Berbers to be the only way of repelling advancing loyalist troops.

There are an estimated 25 million Berbers (as defined by use of Berber languages) spread across North Africa. The Berbers call themselves Imazighen ("Free Men") and their ancestors were known to their ancient Egyptian neighbors as the Libu, the Meshwesh, the Tjehenu and the Tamahu.

Libya's Berbers do not form a single group; a division between Eastern and Western Berbers dates back to ancient times and the desert-dwelling ethnic-Berber Tuareg developed their own independent culture centuries ago. As a result, there are three main groups of ethnic-Berbers in Libya with only minimal interrelation:

- The Western Berbers consist of two main groups.
 - 1) The tribes of the Ait Willul live in the coastal city of Zuwara, known in Berber as Tamurt n Wat Willul (Town of the Ait Willul). Zuwara rose

in revolt in February, but government forces suppressed the rebellion there a month later.

2) The Nafusa tribes live in the Western Mountains (al-Jabal al-Gharbi), better known as the Nafusa Mountains after the region's Berber name, Adrar n Infusen. The Nafusa Berbers retreated there from the coast to isolate themselves from the mass Arabization of the Libyans after the arrival of two large Arab tribes in the 11th century, the Banu Hilal and the Banu Salim. The Nafusa declared against Qaddafi in the earliest days of the rebellion despite having little ability to defend their communities. With the government having managed to consolidate itself in other parts of western Libya, loyalist forces have now turned their attention to the mountain rebels.

- The Eastern Berbers live in the oasis towns of Jalu and Awjilah, about 250km southeast of the battlefield at Ajdabiyah. Rebel sources reported a new loyalist offensive by troops in trucks mounted with anti-aircraft guns and Grad rockets against the settlements this week, part of a government effort to cut off rebel-held northern Cyrenaica from the oil and water-rich Libyan interior. The loyalist column of 45 vehicles was destroyed in a NATO airstrike on May 1 after the column attacked Jalu and Awjilah (Reuters, May 1; Upstream Online, May 2).

- The Tuareg live in communities focused on the oases of southwestern Libya. Though ethnically Berber, the Tuareg developed their own culture and version of the Berber language (Tamasheq or Tamahaq) after their ancestors migrated deep into the African interior roughly 1600 years ago. Despite insisting the Tuareg are actually Arabs, Qaddafi has also sought their favor at times due to their reputation as skilled desert fighters he could use in his efforts to expand his influence in the Sahara and Sahel regions. Qaddafi's occasional efforts to champion the Tuareg cause and arm Tuareg rebel movements outside Libya appear to have brought large numbers of Tuareg from Mali and Niger to Libya to join the loyalist forces, though this recruitment has been achieved more through cash payments than personal loyalty to Qaddafi. [1] Libya's own Tuareg appear divided on whether to support Qaddafi, though few, if any, appear to have joined the armed rebellion.

Qaddafi has always regarded the existence of the Berbers as an annoying reminder of the Berber origins of his own Arabized tribe and hence an impediment to his efforts to become leader of the pan-Arab community. An apparent softening of the regime's approach to the Berber minority led by Saif al-Islam Qaddafi in 2007 (which included lifting the ban on Berber names) was reversed by Mu'ammar Qaddafi less than a year later when the Libyan leader travelled to the Western mountains to warn Berbers; "You can call yourselves whatever you want inside your homes – Berbers, Children of Satan, whatever – but you are only Libyans when you leave your homes" [2]

Notes:

1. See Andrew McGregor, "Libyan Loyalists and Dissidents Vie for Tuareg Fighters," *Terrorism Monitor* Brief, March 10, 2011.

2. U.S. Embassy Tripoli cable 08TRIPOLI530, July 3, 2008, published by the Telegraph, January 31, 2011. See also AFP, August 24, 2007.

QADDAFI LOYALISTS RETAKE STRATEGIC OASIS OF KUFRA

Once known as "Forbidden Kufra," the small group of oases clustered in the vast deserts of southeastern Libya has become the latest battlefield in Libya as government forces battle to retake Kufra from the rebels who seized the region over a month ago. Despite being one of the most isolated settlements on Earth, deep in the Sahara and nearly surrounded by sand seas on three sides, Kufra has now become a strategically important center for the control of Libya's vital oil industry.

On April 28 a column of 60 vehicles carrying roughly 250 loyalist fighters arrived in Kufra, taking the oasis with only light resistance from its rebel defenders before raising the green national flag over the courthouse (Reuters, April 28). Saleh Muhammad al-Zaruq, the security chief for Kufra, had announced his support for the rebel forces in early April, putting the oasis region under rebel control (al-Jazeera, April 3).

According to rebel spokesmen, the loyalist forces travelled nearly 1,000 km from Sabha, a desert stronghold of Qaddafi forces surrounded by pro-regime tribes (Brnieq.com, May 3). The rebels also claimed the loyalists were accompanied by 1,500 Chadian

mercenaries, though this has not been confirmed. Rebel sources tend to exaggerate numbers and the degree of foreign support for Qaddafi in order to obtain greater military support from NATO forces. Libyan state television later reported: “Libyan forces have seized full control of the town of Kufra and purified it of the armed gangs” (Reuters, April 28). The attack on Kufra came days after loyalist forces raided a remote desert oil pumping station, killing eight guards (AFP, April 25).

Kufra was long held by the Teda wing of the indigenous Tubu people, whose large Tibesti-centered desert homeland covers southeastern Libya, northern Chad and eastern Niger. However, control of the oasis region was taken over by the powerful Zuwaya Arabs in 1840. This development opened Kufra to the influence of the Sanussi religious order, which moved their headquarters there in 1895 to resist attempts by the Ottoman rulers of northern Cyrenaica to bring the Sanussis under the supervision of Istanbul. From Kufra the Sanussis expanded their growing confederacy to areas of modern-day Chad, Niger and Western Egypt, areas for which they would soon compete with the colonial armies of France, Italy and Great Britain.

Though the Sanussis had lost much of their territory to the Europeans by the end of the First World War, Kufra continued to resist conquest and remained, with the exception of several prisoners and the redoubtable Rosita Forbes, closed to non-Muslims. When an Italian column under Marshal Rodolfo Graziani arrived in 1931 with 3,000 troops, artillery and a score of warplanes, Kufra’s fate was sealed.

The Italians built a fort and an important airfield, but were relieved of their new possession by a column of Free French and Chadian colonial troops with the aid of the newly-formed British Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) in March 1941. The battle marked the first major victory in the distinguished military career of the operation’s commander, French General Philippe Leclerc. Kufra was then used as a base for desert operations by the LRDG and Special Air Service (SAS).

In recent years Kufra has become an important center on the Libyan desert road system that has improved transportation across the Sahara and allowed food aid shipments to be driven south directly to refugee camps in Darfur and Chad (Mathaba.net, November 24, 2004). A massive agricultural project uses water drawn from the massive aquifers discovered beneath the Libyan desert. On a darker note, Kufra has also become an important

mid-way point for human traffickers shipping migrants from sub-Saharan Africa north to the Mediterranean coast, where they board overcrowded boats bound for a perilous voyage to Europe.

Zuwaya Arabs and Teda Tubu were reported to have clashed in Kufra in 2008, with the Teda getting the worst of it. The Libyan rebels claim to have support from the Zuwaya, but the Tubu are often seen as inclined towards Qaddafi (AFP, April 25). The Tubu have had their own problems with the Libyan leader, who expelled several thousand of them to Chad after a member of the Sanussi royal family tried to recruit Tubu mercenaries to fight Qaddafi in the early 1970s. Despite this, many Tubu find careers in the Libyan military that suit the warrior traditions of their noble clans. Under King Idriss al-Sanusi (1951-1969), the Tubu formed the royal guard. Loyalist operations in the oasis have the potential of reviving the local Arab-Tubu rivalry.

Bin Laden's Neighbors Say Compound Was Under Surveillance Since 2005

By Arif Jamal

Contrary to statements released by Pakistani intelligence agencies denying any knowledge of the occupants of the Abbottabad compound raided by American Special Forces units on May 1, there is evidence that the occupants of the compound housing Osama bin Laden were well known to Pakistani intelligence from the time the purpose-built compound was finished and occupied in 2005.

An official from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) told the BBC that the compound was raided by the ISI while still under construction in 2003 when the agency believed senior al-Qaeda operative Abu Faraj al-Libi was on site. Since then, however, the official claimed the intelligence agency had taken no interest in the facility: "The compound was not on our radar; it is an embarrassment for the ISI... We're good, but we're not God" (BBC, May 3). However, in a statement that appeared to reveal the confusion over the incident at the highest levels of the Pakistani government, an official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that the ISI "had been sharing information [on the compound] with the CIA and other friendly intelligence agencies since 2009" (*The News* [Islamabad], May 4).

The house in the garrison city of Abbottabad where Osama bin Laden apparently lived for several years before he was killed was the focus of neighbors' attention for several reasons. The most important reason was its size. The house was many times bigger than most houses in the neighborhood and its reclusive occupants also appeared to have money to throw around. If the balls of children playing in the streets accidentally landed in the compound, the children were given Rs 50 by the occupants of the house. [1] Several children told Pakistani TV channels that they had started throwing their balls into the compound on purpose. They were never refused the money (Geo TV, May 3).

However, there were also reasons for the people in the neighborhood not to suspect that this house was the residence of the most wanted terrorist in the world. The house had 12 to 16 foot high boundary walls surmounted by electrified barbed wire. There were

surveillance cameras fixed on the walls. The human security around the compound created the impression that it was a secret military or intelligence facility, something the people living in garrison towns are quite used to. A neighbor explained the local lack of interest in the unusual building by saying, "Once you know a particular building belongs to the military or an intelligence agency or any law-enforcement department in Pakistan, you stop taking interest in the unusualness of the building or the activities there." [2] The neighbors' conclusion that it belonged to some security agency seems to have put any worries at rest.

The compound became the focus of attention soon after construction on the building started sometime in the fall of 2004. The haste with which it was built also surprised the neighbors: "The pace of construction of this house was one of the topics in our discussion with our families and with friends. We used to say either the owner is fairly rich or it is going to be a military facility, which is not uncommon in this garrison city." [3] In a TV interview after his interrogation by the security agencies, Noor Mohammad, the contractor who built the house, said that the house was built in one and a half years (Geo TV, May 4). However, most of the neighbors' accounts put the construction period between nine and 12 months. Mohammad noted that, unlike the usual back-and-forth negotiations between contractor and owner at various stages of construction that are typical of the residential construction process in Pakistan, the owners of the Abbottabad house never disputed costs and met all requests for additional funds promptly and without question. He also said that the construction work continued uninterrupted, which suggests some urgency. According to another contractor, it is quite possible to construct such a house in six months if the work is conducted without interruption. [4]

When the house was completed its residents moved in quickly: "Nobody knew when exactly they moved in. They probably moved in the middle of night when all of us were sleeping. The furniture and other stuff were brought in during the day, possibly before they moved in. It took some time before the neighbors realized that there were people living in that house." [5] The few guests to the house typically arrived in the darkness and were rarely seen by the neighbors.

In a country where neighbors have strong ties and very often visit each other, the occupants of the new house discouraged their neighbors from visiting. "My wife tried to establish contacts with the women in that house more

than once but was rebuffed. It was the only house in the neighborhood whose female occupants were not known to the other female [residents of the neighborhood]. I had concluded that some nuclear scientist was living there. Some of the nuclear scientists' families are also reclusive." [6] Interestingly, no neighbor seems to have seen another family visiting the Bin Laden family.

The neighbors' accounts contradict official claims that the house was not on the radar of the intelligence agencies. According to several of these witnesses, the house was under continuous and heavy surveillance by the Pakistani intelligence agencies. A local resident observed: "The compound was continuously under the watch of agents of the intelligence and security agencies. They always looked suspiciously at every unusual interest in that compound by our guests. I always had the impression that it was some sort of an intelligence facility." [7] However, no neighbor ever saw any uniformed personnel visiting the compound. According to a local journalist, it is unlikely that any of the security agents deputed to carry out human surveillance on the compound would have been given any inkling of who was living there. [8] However, it seems clear those directing the surveillance were aware of the identity of the suspects under watch in the compound, indicating that the residents were under the protection of a Pakistani intelligence agency since occupation began.

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Notes:

1. Approximately 62 cents, a substantial sum for children in Pakistan.
2. Interview by a research assistant of a neighbor, Abbottabad, May 2.
3. Interview by a research assistant of a neighbor, Abbottabad, May 2.
4. Interview by a research assistant of a local contractor, Abbottabad, May 4.
5. Interview by a research assistant of a shopkeeper, Abbottabad, May 2.
6. Interview by a research assistant of a neighbor, Abbottabad, May 2.
7. Interview by a research assistant of a neighbor, Abbottabad, May 2.
8. Author's telephone interview with a local journalist, May 3.

Boko Haram Exploits Sectarian Divisions to Incite Civil War in Nigeria

By Jacob Zenn

Boko Haram carried out a series of attacks in northern Nigeria during the country's elections, which began on April 9 with legislative elections and continued on April 16 and April 26 with presidential and gubernatorial elections. While Boko Haram has typically targeted government buildings, military facilities and major public events since the group began militant attacks in 2004, many of its attacks in April – especially in the Borno State city of Maiduguri – were clearly aimed at disrupting the voting and campaigning.

The victims of the election attacks in Maiduguri were primarily party leaders, government officials and voters:

- An All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) gubernatorial candidate was assassinated on January 28 (newsonnigeria.com, January 29).
- The police chief of Borno State and an undercover policeman were assassinated in their homes during the week of February 20 (AFP, February 24).

- Imam Ibrahim Ahmed Abdullahi, an Islamic scholar and preacher against sectarian violence, was assassinated outside his mosque on March 13 (news24.com [Lagos], March 14).
- The Chairman of the ANPP was assassinated on March 28 after a party meeting (*Daily Trust* [Ikeja, Lagos State], March 28).
- At least ten people were injured in a bomb blast at the Unguwar Doki polling center and six casualties incurred at the Independent National Electoral Coalition polling center on April 9 (*Vanguard* [Lagos], April 9; *Daily Trust*, April 11).
- On March 29, police uncovered a Boko Haram plot to bomb an ANPP election rally in Maiduguri, but that same day Boko Haram militants killed three civilians in an attack spoiling the rally anyway (Reuters, March 30).

Boko Haram did not claim responsibility for each of the attacks, but the methods – such as motorcycle and SUV drive-by shootings – and the victims targeted for assassination bear the mark of Boko Haram (AP, February 24). In flyers written in Hausa and Arabic that Boko Haram sent to news organizations in Borno State on April 24, the group said: “We do not believe in any system of government, be it traditional or orthodox. That is why we are fighting against democracy, capitalism, socialism and the rest... We do not respect the Nigerian government because it is illegal... We will continue to fight its military and police because they are not protecting Islam...” (Saferaficagroup.com, April 25; BBC, April 25).

However, Boko Haram’s attacks were not the lone factor in sparking the post-election violence between Muslims and Christians that left more than 500 people dead and 75,000 people displaced. In fact, Boko Haram’s attacks did not cause a delay or shutdown in any of the polls and Maiduguri was spared from most of the post-election violence. Thus, there is no clear correlation between the frequency of Boko Haram terrorist activity and the degree of post-election sectarian violence (AP, April 24).

Political and economic forces beyond Boko Haram’s control fueled the flames of sectarian strife. Allegations of vote-rigging, the economic marginalization of the northern Muslim majority relative to the more prosperous Christian-majority south and the 57% of

the presidential vote for Goodluck Jonathan (a Christian from the south) compared to the 31% for Muhammad Buhari (a Muslim from the north) brought disaffected Muslims into the streets, but then the protests took on religious rather than political or economic overtones.

Regardless of the factors behind the violence, Boko Haram may have set an example for some of the worst acts of religious-inspired terrorism during the rioting. On Christmas Eve in 2010, Boko Haram members attacked and burned down two churches in Maiduguri and bombed a church in Jos, killing 80 people (al-Jazeera, December 31, 2010). In April’s post-election violence, Muslim rioters burned down as many as 40 churches.

As one of Boko Haram’s main goals is to destroy the Nigerian state and impose Shari’a in the entire country, Boko Haram has much to gain from the religious fighting. Muslim dissatisfaction with the Christian leadership in Nigeria and feelings of inequality strengthen Boko Haram’s argument for replacing what is perceived to be an ineffective secular political system with an Islamic system and for replacing Western education with Islamic education – the original purpose for Boko Haram’s existence (Boko Haram means “Western Education is Sacrilege” in Hausa). The religious fighting spreads the Nigerian security forces thin as personnel seek to manage the riots while also countering Boko Haram and other rebellious groups in the southern Niger Delta and elsewhere.

If these tensions continue to resurface year after year as they have in 2009, 2010 and now 2011, Boko Haram may then be able to brand itself as the champion of the Muslims by making headlines and gaining notoriety from highly-publicized attacks, even if most Muslims in northern Nigeria do not support to its radical interpretation of Islam and use of violence to achieve political objectives. The Nigerian government must evaluate the roots of the religious divide and find solutions to reduce conflict between Muslims and Christians, which would then undermine Boko Haram’s *raison d’être* and counter its recruiting propaganda. Despite capturing and killing the Boko Haram leader, Muhammad Yusuf, in 2009 and conducting several crackdowns killing hundreds of sect members, Boko Haram has replenished its ranks by attracting radicalized Muslims, making the group is as active as ever right now.

Thus far, existing Muslim-Christian tensions in Nigeria have had a destabilizing effect on the Nigerian state far

outweighing Boko Haram's tens of terrorist attacks. While these sectarian tensions simmer, all Boko Haram needs to do is to continue fuelling the fire with terror attacks against state institutions, government officials, and churches until the group becomes closer to achieving one of its more insidious objectives – launching Nigeria into a “full-scale war” (*Daily Champion* [Lagos], February 3).

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Jordan's New Generation of Salafi-Jihadists Take to the Streets to Demand Rule by Shari'a

By Murad Batal al-Shishani

Jordan has not escaped the political turmoil and street confrontations that have enveloped the Middle East during the so-called “Arab Spring.” The ongoing debate between the Jordanian government and protestors seeking political reform in Jordan escalated on March 24 when one man died and scores of others were injured in clashes that erupted between pro-government and pro-reform protesters at the Interior Ministry Circle in Amman. The pro-reform protestors claimed that security forces turned a blind eye to the attacks against them.

Prime Minister Marouf Bakhit blamed the Muslim Brotherhood for the violent developments (*Jordan Times*, March, 25). In an interview with Jordanian television, Bakhit accused the group of creating chaos in the country and taking orders from Islamist leaders in Egypt and Syria, while warning them “not to play with fire” (*Petra News* [Ammon], March, 27).

Jihadists on the Street

Some Jordanian Islamists have joined street protests for the first time in their history. These include the Salafi-Jihadists, whose members have held demonstrations in several cities of Jordan demanding the release of their imprisoned colleagues while stressing that their movement has paid a high price for Jordan's alliance with United States in the so-called “War on Terror.” The jihadists, who demanded that Jordan be ruled by Shari'a, have shown that they are large in number, organized and defiant. The jihadists hailed the recent release of four of their colleagues and cancelled a pre-planned demonstration in Amman a few days later, adding that “the State [of Jordan] knows our strength” (*al-Jazeera.net*, April 12).

On April 15, Salafi-Jihadists were among other Jordanian groups demonstrating after Friday prayer in various Jordanian cities. After demonstrating in Amman, Ma'an, Salt, and Irbid, jihadists then went into the streets of Zarqa, the hometown of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, the late leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq who was killed in June 2006.

The protest ended with clashes between jihadists and pro-government and security forces that resulted in some 80 injured policemen. Jordan's police chief, Lieutenant General Hussein Majali, stated that eight civilians had been hurt when police fired tear gas to stop Salafist demonstrators from attacking shoppers in Zarqa: "It was clear that the demonstrators had plans to clash with police. They carried swords and daggers and were provocative, seeking to drag police into a bloody confrontation" (AFP, April 15). Jordanian security services responded to the violence by conducting a series of raids in Zarqa and the nearby town of Rassifeh that rounded up some 70 Islamists, including prominent leader Shaykh Abdul Shahatah al-Tahawi (AFP, April 16).

Shaykh Ali Hasan al-Halabi, a prominent Salafist whose movement has a strong enmity towards the Salafi-Jihadists, claimed the violence was the work of those who falsely represent themselves as Salafis and are "known for their ugly takfiri thought" (Ammon News, April 16). However, Salafi-Jihadist leader Abu Obaidah complained that the Salafist movement had fallen "into a trap orchestrated by security forces to drag Salafis into events not planned for by the Salafis themselves" (Ammon News, April 28). General Majali warned that "those who deserve it" could expect much rougher treatment from the security services next time (Ammon News, April 16).

According to their spokesperson, Dr. Sa'ad al-Hunaiti, the Salafists denied attacking policemen, saying they were defending themselves while blaming the government for sending "thugs" to confront the demonstrators, similar to earlier clashes in Amman on March 24 (Ammon News, April 15). Elsewhere, al-Hunaiti has said the Salafist movement's intention to implement Shari'a throughout Jordan threatens "Allah's enemies" who are coordinating with the Jews and sending Jordanian Muslims to "fight as mercenaries alongside the Jews and Crusaders in Afghanistan," a reference to Jordanian troops serving with Coalition forces (*Al-Sabil* [Amman], April 8).

In the wake of the violence in Zarqa, the state security court charged 146 Islamists on April 24 with plotting terrorist attacks (*The National* [Abu Dhabi], April 25; *Jordan Times*, April 26).

Structural Crisis

Like other Arab countries, Jordan has witnessed protests in the last three months calling for political and economic reforms as well as the elimination of corruption. Though the reform movement in Jordan has been inspired by the popular movements in Tunisia and Egypt, it is largely a response to a local grievances and changes in the Jordanian socio-economic structure.

The median age in Jordan is only 21.8. A high percentage of young people have an advanced education, creating a gap between the elites and the youth. This has combined with three important factors in creating a social disruption in Jordan:

- The increasing role of the private sector in the national economy reflects the sudden decrease in the role of the welfare state, which helped create jobs for youth, particularly in marginal areas of Jordan. In this context it is worth noting that the first demonstration protesting economic issues and demanding the resignation of then Prime Minister Samir Rifai's was in the marginal small town of Dhiban (southwest Amman) on January 7 (UPI, January, 8).
- The increasing frustration caused by corruption.
- Jordan has witnessed a decline in freedoms, reflected in some of the slogans raised by the political parties and forces that took part in demonstrations in Jordan against the intervention of the Mukhabarat (secret service) in public life.

These factors played a major role in the development of what might be described as a "reform movement" which reflects the changes in Jordanian society. Jordanian journalist Musa Barhoomah, who is closely following the protests in Jordan, told Jamestown that the protests in Jordan represent a socially mobile movement; liberals, leftists, Islamists, youth movements, students, teachers and professionals are all involved in this movement. [1] Barhoomah is a member of the National Dialogue Committee formed after the protests started in Jordan as an umbrella for "political debates over reform," though the Muslim Brotherhood refused to join the committee. The journalist told Jamestown that political parties, including Islamists, are not leading this social movement, but they are part of it and support it with their experience. This was confirmed to the author by Hamza Mansour, secretary general of the Islamic

Action Front (IAF - the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood), who explained the Brothers are not dominating the reform movement in Jordan: “We are partners of all believers in real reform... and we are an influential power in Jordan.” [2]

The IAF, established by the Muslim Brotherhood in 1992, is the largest opposition party in Jordan. It took part in the 1993 elections and won 17 of 80 seats. The party then boycotted the 1997 elections to protest the new election law known as “One Man, One Vote,” which replaced the old electoral legislation that allowed voters to cast ballots for several candidates in each constituency. The party again took part in the 2003 elections, the first since King Abdullah II succeeded his father, and won 17 of 110 seats. Remarkably, the IAF lost 11 seats in the 2007 parliamentary elections, a poll the Islamists considered fraudulent. The current Prime Minister was in office at that time, explaining the movement’s opposition to his re-election. The IAF boycotted the 2010 elections.

The highs and lows in IAF political participation reflect the relationship between the Jordanian regime and the Muslim Brotherhood since the latter’s establishment in 1946. Although it was always considered an opposition group, the Brotherhood has never confronted the regime. Sometimes the Brotherhood was a strong ally to the regime, confronting the Palestinian factions that aimed to overthrow King Hussein’s regime for instance, or aiding the efforts to contain communism in the 1960s and 1970s.

According to some observers, the Jordanian government would not have violent jihadists in the streets of Zarqa if it had not “excluded moderate Islamists” from the political process and “dealt wisely and foresightedly with the Muslim Brotherhood, which has always been an incubator for stability and a foundation to contain radicalism, as well as [being] able to protect everyone from religious extremism” (*al-Quds al-Arabi*, April 17).

Conclusion

It is worth noting that most of the jihadists in Jordan represent a new and radical generation of the Salafi-Jihadist movement that consider themselves the inheritors of al-Zarqawi’s legacy. This new generation has been involved in an increasing number of jihad-related prosecutions after 2003. At the same time, developments in Jordan have shown there is a new leadership among jihadists that prefers a more public

role, indicating a tacit admission that non-violent activism is more productive than violence in terms of political change, as seen in Tunisia and Egypt. This marks a shift in the thinking of some jihadists and could be a source of division in the movement. Moreover, this means that there could be jihadists who are now willing to talk to Arab regimes.

The Jordanian government’s response to the structural problems the country is facing will determine the future behaviour of Jordan’s Islamists, including the jihadists. Allowing demonstrations for all movements in Jordan will make the Brotherhood a prominent, but not dominant, part of the socio-political reform movement in Jordan. Furthermore, a prompt response to challenges such as corruption and freedoms would help in reconciling moderate Islamists and involving them in political life. Such a scenario would defuse violent tendencies among jihadists by outlawing rhetoric that legitimizes political violence.

On the other hand, if the government chooses to keep channels of communication blocked with the Muslim Brotherhood and increases security pressure on the jihadists, it will exacerbate the political tensions caused by political deadlock. Such a situation will provide fertile ground for jihadists to resort to violence.

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Notes:

1. Telephone interview with Jordanian journalist Musa Bahoomah, March 29, 2011.
2. Telephone interview with Hamza Mansour, Secretary General of the Islamist Action Front (IAF), March 31, 2011.