



# Terrorism Monitor

In-Depth Analysis of the War on Terror

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## ISRAEL TO ASSIST KENYA IN BATTLE AGAINST AL-SHABAAB

Kenyan reports say Israeli personnel will help secure potential targets in Kenya from terrorist attacks. The Israeli security experts are expected to start work in the next few weeks. According to Israeli ambassador Gil Haskel: “Israel is willing to send consultants to Kenya to help Kenya secure its cities from terrorist threats and share experience with Kenya because the operation in Somalia is very similar to Israel’s operations in the past, first in Lebanon and then in Gaza Strip” (*Daily Nation* [Nairobi], November 18). Since the Kenyan operation in Somalia began in mid-October, terrorists have struck the Kenyan cities of Nairobi, Garissa and Mandera. More attacks are feared as the operation progresses; al-Shabaab leaders continue to call for major terrorist attacks within Kenya.

A statement from the office of Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga said that Israel had agreed to help “rid its territory of fundamentalist elements,” with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu asserting that “Kenya’s enemies are Israel’s enemies.” The statement also said that the Israeli prime minister had pledged to help create a “coalition against fundamentalism” in East Africa together with Kenya, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Tanzania (BBC, November 4). The Kenyan prime minister’s four-day visit to Jerusalem concluded with the signing of a memorandum of understanding on internal security issues (*Jerusalem Post*, November 15). Various arms deals are expected to follow, with Kenya seeking patrol vehicles and maritime surveillance equipment. The latest meetings follow up on a Kenyan mission to Jerusalem last year to request Israeli military assistance in countering al-Shabaab threats (Shabelle Media Network, February 14; see also *Terrorism Monitor* Brief, March 11, 2010).

Al-Shabaab is reported to have responded to the initiative by sending agents from mosque to mosque to announce Israel had now joined the Christian Crusaders in destroying Islam in Somalia (*Daily Nation*, November 18). Referring to the terrorist strikes already carried out inside Kenya, al-Shabaab spokesman Ali Mahmud Raage warned Kenya that “things have not begun in earnest yet and it is now a month on. You still have a chance to go back to your border (*Nairobi Star*, November 17). Al-Shabaab spokesmen also insisted the world’s Muslims had a responsibility to aid the Somali Islamists now that Israel was joining the struggle against them.

Israel has lately intensified its diplomatic efforts in sub-Saharan Africa. A recent meeting between Netanyahu and South Sudan president Salva Kiir was soon followed by visits from Kenyan Prime Minister Odinga and Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni, who actually bumped into each other in Jerusalem unaware of each other’s presence (*Nairobi Star*, November 18). Israel indicated last year that it was prepared to recognize the breakaway territory of Somaliland as an independent nation (Golis News, February 11, 2010). It is believed that Israel has an interest in establishing a military outpost in the Somaliland port of Berbera (Shabelle Media Network, February 14, 2010). However, new complications in Israeli naval access to the Suez Canal since the Egyptian Revolution may put such plans on hold.

The question now is whether the Israeli-Kenyan agreement will provide the necessary fuel to sustain a successful al-Shabaab recruitment campaign in Somalia at a time it is hard pressed on several fronts and awaiting yet another potential military intervention by Ethiopia. TFG cooperation with the Kenyan offensive will also be easily interpreted by Somalis as cooperation with Israel, a development that would present a major setback for international efforts to restore security in the Horn of Africa region. Discussions regarding Kenya joining the existing African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) could further complicate the local credibility of American-backed African Union efforts to destroy al-Shabaab.

## LIBYA’S MUSLIM BROTHERS EMERGE FROM THE SHADOWS

Political parties continue to multiply in Libya, but few are so well prepared and organized as the National Gathering for Freedom, Justice and Development (NGFJD), the political front of Libya’s long-repressed Muslim Brotherhood and associated Libyan Islamists. Led by Shaykh Ali al-Salabi, the Benghazi-based party is modeled on Turkey’s ruling Islamist Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP) (Arab News, November 17).

Formerly based in Geneva, the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood held its first post-revolutionary conference on Libyan soil in mid-November. The Benghazi event was attended by several hundred delegates (AFP, November 18). Remarks by the Brotherhood’s leader, Suleiman Abdelkadir, included a call for Libyan factions to unite in the task of rebuilding Libya as it was “not a task for one group or one party, but for everyone...” (Reuters, November 18). Abdelkadir told the conference the Brotherhood was in favor of a civil state in Libya: “We don’t want to replace one tyranny with another. All together, we want to build a civil society that uses moderate Islam in its daily life” (OnIslam.net, November 18).

The conference included speeches by members of Tunisia’s Islamist Ennahda Party and the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and was attended by ministers of the Libyan Transitional National Council (TNC), including Defense Minister Jalal al-Degheili and Islamic Affairs Minister Salam al-Shaykhli. Many of the Brothers at the conference were reported to be highly educated and fluent in English (Reuters, November 17).

NGFJD leader Shaykh Ali al-Salabi, a prominent figure in Libya’s Islamist movement, is regarded as a polarizing individual by many who accuse him of being under the influence of Turkey and Qatar. He is especially disliked in Tripoli, where thousands have gathered in demonstrations against his efforts to bring Shari’a to Libya.

Responding to those in Libya who have expressed their opposition to religious leaders in politics, al-Salabi said: “I believe that Islam covers all, including politics. In the past we were deprived from implementing the principles of Islam. I am a religious person, I am also a Libyan citizen. I have my say with regard to the political issue... We call for a moderate Islam. But you all have to understand

that Islam is not just about punishment, cutting hands and beheading with swords” (Reuters, October 10). Al-Salabi maintains that the NGFJD is a nationalist party similar to the moderate Islamist Ennahda party that took recent elections in Tunisia (Arab News, November 17). The party is likely interested in having a large representation in the new government when the crucial question of writing a new Libyan constitution is addressed.

The TNC is planning to hold general elections in June, 2012. It is difficult to gauge the degree of support the Islamists have – some observers maintain they would easily win an election, while others, like Ashur Abu Dayyah (founder of the 17 February Free Forum) estimate all the Islamist factions combined do not exceed 10 percent support in Libya (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, October 8).

The resignation of interim Prime Minister Mahmoud al-Jibril on October 23 helped halt a growing rift between the ruling Transitional National Council (TNC) and al-Salabi, who called for his resignation. Under criticism for his divisive approach at a critical juncture in the Libyan revolution, al-Salabi later noted he had opposed the Prime Minister’s “professional capabilities and performance,” not his religious views (Reuters, October 10). Al-Salabi’s campaign against al-Jibril even failed to get the support of Abd al-Hakim Belhadj, the powerful commander of the Tripoli Military Council, who has unexpectedly joined the NGFJD. Belhadj is a veteran of the war in Afghanistan and a former Libyan Islamic Fighting Group commander who was imprisoned by the Qaddafi regime for eight years before his release in an amnesty for Islamist militants who renounced violence. He is generally regarded as the Qatar-supported leader of the Salafist-Jihadist trend in Libya. Whether Belhadj’s presence in the party will serve to radicalize the NGFJD or to moderate Belhadj remains to be seen. Belhadj is considered a leading candidate to become Libya’s new Minister of Defense (*al-Arabiya*, November 18; for Belhadj, see *Militant Leadership Monitor*, September 29; *Terrorism Monitor* Brief, September 9).

For now, however, Belhadj has downplayed charges of an impending Islamist takeover of Libya:

The Islamists are a principal constituent of the Libyan people, and they have performed very well in rescuing Libya from the things of which the citizens suffered. This does not mean that there is nobody other than the Islamists who have exerted patriotic efforts for the salvation of Libya... We have been and we will continue to confront exclusion tendencies that always claim that the Islamists impose dangers to the society, and have intentions that lead to instability and to threats to the security of the country and of the region, and so on. These claims are not true. We will not behave in any other way than to further the security of the country first and the stability of the region second, and we will have equal relations with all, which will be based on mutual respect and joint interests (*al-Hayat*, September 19).

Interim Libyan leader Mustafa Abd al-Jalil, a former Qaddafi justice minister, has declared that “any law that violates Shari’a is null and void legally,” citing in particular the Qaddafi regime’s restrictions on polygamy (NOW Lebanon, October 28). Dr Muhammad Abd-al-Muttalib al-Huni, a prominent Libyan intellectual and former adviser to Sayf al-Islam al-Qaddafi, may be said to represent the largely secular component of Libyan society that finds the TNC’s priorities puzzling: “Mr Mustafa Abd-al-Jalil is an ignorant man who is suitable only to be a Shari’ah registrar of marriages and divorces. On the day of declaring liberation the only thing in his mind was to rescind the law that limits polygamy. This law was not a gracious gift from al-Qaddafi, but it was the result of the struggle by Libyan women for more than six decades.” Al-Huni also mocks al-Jalil’s announcement he will eliminate Western-style banks that practice “usury” in favor of non-interest paying Shari’a-compliant banks, saying Libya’s interim leader forgets “that without national and foreign banks there can never be a prosperous economy, and the unemployed youths will not be able to fulfill their dreams and prosperity, for which they aspire after the revolution” (*Ilaf.com*, October 27). Even al-Salabi dismissed al-Jalil’s aspirations for Libya’s banking system: “This is his opinion, nothing else” (Arab News, November 17).

Unlike the hastily-organized political parties springing up everywhere in Libya, the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood has been organizing since its formation in 1949, often meeting underground in Libya or abroad in Europe. Though membership has for these reasons been traditionally small, the party is made up mainly of a dedicated core of educated professionals who are sure to mount a formidable campaign to form the first post-revolution government in Libya so long as it can control rivalries within the party.

## “By the Hands of Men Who Don’t Fear Death” – Jund al-Khilafa Launches Islamist Insurgency in Kazakhstan

Jacob Zenn

Since the Kazakh militant group Jund al-Khilafa (Army of the Caliphate) released videos in September and October of two attacks that it claimed to have led against U.S. forces in Afghanistan, the group has risen to prominence on the international jihad scene. The group’s three Kazakh founders, Rinat Khabidolla, Urynbasar Munatov and Damir Znaliyev may have been among numerous foot soldiers in the Haqqani network’s foreign legions, but their savvy in using the internet to promote jihad in Kazakhstan has brought significant attention to their cause (*Tribune* [Astana], November 9). Already Jund al-Khalifa ranks with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP)/ East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) as one of the most prominent indigenous Central Asian jihadi organizations. In fact Jund al-Khilafa, which claims to have 90 percent Kazakh fighters, may be a sub-unit of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (Tengrinews, November 2).

In a statement posted on the Ansar al-Mujahideen Islamic Forum on November 17, Jund al-Khilafa lashed out against President Nazarbayev’s policies to close down mosques and his pawing to Russian interests in the country, governmental corruption, and the torture of Muslims in Kazakh prisons. [1] In an earlier October 21

video statement, Jund al-Khilafa threatened to “make a move” against the government if it “insisted on its position” with regard to laws forbidding prayer in public institutions and the wearing of headscarves (*Noviy Regyon* [Moscow], October 26). Through statements focusing on domestic Muslim concerns, Jund al-Khalifa has portrayed itself as the legitimate representative of jihad against the Kazakh State, while the two videos of attacks in Afghanistan have won the group credibility internationally.

When Jund al-Khilafa released the video on October 26, it had still never conducted or claimed an attack on Kazakh soil. But within one week of the video, on October 31, one attacker blew himself up next to an apartment building and another bomb was detonated in a garbage can in Atyrau (Tengrinews, November 1). Jund al-Khilafa claimed credit for the explosions and provided a statement on November 1 saying, “We deny that the last attack was made by a suicide bomber. It looks like the bomb exploded accidentally causing the martyr death of the carrier... Both of these blasts were just warnings for the government and we intentionally did not aim for deaths and injuries, as we don’t want to harm a lot of people” (Tengrinews, November 1).

The “martyr” was identified as a 23-year old resident of Atyrau, and on November 7, three other men were also arrested in the *oblysy* (province, from the Russian oblast). The provincial prosecutor’s office alleged that the cell responsible for the explosions was formed in 2009 under the influence of Russian-born Islamic convert Said Buryatsky (a.k.a. Alexander Tichomirov) and received orders to carry out the October 31 explosions from Jund al-Khilafa leaders based in Afghanistan (Tengrinews, November 9). Atyrau is an oil hub in the western part of Kazakhstan directly across the Caspian Sea from the North Caucasus where Buryatskiy made his name as a jihadi leader before Russian forces killed him in 2010 (see *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, March 11, 2010). That Atyrau was the site of the October 31 attack may be symptomatic of growing extremism in the *oblysy*. 90 percent of the province’s 8,000 practicing Muslims are believed to be between the ages of 13 and 30, and 70% of the young people are influenced by Salafism (Tengrinews, November 17).

If the October 31 attack was the work of Jund al-Khalifat, its failure may point to the group’s inexperience. However, Jund al-Khilafa will have support from their jihadi allies in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region to hone their operational capabilities. The Turkistan



Islamic Party (TIP), which represents Uyghur Muslims fighting Han Chinese rule in Xinjiang, frequently claimed credit for attacks in China that it had nothing to do with when it first appeared in online statements and videos in 2008, but by October 2011 the TIP had succeeded in striking Xinjiang several times with deadly terror attacks carried out by militants who had trained in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region.

The Taliban has accused Kazakhstan of “protecting American interests instead of taking into account the aspirations of their people and the regional interests” and called for Kazakhs to “stand against this wrong policy of their rulers” (*China Daily*, May 22). This statement is but one indication that the Taliban will aid Jund al-Khilafa in fighting the Nursultan Nazarbayev regime in Kazakhstan.

Jund al-Khilafa claimed another strike on November 12, this time in the eastern city of Taraz, which lies along the Kazakh border with Kyrgyzstan. In a two-hour noon-time rampage, a 34-year-old former senior rifleman in the Kazakh army, M.K. Kariyev, hijacked a car by threatening the driver with a gun; robbed arms from a gun shop, killing a shopper and a guard in the process; stole a police car by killing two special security police officers and taking their Kalashnikov and Makarov guns; drove home to pick up an RPG-26 grenade launcher; then drove to the regional office of the National Security Committee (NSC – the post-Soviet successor to the KGB) and launched one shot from the grenade launcher and several shots from automatic weapons at the walls of the building. At this point Kariyev drove away and shot and wounded two more policemen before he was finally wounded by police in a shootout. When a commander arrived to seize Kariyev, he blew himself up killing the commander as well. In total, there were five killed, besides Kariyev (*Tengrinews*, November 13).

Jund al-Khilafa said in a statement the day after the attack that, “In Taraz, you saw with your own eyes what one soldier did to you, and Insha’Allah you will see horrors by the hands of men who don’t fear death and give their souls easily to support the religion of Islam and defend the honor of the Muslims” (*ansar1.info*, November 16).

There is no denying that there is a terror problem in Kazakhstan. Kariyev’s attack in Taraz followed a string of violent incidents in the country, including:

- The country’s first-ever suicide bombing when an attacker entered the NSC headquarters in the northwestern city of Aktobe on May 17, killing himself and two others. In this incident the government blamed the attack on “mafia” grudges against the Security Bureau (*Eurasianet*, May 17).”
- The government ruled out terrorism in a May 24 nighttime car bombing outside the NSC headquarters in Almaty that killed the driver and a passenger and for a June 30 incident in which two police officers were murdered in a village 250 km from Aktobe (*Central Asia Today*, May 24).
- The government arrested more than 20 terror suspects with links to terrorists in Pakistan in an October 31 operation in Atyrau (*Tengrinews*, September 2).
- On November 12, one day before Kariyev’s attack, a bomb killed one person and injured several others when it exploded next to the Taraz *oblysy* administration building. Several other explosions were reported throughout the city on the same day (*Tengrinews*, November 12).

Jund al-Khilafa is well positioned to take credit for all of the violence in Kazakhstan because of its online monopoly of the Kazakh jihad. It hopes that attacking state institutions will trigger an Arab Spring type of revolution in Kazakhstan. In its October 26 statement, Jund al-Khilafa said, “Know that the policy that you [Nazarbayev] are following is the same that was applied in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt; however, as you have seen, it only caused loss to those who exercised it.”

If Nazarbayev cannot maintain stability in Kazakhstan, then even the majority of religiously non-affiliated Kazakhs may question the purpose of his two-decade rule, which, like Mubarak’s Egypt, has been characterized by the trade-off of people giving up democratic rights for the stability provided by dictatorship. Whereas the Arab Spring was triggered by liberal secularists and then taken advantage of by Islamists, in Kazakhstan

the Islamists may trigger the leader's downfall, though it may be the moderate Kazakh citizenry that reaps the spoils.

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Note:

1. <http://www.ansar1.info/showthread.php?p=132853#post132853>.

## **Muslims Against Crusades Banned in Latest Episode of the UK Jihad**

*Raffaello Pantucci*

In a move aimed at preempting planned protests to disrupt annual Remembrance Day celebrations on November 11, British Home Secretary Theresa May proscribed the British organization Muslims Against Crusades (MAC) on November 9. Declaring that MAC was “simply another name for an organization already proscribed,” she declared that membership or support for the organization would henceforth be “a criminal offense.” [1]

Led by individuals linked to formerly banned group al-Muhajiroun and its offshoots Islam4UK, al-Ghurabaa (“The Strangers”) and The Saved Sect, MAC emerged in the wake of a decision in January 2010 to proscribe al-Muhajiroun and Islam4UK (see *Terrorism Monitor*, January 21, 2010). Like its predecessors, MAC established a slick English-language website and started to organize vocal and often aggressive protests. Most infamously last year during the Remembrance Day celebrations, a group of 20 members of the group gathered in central London to chant during the commemorative minute's silence and burn poppies worn by people in the UK during the Remembrance Day period. One member of the group, Emdadur Choudhury, who burned poppies and chanted “British soldiers burn in Hell!” during the two-minutes of silence observed on November 11, was convicted and fined £50 under the Public Order Act for causing “harassment, harm or distress” (BBC, March 7). The British-born Choudhury, who collects £792 per month in state benefits, vowed not to pay the fine, announcing: “I don't have any respect for British soldiers, and if they lose a limb or two in Afghanistan then they deserve it. You expect me to feel sorry for them? Of course I don't” (*Daily Mail*, March 8).

The announcement that MAC was going to hold a similar protest this year under the banner “Hell for Heroes” was made in late October when the group requested a police permit to hold the demonstration (*Daily Mail*, October 31). A press release published at the time announced that the intended protest was meant to “poignantly remember the victims of [British] military intervention.” [2] In response, anti-Islamist protest groups like the English Defence League (EDL) announced competing protest marches.

All this came in the wake of a demonstration by the group against Conservative Member of Parliament Mike Freer. Prior to the event's announcement, the group published a flyer on its website in which it threatened Mr. Freer and referred to a previous incident in which East London student Roshonara Choudhry stabbed MP Steven Timms for his support of the Iraq War after claiming to have watched videos by the late American-Yemeni preacher Anwar al-Awlaki (see *Terrorism Monitor*, December 2, 2010). While there is no public evidence that Choudhry was linked to MAC or any of the other al-Muhajiroun successors, members linked to this network have shown up at protests during her court appearances and in a letter purportedly sent from Choudhry in prison, she acknowledges their support. [3] The campaign against Freer was launched after his role in obstructing the entrance into the UK of Palestinian activist Shaykh Raed Salah earlier this year was made public. Members of the MAC followed up their online threats by making an appearance at a constituency meeting Freer was holding at the North Finchley Mosque on October 28, disrupting events and, according to Freer, calling the openly gay MP a "Jewish homosexual pig" (Press Association, October 31).

The group was unfazed by the ban, with MAC leader Anjem Choudary declaring that it was a "bid by the government to cover up the truth" (Guardian, November 10). On his twitter feed he was even more confrontational, declaring, "a ban will never stop Islam and the Muslims. We will not rest until the flag of Islam flies high over Downing Street. This is a victory for us!" [4] A day or so after the ban, Choudary's own home was raided as part of a police operation and he declared defiantly that "there is nothing like a ban and raid from the enemies of Islam and Muslims to increase the zeal with which one works to establish the Shari'ah!" [5]

The news of the ban came a week before it was revealed that a pair of Britons linked to the network of violent extremists that has emerged from al-Muhajiroun's broader community were killed by drone strike in Pakistan. Though they appear to have been killed some three months ago, the news of the deaths of Ibrahim Adam and Mohammed Azmir Khan was only made public now due to confirmation by the men's families in the UK (AFP, November 18). Both men were members of families that had produced a number of radicals, including Anthony Garcia (Adam's brother, who is in a British jail for his role in an attempt to blow up a UK shopping mall in 2004 and who attended a training camp in Waziristan alongside some of the July 7, 2005

London bombers) and Mohammed Jabar Ahmed (Mohammed Azmir Khan's brother, killed by a drone strike on September 8 last year after allegedly claiming at a public meeting of extremists in North Waziristan that he was going to lead a strike on the UK) (Daily Telegraph, November 18). Both pairs of brothers were known to have attended some al-Muhajiroun meetings in the UK and were identified by an American informant within al-Muhajiroun's Lahore office.

It is unlikely this ban will be the last we hear of al-Muhajiroun's successors. In the past the organization has simply reformed under a new name, established a new website and continued as before. However, the group's capacity to attract the same sort of attention as in the past has diminished and it is roundly condemned by all parts of British Muslim society. Its meetings are poorly attended and its public protests attract limited numbers. It has in some ways been revitalized as a number of prominent members were released from prison - as radical as when they went in and are now respected in some eyes for having been "bloodied." Yet it is unclear whether terrorist networks based abroad rely as much on the group's networks as they did in the past. [6] Nevertheless, the group continues to retain a hard core and continues to attract some new young followers, keeping the radical narrative in the UK alive and showing that there remains an appetite for jihadist ideas amongst some elements of British youth.

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Notes:

1. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/media-centre/news/mac-proscription>.
2. The MAC website is now blocked, a copy of the statement can be found here: <http://www.barkingspider.blogspot.com/2010/11/muslims-against-crusades-uafscum-plan.html>
3. <http://www.muslimprisoners.com/roshanarachoudhary-letter-1.html>.
4. <http://www.twitter.com/anjemchoudary>, November 10, 2011.
5. <http://www.twitter.com/anjemchoudary>, November 12, 2011.

6. For a complete overview of the group's links to terrorism, see Raffaello Pantucci, "The Tottenham Ayatollah and the Hook Handed Cleric: An examination of all their jihadi children," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 33(3), March 2010, pp. 226-245.

## **Khartoum Besieged? : Sudan's Rebel Movements Unite against the Center**

*Andrew McGregor*

Sudan's military offensive against rebels in its southern Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan provinces has begun to spill over the new border with South Sudan with potentially devastating results for the region. As Khartoum descends into a severe financial crisis caused, in part, by the loss of three-quarters of its oil-fields to the newly sovereign South Sudan, it is now being challenged by a new alliance of rebel movements from Darfur, South Kordofan, Blue Nile and eastern Sudan. The Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) is contesting the post-independence domination of Sudan's non-Arab majority by an Arab minority hailing from the banks of the Nile in northern Sudan.

A statement issued at the SRF's November 11 meeting asserted the alliance's determination "to overthrow the [ruling] National Congress Party (NCP) regime using all available means, above all, the convergence of civil political action and armed struggle." [1] As well as a "High-Level Political Committee," the alliance has established a "Joint High-Level Military Committee" to coordinate the armed struggle: "Its first responsibility is to repel the NCP's vengeful dry season offensive, which is targeting civilians in war zones, in all the theaters of conflict, including Khartoum..." The statement makes clear that the constituent groups of the SRF believe the time is ripe to topple the regime, claiming it is "presently at its weakest – economically, politically and militarily. The regime is imploding and will vanish, like other corrupt regimes around us that have come to rely on repression to retain power." [1]

The statement was signed by representatives of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army – North (SPLM/A – N) and three Darfur rebel movements, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), the largely Fur Sudan Liberation Movement/Army – Abdel Wahid (SLM/A – AW), and the largely Zaghawa Sudan Liberation Movement – Minni Minnawi (SLM/A – MM). The latter's commander, Minni Minnawi, had sided with the government for some time after signing the 2006 Abuja agreement with Khartoum, but has now returned to the rebellion.



The groundwork for the formation of the SRF was laid in August when the SPLM/A-N signed an agreement in the South Kordofan town of Kauda with two Darfur rebel movements pledging to overthrow the central government in Khartoum. The formation of the alliance was quickly condemned by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon as an escalation in tension possibly leading to a new civil war, but the secretary-general's remarks were challenged by the SPLM-N's own secretary general, Yasir Arman, who accused the UN leader of supporting "aggressors and war criminals" (Sudan Tribune, November 17).

On November 15, the Beja Congress of northeastern Sudan announced its decision to join the SRF. Founded in 1958, the Beja Congress was originally a political party, but has gradually grown into an armed resistance movement fighting a low-intensity insurgency on behalf of the roughly two million indigenous non-Arab Beja people. The Congress has resisted efforts by Khartoum to "Arabize" the Beja tribes, noting in its announcement that "The misery and suffering of the [Beja] people is increasing due to poverty, starvation and other deadly diseases. The ruling regime in Sudan is subjecting its people to humiliation and tyranny. They are arrogant and killing the marginalized people" (Radio Dabanga, November 16).

The SRF also announced that the Koch Revolution Movement (KRM) had joined the alliance (Radio Dabanga, November 18). Though little is known of the KRF, it is likely based in the Koch County of South Sudan's oil-rich Unity State, which recently suffered from a local rebellion by a pro-government Nuer militia led by the late Colonel Gatluak Gai (murdered by his deputy in late July; for Gatluak Gai, see Terrorism Monitor Brief, August 12).

#### Unresolved Issues

Prominent opposition leader Sadiq al-Mahdi, leader of the Umma Party and former Prime Minister of Sudan before being overthrown by al-Bashir in 1989, recently described the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between North and South Sudan as a "flawed agreement" that "left behind time bombs," namely the unresolved status of oil-rich Abyei District, South Kordofan and the Blue Nile Province. The latter two regions lie north of the border between Sudan and South Sudan, but supplied thousands of fighters allied to Southern forces in the 1983-2005 civil war. Al-Mahdi blames the regime for the proliferation of rebel groups

in Sudan: "There is no doubt that the ruling regime in Sudan has played an important role in weakening unarmed political parties. In fact during one period they said we do not negotiate with anyone except those who are armed. This tempted a great number of youths to carry arms" (al-Sharq al-Awsat, November 13).

Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir has loudly accused South Sudan of preparing a new war against the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), claiming to have documented proof of his charges. Saying that Khartoum had already exercised "too much patience and self-restraint," al-Bashir issued a stern warning to the South: "We tell our brothers in the South that if they want peace, we want peace. If they want war, our army is there... Our message to our brothers in the South is this: you won the South not because you were victorious [in the war], but because of an agreement and a pledge we upheld [i.e. the CPA], so you had better stay in your place" (Sudan Tribune, November 7).

A pro-government news agency in Khartoum reminded the rebels that in a world preoccupied with a number of crises, their cause is unlikely to garner international support: "The engineers of the new alliance might think that they will get support from everywhere, but this is just an illusion because the world is now busy resolving its crises to the extent that there is no time to look on new alliances attempting to topple regimes while the whole world order is collapsing" (Sudan Vision, November 17).

#### The SPLM/A-N Rebellion

SPLA-N forces have been fighting in the Nuba Mountains of South Kordofan since June (see Terrorism Monitor, July 1). An SPLA-N insurrection followed in the Blue Nile province, which has now been placed under military control as the SAF drive the rebel fighters south towards the border with South Sudan.

The SPLA-N rebels in Blue Nile Province suffered a major setback on November 3 when the SAF's 14th Infantry Division took the town of Kurmuk, a rebel stronghold near the border with Ethiopia, reportedly inflicting heavy losses on the rebels. A spokesman for the rebels insisted that the expulsion was actually a withdrawal undertaken for "strategic reasons" (Reuters, November 4). SPLM/A-N Secretary General Yasir Arman claimed that the SAF forces attacking Kurmuk had been reinforced by Janjaweed militia from Darfur and fighters belonging to the anti-Juba Jonglei-

based South Sudanese militia led by Dinka General George Athor (for Athor, see *Terrorism Monitor*, May 20, 2010).

On November 22, the SAF announced it had seized the town of Diem Mansour from the rebels (*Sudan Tribune*, November 22). Diem Mansour is only 25 km from the South Sudan border. Satellite imagery shows that the SAF is installing helipads and lengthening and upgrading runways in Kurmuk and ad-Damazin, moves that would allow the SAF to improve its ability to bomb targets further into the South Sudan (*VOA*, November 11).

#### Cross-Border Attacks

Reports from the border between North and South Sudan indicate that al-Bashir's rhetoric is now being matched by SAF operations in the border region. On November 11, an SPLA spokesman announced that SAF forces and allied militias had been repelled in a seven-hour battle at Kuek, home to an SPLA military base guarding nearby oil fields. The attack was denied by Khartoum, but SPLA spokesmen insisted the battle was proof of Khartoum's plans to "capture the oil fields" (*AFP*, November 11; *Sudanese Media Center*, November 11). There were reports of a similar attack on an SPLA base in Raja County in Western Bahr al-Ghazal Province (*Saturday Nation* [Nairobi], November 19).

Yida refugee camp in Unity State was bombed on November 10 by one of Sudan's ancient Soviet-built Antonov cargo planes, used by the Sudan Air Force as makeshift bombers. The attack came a day after a similar bombing of a refugee camp at Guffa in Upper Nile State that killed seven people (*Sudan Tribune*, November 10; *VOA*, November 11). Despite estimates that up to 100,000 people may have fled south from the fighting in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile Province, Khartoum maintains that all such camps are actually bases for SPLA-N insurgents. A spokesman for the Sudanese Foreign Ministry insisted that "There are no camps for Sudanese refugees in South Sudan... only assembly areas for rebel troops" (*AFP*, November 11).

Sudan has made two complaints to the UN Security Council this year over what it charges is South Sudanese military support for the SPLM/A-N rebels. At the same time, Khartoum continues to ignore a Security Council order to withdraw its forces from the disputed Abyei region. In the South, President Salva Kiir has also complained to the Security Council over threats

of a southern invasion coming from Khartoum: "It is surprising that Sudan as a member of the United Nations has arrogated itself to threaten the sovereignty of the Republic of South Sudan through military invasion" (*Sudan Tribune*, November 10).

Renewed fighting along the border will make it extremely difficult to restart negotiations between North and South, which had already broken down without making any progress on resolving issues like the status of Abyei, border delimitation and a formula for oil distribution fees. Both Sudan's find themselves in a tricky situation as most oil is produced in the South but all of it must pass through North Sudan in a pipeline to the Red Sea terminal at Port Sudan. With peace talks having ground to a halt, the SPLM tried a new gambit to revive negotiations by offering "to assist the north, give them billions of dollars... We are willing to share with them, despite our poverty, in the interests of peace" (*AFP*, November 18; *Reuters*, November 18). At the same time, South Sudan president Salva Kiir has been issuing increasingly stronger statements maintaining that the South will preserve its newly-gained sovereignty from attack by Khartoum by force if necessary.

Following the alleged SAF attacks Salva Kiir visited Kampala for urgent security-related discussions. Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni, a close U.S. ally well on his way to building one of Africa's strongest militaries, told a joint news conference that Khartoum must end its "aggression" against the South and avoid making the mistake of "managing Sudan as an Arab country [when] it is Afro-Arab" (*Saturday Nation* [Nairobi], November 19).

China, meanwhile, appears to have decided to continue its support for the Khartoum regime despite its continuing involvement in oil operations in both South and North Sudan. The Defense Ministers of China and the Sudan agreed on November 17 to strengthen military relations and deepen cooperation between their respective militaries (*China Daily*, November 17).

#### Conclusion

After decades of conflict, Khartoum seems unable or unwilling to turn to anything other than a military solution in its dealings with internal dissent or in resolving differences with its neighbors. The military buildup along the border with South Sudan suggests Khartoum might like to move on the Southern oilfields, but any such operation would have to quick and

decisive; otherwise oil flows would stop and both North and South Sudan would immediately face an economic crisis. The South, having spent roughly 50% of its annual budget on arms and military equipment since 2005, has prepared well for any irredentist attack by Khartoum and the few Khartoum-supported militias operating in the South are unlikely to be enough to distract the South Sudanese Army, now one of Africa's largest, from repelling a Northern offensive. In fact, with the creation of the Sudanese Revolutionary Front, it is now Khartoum that must worry about rebel militias operating in its rear areas. In the event of a third round of war with the South, these Northern rebel movements would soon begin receiving arms and training from the SPLA.

The Shaiqiya, the Ja'alín and the Danagla, the powerful riverine Arab tribes that dominate the Sudanese state, have too much at stake to allow al-Bashir, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court on war-crimes charges, to bring down a state which, at least in Khartoum and parts of the northern Nile region, had begun to show signs of prosperity thanks to petrodollars and investment from the Gulf States.

The creation of the SRF does not mean that rebel fighters will soon be seen in the streets of Khartoum, but it does remind Northerners that peace agreements with empty rebel fronts like the recent deal with Darfur's Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) are no substitute for negotiations with genuine security threats. The SRF can succeed against the regime through a war of attrition, keeping the Sudanese Army fighting an expensive multi-front counter-insurgency in the midst of a crippling economic crisis. Khartoum will no doubt attempt to apply its proven strategy of dealing with regional opposition by exploiting divisions within the opposition, then offering financial and political incentives for disenchanted factions to join the government forces. Nevertheless, it seems probable that at some point those with vested interests in the survival of the regime and the prevention of the state's total economic collapse will begin to look for alternatives to al-Bashir in their desire to maintain something as close to the political and social status quo as possible.

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Note:

1. Communiqué of the Sudan Revolutionary Front, November 11, 2011; full text available at: <http://paanluelwel2011.wordpress.com/2011/11/12/communique-of-the-sudan-revolutionary-front/>.