



# MILITANT LEADERSHIP MONITOR

## Personalities Behind the Insurgency

VOLUME 4 ♦ ISSUE 1 ♦ JANUARY 2013

### IN THIS ISSUE:

BRIEFS.....1

A TALE OF DEFECTION: THE STORY OF SYRIAN MAJOR GENERAL ABDULAZIZ AL-SHALAL  
By Dominic Kalms .....2

A PROFILE OF ALGHABASS AG INTALLAH: REASSERTING TRADITIONAL TUAREG  
LEADERSHIP AT THE EXPENSE OF ANSAR AL-DIN  
By Andrew McGregor .....4

WHO'S WHO IN THE JORDANIAN OPPOSITION: PART ONE  
By Murad Batal al-Shishani .....7

A POST-MORTEM ANALYSIS OF MULLAH NAZIR: THE "GOOD TALIBAN" KILLED IN A  
CIA DRONE STRIKE  
By Brian Glyn Williams .....9

MURDER IN PARIS: PARSING THE MURDER OF FEMALE PKK LEADER SAKINE CANSIZ  
By Michael Gunter .....12



Comrade Artemio

### CAPTURED SHINING PATH LEADER REFUSES TO REMAIN SILENT AT TRIAL

The leader of the Shining Path faction in the Upper Huallaga Valley, Comrade Artemio, was captured in February 2012 after one of his comrades betrayed him and gave his location to the Peruvian security forces (*Peruvian Times*, March 6, 2012). Comrade Artemio is now standing trial in Lima on homicide charges, for which he has admitted responsibility, though he has rejected the drug trafficking charges placed against him (*La Republica*, February 24, 2012).

When Artemio was first arrested, he said that he would invoke his right to remain silent in trial, but in early January 2013, Artemio's lawyer said Artemio would speak at the trial so that the public "would know the truth of what happened in the Upper Huallaga and draw their own conclusions" (*El Comercio* [Peru], January 9). Artemio's decision to speak during his trial is likely an attempt to publicize the Shining Path's ideology and use the pulpit of the courtroom to promote Shining Path's vision of "political reform." Shining Path founder Abimael Guzman, who was captured in 1992, has similarly used public appearances in the courtroom to show solidarity with Shining Path and its sympathizers.

Unlike the Shining Path faction in the Apurimac and Ene River Valley, which is known for drug trafficking and its connections to cartels in Mexico and Colombia, Artemio's faction has remained closer to the Shining Path's founding ideology, which calls for a Marxist revolution in Peru. Artemio's fighters provided sanctuary to drug lords in the Upper Huallaga Valley in return for "taxes" from them, but drug-related criminal activities were likely peripheral to the faction's political objectives (IDL Reporteros, March 6, 2012).

Militant Leadership Monitor is a publication of The Jamestown Foundation. It is designed to be read by policy-makers and other specialists yet also be accessible to the general public. In order to purchase a subscription, visit <http://www.jamestown.org/programs/mlm0/> and click on log-in.

The opinions expressed within are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of The Jamestown Foundation.

Unauthorized reproduction or redistribution of this or any Jamestown publication is strictly prohibited by law.



For comments or questions about our publications, please send an email to [pubs@jamestown.org](mailto:pubs@jamestown.org), or contact us at:

1111 16th St. NW, Suite #320  
Washington, DC • 20036  
Tel: (202) 483-8888  
Fax: (202) 483-8337

TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE MILITANT LEADERSHIP MONITOR, VISIT [mlm.jamestown.org](http://mlm.jamestown.org)

Artemio is represented in court by Alfredo Crespo, the leader of the Movement for Amnesty and Fundamental Rights (a.k.a. Movadef). Movadef was founded in 2009, and, according to Peruvian authorities, “explicitly adheres to Marxism, Leninism, Maoism, and Gonzalo [Abimael Guzman] ideology” (Dialogo, January 4). Guzman was also defended by Crespo, who seeks an amnesty for captured Shining Path members in the name of “political reconciliation.” Yet, the Peruvian authorities believe Movadef is merely a political wing of the Upper Huallaga faction of the Shining Path and are contemplating implementation of new criminal laws to ban or, at least, weaken Movadef (*Andina*, December 15, 2012). Thus, Artemio’s trial could be one of the last chances for Movadef to convey its message to the Peruvian while still a legal organization.

## IMU MUFTI ABU ZAR AL-BURMI DEMANDS REVENGE ON MYANMAR

The Uzbek, Arabic and Urdu speaking mufti of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Abu Zar al-Burmi, is a Pakistani national of ethnic Rohingya Burmese descent. Since inter-ethnic violence broke out between the Rohingyas of Rakhines in Arakan State, Burma, in June 2012, al-Burmi has led the call for a jihad against Burma as the solution to the “occupation” of Rakhine State (Ansar al-Mujahideen Forum, January 8). The IMU’s Jund Allah media network issued a video of al-Burmi’s most recent speech, “The Lost Nation,” which was then translated and posted on the Ansar al-Mujahideen forum in January 2013. The speech was significant not only for al-Burmi’s anti-Burma message, but also his contempt for China’s alleged role in backing the Burmese government.

Al-Burmi said that “We are heartbroken by the massacre... committed by a pagan Buddhist enemy which is the infidel, aggressive, oppressive, licentious state of Burma with support of China, and the Ummah and especially the mujahideen should know that the coming enemy of the Ummah is China which is developing its weapons day after day to fight the Muslims.” After asserting incorrectly that the Muslims were the majority in Burma, when in fact they are about 4% of the population, al-Burmi said the oppression of the Rohingyas has its origins in the support China and Russia gave to the “communist police government” that came to power in Burma in 1965. Al-Burmi then blamed the recent “massacres and mass killings” on the United Nations and the governments of Burma, China and Germany.

The IMU is currently based in the tribal areas of Pakistan, where it often carries out attacks on Pakistani troops, and it has also infiltrated northern Afghanistan, where it often carried out attacks on NATO forces. The IMU does not have a history of focusing on China, although the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), which is comprised of Uyghurs and also based in Pakistan’s tribal areas, has as a goal to “liberate” Xinjiang Province from its “oppressors” and create an Islamic caliphate called Turkistan out of Xinjiang and the other five Central Asian countries. Al-Burmi’s statement is most likely an appeal made to express solidarity with his fellow Rohingya kin. At the same time, his speech could reflect that the IMU and TIP are working closely together in Pakistan’s tribal areas with the Pakistani Taliban. After the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces from Afghanistan in 2013, China could eventually become the leading military power in Central Asia and therefore could also become a target for militants in the IMU in addition to the TIP, who, like al-Burmi, view China as their enemy.

## A Tale of Defection: The Story of Syrian Major General Abdulaziz al-Shalal

*Dominic Kalms*

In a scene reminiscent of a Hollywood action movie, Syrian Major General Abdulaziz al-Shalal snuck across the Syrian border into neighboring Turkey on the night of December 21, 2012, trekking across the dangerous Cilvegozu border and the town of Reyhanli in Turkey’s southern Hatay province (*Hurriyet Daily News* [Istanbul] December 27, 2012). The journey lasted four days and involved the use of motorcycles, scooters and horses as well as a steep climb through mountainous terrain. It was a risky move, fraught with deadly ramifications if something went awry, yet he had decided that he could no longer participate in the Assad regime’s despotic campaign to exterminate Syrian opposition fighters and he believed defection was his only way out alive.

Major General Shalal headed the military police division of the Syrian Army and was responsible for ensuring that military officers did not defect to the opposition. He was also responsible for overseeing the units that guarded the prisons where political dissidents and rebels were held (*Times of Israel*, December 27, 2012). While the Syrian government has downplayed his position, calling him a figurehead who

was near retirement and only wanted to play hero, the reality is much different (*Arab News* [Saudi Arabia] December 26, 2012). The general is reportedly the highest-ranking officer to defect and one of Syria's top military, security and intelligence officials (*Arab News* [Riyadh] December 26, 2012). He was not a member of Assad's inner circle, however, and his religious background as a Sunni Muslim indefinitely blocked him from reaching the top echelons of the Syrian government, which is composed entirely of Alawites. The defection of Major General Shalal has nevertheless been an embarrassment for the Assad regime and a blow to its public image.

Major General Shalal is not a well-known figure and information on his background is extremely scarce (*Daily News Egypt*, December 26, 2012). Though he was highly ranked in the Assad regime, several Syrian government officials have stated that he was pushed to the sidelines a long time ago, as a result of rumors that he was collaborating with insurgents (*Daily News* [Egypt], December 26, 2012). This story seems to be corroborated by the *al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper, which reported in December 2012 that rumors had been circulating in Damascus that Shalal was contributing to the rebel cause from within Assad's military (*Times of Israel*, December 27, 2012). Shalal has confirmed that he had engaged with the rebels and in early December, 2012 he met with the Free Syrian Army (FSA), where he discussed his plans to defect from the Assad regime. In fact, negotiations for the general's defection had been ongoing for months and according to Louay Mokdad, the political coordinator for the FSA, the general had tried to defect several times before but had been prevented for fear of being caught (*TurkishNews.com*, December 27, 2012).

After the general and his family arrived in Turkey on December 25, 2012, he immediately put out a statement on al-Arabiya TV, in which he methodically laid out his reasons for defection, starting with his most compelling reason; the Syrian government's deviation from its mission to protect the nation and its transformation into "gangs of murder and destruction" (*Daily News Egypt*, December 26, 2012).

While Shalal is now an active member of the FSA, his defection reveals much about his character and motivations. Shalal waited 22 months into the Syrian civil war before he defected to the rebels after the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights had already put the death toll in Syria at 60,000 from the conflict (*United Nations Dispatch*, January 2). General Shalal not only participated in some of these atrocities, but took an active role in guarding rebel dissidents, the same men and women with whom he is now partnering. Many of his fellow rebels have not forgotten

—this fact; in an interview Captain Adnan Dayoub, a rebel commander in Hama, said that General Shalal had been responsible for prisons—"God knows how many"—and was almost certainly guilty of war crimes (*The New York Times*, December 26, 2012).

From his allegiance to the Assad regime, to his role as a prison guard, to his willingness to sit atop the Syrian military for 22 months during the civil war, it seems that General Shalal is no revolutionary freedom fighter, but rather a shrewd and calculating government official, who realized that if he did not defect he risked being dragged before a war tribunal if the Assad regime collapsed. Looking at his defection from a historical standpoint, it seems remarkably overdue and in reality the general was one of the last high ranking Sunnis in the Assad government. In fact 54 senior military and security officials, three cabinet members, four members of parliament and thirteen diplomats had already defected since the start of the revolution in Syria, long before the general decided to leave (*SES Türkiye*, January 1, 2013).

While some analysts have stated that the general's defection is "one of the most important," in reality his defection seems to be remarkably consistent with what occurred in Syria over the past several months. Rather than being a courageous dissident, his actions reveal a man who is following the trend. In the weeks leading up to the general's defection, several high ranking Sunnis had fled, notably Sunni Brigadier General Munaf Tlass and Prime Minister Riyad Farid Hijab (*al-Arabiya* [Saudi Arabia] December 26, 2012). General Shalal appears to have been following his predecessors.

General Shalal may have defected to preserve his life, protect his family and ensure his freedom. While the FSA and Syrian National Coalition (SNC) embrace him now, it is uncertain how long the welcome will last; as Syrian rebel commander Captain Dayoub recently told *The New York Times* in an interview, General Shalal "is contaminated from top to bottom...[but] tomorrow he will be a hero" (December 26, 2012).

Ultimately, the General's fate will rest in the hands of the SNC and FSA, and their chosen method of transitional justice. If the post Assad government embarks on truth and reconciliation tribunals, such as those in post-Apartheid South Africa, then the General will certainly remain free. If the post Assad government engages in Lustration, as in post-Soviet Czech Republic, then the General will also remain free. However, if the next Syrian government decides to prosecute Assad loyalists and government officials, as was the case in post-genocide Rwanda, then it is possible General Shalal will be brought before a national tribunal

for his crimes committed during and before the uprising. While there is great ambiguity in the General's future, it is clear that the General has now been embraced by the Syrian opposition and his knowledge and understanding of the Assad regime's inner workings will be exploited by the rebels, and just maybe that will be enough to save him from future prosecution.

*Dominic Kalms is an analyst specializing in Middle East and Latin American national security affairs. He holds a Master's Degree in International Affairs from Columbia University.*

## **A Profile of Alghabass ag Intallah: Reasserting Traditional Tuareg Leadership at the Expense of Ansar al-Din**

*Andrew McGregor*

**A**lghabass ag Intallah, a young Tuareg politician and tribal leader, has placed himself in a position where he can play a crucial role in determining the future of the ongoing conflict in northern Mali. Ag Intallah's January 23 split from the Islamist Ansar al-Din of Iyad ag Ghali, was a serious blow to the movement and a challenge to Ag Ghali's leadership ambitions in the region.

Prior to his split from Ansar al-Din, Ag Intallah was, for the last year, the perplexing public face of Ansar al-Din; a man who not long ago embodied Tuareg traditional rule and opposition to religious and political extremism but who now acted as the lead negotiator for Ansar al-Din, a radical Islamist movement allied with al-Qaeda.

### **Forming the Mouvement Islamique de l'Azawad**

Ag Intallah's new group, the Mouvement Islamique de l'Azawad (MIA), is almost exclusively composed of Malian Tuareg who have left the ranks of the radical Ansar al-Din as the latter is hammered by French airstrikes while falling back before a French-led ground offensive. Ag Intallah was immediately joined in the MIA by former Ansar al-Din spokesman Muhammad ag Arib. The movement's founding statement described the defectors as "the moderate wing of Ansar al-Din" and added that the newly formed MIA "totally

differentiates itself from any terrorist group, condemns and rejects any form of extremism and terrorism and commits itself to fighting them." While appealing to Bamako and Paris to cease hostilities in the areas it claimed to control (Kidal and Menaka), the movement also expressed its interest in "the establishment of an inclusive political dialogue" (*Tout sur l'Algerie*, January 24). Following the announcement, Alghabass told Reuters by phone that: "We want to wage our war and not that of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb [AQIM]" (Reuters, January 24).

This approach would be consistent with the view of French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, who recently explained that northern Mali's "terrorist and jihadist groups must be differentiated clearly from the movements that are representing the north of Mali and the people of this area in all of their diversity. Neither these movements nor the people are targeted under any circumstances by the military action which we have started..." (RFI, January 17). Statements such as these appear to be a clear invitation for the Tuareg to abandon Ansar al-Din's hardliners and their al-Qaeda associates to avoid being targeted by French military power.

A day before the MIA's announcement, an Algerian government source told an Algiers daily that if the new formation agrees to fight terrorist groups (specifically AQIM and MUJWA) and respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Mali, "they will be qualified to speak in the name of the Ifoghas [Alghabass' tribe] and we shall help them" (*Tout sur l'Algerie*, January 23).

Two days after the creation of the MIA, Ansar al-Din suffered another blow when Colonel Kamo ag Menali announced he was leaving Ansar al-Din to join the secular Tuareg nationalists of the Mouvement National de Libération de l'Azawad (MNLA). At the time of his defection, the Colonel was based in Léré, close to the Mauritanian border (Sahara Media [Nouakchott], January 25).

### **Background**

Alghabass ag Intallah has been described as tall (about 6'4") and imposing, with a quiet charisma that reflects his station in the local Tuareg hierarchy. [1] Alghabass was born into the highest levels of the Kidal Tuareg leadership as the middle son of the Amenokal (chief) of the noble Ifoghas tribe, the traditional rulers of the Kidal region. His father, Intallah ag Attaher, has been Amenokal since 1963, but has been ailing for some years and has lately devolved much of his power on his designated successor, Alghabass.

Though blessed with many advantages in his pursuit of

election to Mali's National Assembly, Alghabass has been pursued by charges of electoral irregularities, particularly in what was expected to be a close contest with Zeid ag Hamzata in July, 2007. Ag Hamzata's campaign registration documents mysteriously disappeared only hours before the filing deadline, a situation remarkably similar to one that occurred when Ag Hamzata had challenged Alghabass' younger brother for the mayoralty of Kidal three years earlier. Rumors in Kidal insisted that the registrar had been paid \$20,000 to "lose" Ag Hamzata's papers. [2] One Bamako daily suggested Alghabass' election was reliant on "the partiality of the representatives of the administration, fraud, corruption, buying of officials at polling stations and the abusive use of proxies" (*Le Républicain* [Bamako], August 3, 2007).

Ag Intallah is reported to have useful contacts with the Qatari royal family, for whom he arranges hunting trips in the Sahara (*Jeune Afrique*, October 3, 2012; Maliweb.net, November 21, 2011).

### **Opposing Extremism in Azawad**

Alghabass' personality and place in the Tuareg hierarchy expanded his political role from National Assembly deputy to regional mediator and spokesperson for the Tuareg of Kidal. In September, 2007, Alghabass was deeply involved in mediation with the rebel movement of Ibrahim ag Bahanga to obtain the release of a large number of hostages, a role for which his background made him well-suited (*Le Républicain* [Bamako], September 20, 2007; *L'Indépendant*, September 19, 2007).

In the early months of 2009, Alghabass came into conflict with Lieutenant Colonel Lamana Ould Bou, a military intelligence officer with Mali's Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (DGSE) and a former member of the Front Islamique Arabe de l'Azawad (Arab Islamic Front of Azawad – FIAA), an Arab rebel movement active in northern Mali. Colonel Lamana had been active in organizing a number of Arab militias in northern Mali that had been partially credited with driving Tuareg rebel forces under the late Ibrahim ag Bahanga from the region in February, 2009 (see *Terrorism Monitor*, February 25, 2009). Alghabass, however, told U.S. diplomats in Bamako that Lamana's men were nothing but Arab smugglers and bandits working out of the relatively lawless In Khalil border post with Algeria (In Khalil has lately become the base of Mokhtar Belmokhtar's new AQIM faction - see *Terrorism Monitor Brief*, January 10).

Colonel Lamana was assassinated in June, 2009 in Timbuktu by assassins believed to belong to AQIM. There were later

reports that Arab tribesmen from Timbuktu took revenge for the murder by killing four AQIM members in November, 2010 (AFP, November 4, 2010; see also *Terrorism Monitor Brief*, June 25, 2009).

In August 2009, Alghabass and fellow National Assembly deputy Ahmada ag Bibi (later a leading member of Ansar al-Din) told American diplomats in Bamako that the Malian government had failed to implement the 2006 Algiers Accords, particularly in terms of reintegrating Tuareg fighters into the Malian military, incorporating Tuareg youth into the national economy and sponsoring development projects in northern Mali. Both Alghabass and Ag Bibi urged the U.S. government to pressure Bamako to use the Tuareg against al-Qaeda elements active in northern Mali, apparently without success. [3] By late 2009, Alghabass was taking a public hardline towards the Salafist militants; "Our agenda is to form a delegation of resource persons to see where al-Qaeda is and ask it to leave our territory, or we will fight" (*Le Républicain* [Bamako], December 9, 2009).

Alghabass also told U.S. diplomats that the outbreak of hostage-taking by AQIM groups could be blamed on the reluctance or unwillingness of Algeria and Mali to undertake effective counterterrorist operations, suggesting that al-Qaeda elements in the region could be defeated easily by any serious effort on the part of Algiers or Bamako. Alghabass added that he had tried to raise the issue of the failure of Mali's security services to confront AQIM at the National Assembly, but had been personally dissuaded by then-President Amadou Toumani Touré. [4]

### **Joining Ansar al-Din**

Alghabass' February, 2012 decision to leave the MNLA for Iyad ag Ghali's Ansar al-Din movement may have been encouraged by an incident that occurred when the rebellion was just starting in January, 2012. Alghabass was reported to have been safely removed from Kidal by Iyad ag Ghali just as Tuareg loyalists were searching house-to-house for Alghabass and other suspected rebel leaders (*Jeune Afrique*, April 20, 2012). The loyalist militia was led by Colonel al-Hajj ag Gamou, a member of the large Imghad Tuareg clan, a "vassal" clan in the Tuareg hierarchy that discovered a combination of democracy and demographics could give the Imghad political power over their customary superiors, the "noble" Ifhoghas.

The relationship between Alghabass and Iyad ag Ghali was complicated by the fact that the latter was clearly leader of the Ansar al-Din, but by any understanding of the local traditional Tuareg hierarchy, Alghabass was quite clearly

senior to Iyad ag Ghali, a factor that might have encouraged Iyad in making Alghabass the movement's senior negotiator in distant Ouagadougou. Deepening Iyad ag Ghali's resentment was the fact that he was bypassed as the appointed successor of the Ifogha in favor of the Amenokal's son (*Jeune Afrique*, November 3, 2012).

As a representative in the National Assembly, Alghabass was known as a strong supporter of President Amadou Toumani Touré. Before announcing his departure from the government to join the MNLA rebels, Alghabass is reported to have called President Touré to express his disappointment that, despite his personal loyalty to the government, Malian policy had failed to develop or benefit the north (Toumast Press, January 27).

Alghabass' membership in Ansar al-Din conflicted with the views of his father, Intallah ag Attaher, who issued a public statement in mid-April, 2012 stating his support for the MNLA and calling for the international community to recognize the independence of Azawad (northern Mali). The Amenokal went on to ask all groups that did not support independence (including Ansar al-Din and AQIM) to leave the region and condemned "all groups who kidnap foreigners in Azawad and terrorize the local population" (Toumast Press, April 18, 2012). However, Intallah ag Attaher's repudiation of Ansar al-Din did not prevent anti-Ansar rioters from targeting his home in June, 2012 in the absence of his son (*Le Républicain* [Bamako], June 6, 2012).

In March, 2012, Alghabass told interviewers that he was fighting for the introduction of Shari'a in northern Mali (*Jeune Afrique*, March 22, 2012). By June, 2012, however, there were reports from the Tuareg community that a faction of Ansar al-Din led by Alghabass was in growing conflict with Iyad ag Ghali's hard-line Islamists (Toumast Press, June 9, 2012).

Ag Intallah led a delegation of seven Ansar al-Din representatives to the first joint talks with the MNLA on November 16, 2012. Hosted in Ouagadougou and mediated by Burkina Faso president Blaise Compaoré, the talks were viewed by some as a first step in detaching Ansar al-Din from its Islamist allies. The creation of the MIA will likely bring Alghabass and his followers into an alliance with the MNLA, which has already taken advantage of the French intervention to seize Kidal. MNLA spokesman Moussa ag Assarid was quick to express the movement's support for the military intervention; "We're ready to help; we are already involved in the fight against terrorism... We can do the job on the ground. We've got men, arms and, above all, the desire to rid Azawad [northern Mali] of terrorism" (AFP, January

14). However, the MNLA must change its separatist agenda to be welcomed into negotiations with France and Algeria.

## Conclusion

The loss of Alghabass ag Intallah will have a significant impact on the degree of support Ansar al-Din leader Iyad ag Ghali can count on in his home region of Kidal. However, the departure of Ansar al-Din's more moderate members may encourage greater extremism in the remaining faction. Ansar al-Din spokesman Sanda Ould Bouamama appeared to bringing the movement in line with the global jihad preached by al-Qaeda in his reaction to the French intervention in northern Mali: "Oil companies lead this war. Hence, it has become the duty of the mujahideen all over the world, whether Algerians or other nationalities, to target the interests of the West and its companies that finance the war" (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, January 23).

Alghabass ag Intallah has an opportunity to help save Mali's Tuareg from destruction by offering a refuge for disillusioned followers of Ansar al-Din. By participating in joint "counter-terrorism" operations with the MNLA (and possibly alongside advancing Franco-Malian forces) against AQIM and their Islamist allies in the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA), Alghabass may embody the reassertion of traditional leadership in the Tuareg communities of the Kidal region and renew his role as a lead negotiator – this time as the representative of a primarily nationalist movement rather than as the representative of an Islamist movement with little popular support in Kidal. Bamako cannot hope to resolve the crisis in northern Mali without the cooperation of local partners – preferably known commodities with experience at negotiation and a well-grounded constituency. Ag Intallah fits the bill but knows it, and will use the leverage offered to ensure his political future while reshaping the political structure of his homeland.

*Andrew McGregor is Senior Editor of Jamestown's Global Terrorism Analysis and Director of Aberfoyle International Security, a Toronto-based agency specializing in security issues related to the Islamic world.*

## Notes

1. Cable 09BAMAKO211, U.S. Embassy Bamako, April 6, 2009, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/04/09BAMAKO211.html>.
2. Cable 07BAMAKO594, U.S. Embassy Bamako, June 1, 2007, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2007/06/07BAMAKO594.html>.

3. Cable 09BAMAKO567, U.S. Embassy, Bamako, Agut 26, 2009, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/08/09BAMAKO567.html>.
4. Cable 09BAMAKO211, U.S. Embassy Bamako, April 6, 2009, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/04/09BAMAKO211.html>.

## Who's Who in the Jordanian Opposition: Part One

*Murad Batal al-Shishani*

Inspired by the Arab Spring, the Salafi-Jihadists of Jordan have taken to the streets for the first time and have been holding demonstrations in several cities, including Amman, Ma'an, Salt, Irbid and Zarqa, to demand the release of their imprisoned colleagues and the implementation of Shari'a. On April 15, 2012, the opposition clashed with pro-government and security forces (See *Terrorism Monitor*, May 5, 2011; *Open Democracy*, May 2, 2011). Since then, the radical generation within the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood has gained favor. This generation believes physical jihad is the most effective form of political activism.

As citizens take to the street in protest, to demand political reform, jihadists have shown that they are large in number and defiant, though they do not operate as an organization. This article profiles twelve key figures in the Jordanian opposition and is split into two parts. The first part covers six individuals who are considered traditional opposition figures. The second part will cover another six militants who represent newly formed opposition groups.

### Ahmad Obeidat

Ahmad Obeidat is a unique case in the Jordanian opposition because he was appointed Prime Minister between 1984 and 1985 and was appointed director of the Mukhabrat, Jordan's general intelligence department, from 1974 to 1982. Obeidat was also a member of the House of Senate (all members appointed by the king) for several terms. He resigned from his post in objection to Jordan's peace treaty with Israel but was reappointed to the post in 1999 by King Abdullah II. Coming from the heart of Jordan's bureaucracy and having filled various posts has made him a very influential opposition leader.

Obeidat showed signs of political opposition in other instances but was nevertheless assigned by King Abdullah II in 2003 to establish the National Center for Human Rights (al-Jazeera, May 15, 2011). Under his leadership, the Center published several reports criticizing the performance of official bodies in Jordan. One of these reports, for example, highlighted fraud committed in the parliamentary elections of 2007.

In 2008, Obeidat was forced to resign from the Center after he issued a statement, signed by 150 Jordanian political figures, criticizing privatization policies and the way the state was being administered. His criticism reached the king himself (Assawsana [Amman], July 2, 2008). Since then, he has been a strong proponent of reforming the system and he has very good relations with other opposition bodies in Jordan. He launched the National Front for Reform in May 2011 as an umbrella organization for opposition movements in Jordan, including the Muslim Brotherhood's political arm, the Islamic Action Front.

### Laith Shubeilat

Born in 1942, Laith Shubeilat has been a notable opposition figure since the mid-1980s, when he started to criticize the monarch at a time when such criticism was taboo. His father was a Jordanian diplomat who was close to the king and worked at the royal court.

Shubeilat earned a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering from the American University of Beirut in 1964, and a master's degree from George Washington University. Shubeilat was elected to parliament as an independent Islamist in 1984 and again in 1989, when democracy was reintroduced to Jordan.

Shubeilat was arrested in 1992 and a military court charged him "of plotting with Iran to overthrow King Hussein." He was sentenced to 20 years of hard labor but was freed by the king under special amnesty. [1] Following his arrest, Shubeilat left his political career in protest against the electoral laws that he believed ran counter to democratic principles. He was subsequently elected president of the Jordanian Engineers Association (JEA); he was the first Islamist to be elected to head the JEA.

Shubeilat continued to oppose normalization of relations with Israel and was arrested again in 1995, charged with *lèse majesté* (violating the dignity of a ruler), but was released in 1996, again, under terms of special amnesty. Shubeilat was detained in February 1998, following a sermon at a mosque in a town south of Amman that authorities claimed had incited a demonstration. While in prison, he refused a royal

pardon, an unprecedented move in the Jordanian political scene.

Though Shubeilat has been a leader of the Jordanian opposition, he has received criticism for his strong aversion to the peace treaty with Israel and for his close relations with former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein; critics ask how a supporter of a dictatorial regime like Saddam's could advocate democratic values.

### **Rohile Gharybieh**

Rohile Gharybieh (a.k.a. Erhail or Ruhayil) is one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood and has held various posts in the movement and its political arm, the Islamic Action Front. Gharybieh holds a PhD in Shari'a and he has worked as a teacher and is a prominent columnist. He was one of 22 representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Jordanian Parliament in 1989. [2] He is also the director of the Muslim Brotherhood's think tank, the Ummah Study Centre. Nonetheless, Gharybieh represents a rebellious ideological group inside the Brotherhood, which the media ironically describes as "the doves" because they represent a moderate view within the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan.

In response to criticism that the Muslim Brotherhood is influenced by Hamas, Gharybieh and his colleagues have declared that they will give Jordanian local issues priority over any foreign issues, including the Palestinian question. Gharybieh presented an initiative in 2009 that called for a "Constitutional Monarchy"—an elected government, rotation of power and a new process for decision-making. [3] The initiative provoked widespread debate in Jordan and was among the demands of Jordanian protesters following the Arab Spring.

Gharybieh risked dividing the Muslim Brotherhood when he released the "National Initiative for Building," better known as "the Zamzam Initiative" in December 2012. [4] The new initiative stresses the need to "build a good relationship with all state institutions based on cooperation and active participation in various fields," and emphasizes the "need to adopt the principle of gradual transition toward democracy within the framework of reform plans, which must be implemented based on national consensus and popular participation in the reform project." The "hawks" who control the high echelons of the group's leadership issued an internal circular calling for Muslim Brotherhood members to boycott the initiative. All parties are insisting, however, that this will not affect the movement's unity (al-Hayat, December 5, 2012; al-Jazeera.net, December 3, 2012).

### **Zaki Bani Rusheid**

Zaki Bani Rusheid is one of the most influential leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan. He is the deputy to the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood as well as the head of a political committee in the Islamic Action Front. Rusheid, who was born in Zarqa (25 kilometers east of Amman) in 1957, holds a diploma in Chemical Engineering. He was the General Secretary of the Islamic Action Front from 2006 to 2009 (The Global Muslim Brotherhood Daily Report, May 7, 2010). Some argue that Hamas' influence on the Muslim Brotherhood has increased since Rusheid left the helm of the group, leading to a division between the hawks and the doves (al-Hourriah [Beirut], September 21, 2011; al-Quds, March 19, 2010).

Rusheid has defended the group's decision to boycott the general elections since 2010, in response to what was widely seen as fraud in the election in 2007, when the Muslim Brotherhood lost in areas that were considered strongholds for them, winning just six seats. Rusheid stated that the Muslim Brotherhood is of the opinion that "absolute powers" should be revised in Jordan. Rusheid said: "When we talk about amendments that change the political rules, we mean, the way of formation of the executive and the legislative branches...The way of mandating cabinets remains the prerogative of the king without consideration for the will of the people or their representatives in parliament." He explains that since the parliament will be representing the Jordanian people, the king should be bound to commission a parliament that represents the majority. "This was our main demand," he said (al-Hourriah [Beirut], September 21, 2011). [5]

### **Hamza Mansour**

Born in 1944, Hamza Mansour is the General Secretary of the Islamic Action Front and it is his third time in this position (2002–2006). He is also a member of the Shura Council of the Muslim Brotherhood. Mansour holds a Master's Degree in Education and previously worked in the Ministry of Education. He was elected to parliament several times.

Mansour is described as very good speaker and considered charismatic. He is popular among Muslim Brotherhood grassroots groups as well as among other political opposition parties. Being such a consensual figure has allowed him to play a major role in designing alliances with other parties and to stand as a middle man inside the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Jordan.

In this context, Hamza Mansour, in March 2011 told The



Jamestown Foundation that the Muslim Brotherhood is not dominating the reform movement in Jordan: “We are partners of all believers in real reform... and we are an influential power in Jordan.” [6]

## Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi

Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi seems to be to the most influential ideologue. Al-Maqdisi’s real name is Issam Muhammad Tahir al-Barqawi. He was born in 1959 in Nablus, and at a young age his family moved to Kuwait. From there he travelled through Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Afghanistan. He returned to Jordan in 1992, in the aftermath of first Gulf war, and began to preach his ideology, which spread among young Jordanians. He criticized Jordanian officials by denouncing their rule as illegitimate and opposed to Shari’a.

Al-Maqdisi’s ideas and writings have played a major role in shaping the contemporary jihadist movement, and his influence is not limited to Jordan where he is very influential—especially since his writings have been translated into other languages.

*Murad Batal al-Shishani is an Islamic groups and terrorism issues analyst based in London. He is a specialist on Islamic Movements in Chechnya and in the Middle East.*

## Notes

1. For more see: <http://shubeilat.com/about/>.
2. Nohlen, D, Grotz, *Elections in Asia: A data handbook*, Volume I, F & Hartmann (2001), p. 151.
3. To read about the reaction to the initiative, see the wire issued by the U.S. Embassy in Amman and leaked by Wikileaks, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/03/09AMMAN677.html>.
4. The initiative was named after the hotel where the writers of the initiative met. Zamzam also refers to the sacred water in Mecca.
5. Mukhabrat’s intervention in Jordan’s political life played a major role in inflaming the protests in the country. However King Abdullah II recently stated that the next Jordanian government will be formed after consultation with the newly elected parliament on January 23 of this year.
6. Telephone interview with Hamza Mansour, Secretary General of the Islamist Action Front (IAF), March 31, 2011.

## A Post-Mortem Analysis of Mullah Nazir: The “Good Taliban” Killed in a CIA Drone Strike

*Brian Glyn Williams*

A CIA Predator or Reaper drone killed the powerful South Waziristani Taliban leader Mullah Nazir and five to seven of his top deputies on the night of January 2 near Angor Adda, South Waziristan. The incident is a contentious start to the 2013 drone campaign in Pakistan’s FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Agencies) region. As is increasingly the case to avoid civilian casualties, the drone strike took place while Nazir was traveling in an SUV. [1]

While seemingly a strategic victory, the strike could cause tension with Pakistan because Nazir’s South Waziristan based Taliban faction had declared a truce with the Pakistani government. Like his Taliban allies Gul Hafez Bahadur and Jalaladin Haqqani, this made him a “good Taliban” in the eyes of the Pakistanis. By contrast, the Pakistanis have been engaged in a bloody war with the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP, Pakistani Taliban) faction based in North Waziristan and led by Baitullah Mahsud—who was killed by a drone on August 5, 2009—and his successor Hakimullah Mahsud. The Pakistanis have worked hard to bring leaders like Nazir to the negotiating table and have used them to create a complex web of truces that have brought a modicum of stability to this war-torn, tribal region.

## The Rise of a “Good Taliban”

Mullah Nazir (often known by the higher religious title of Maulvi) was born in 1975 in the village of Angor Adda, which straddles the border between the Pakistani province of South Waziristan and the Afghan province of Paktika. Nazir’s father, Abdul Salam, fought in the anti-Soviet jihad of the 1980s while Nazir attended *madrassa-s* in Birmal, Paktika and Wana, South Waziristan. Nazir joined the Taliban when they swept to power in the border region in 1996. After the Taliban regime was overthrown in Afghanistan during 2001’s Operation Enduring Freedom, Nazir fled to South Waziristan. He became involved in providing *melmastia* (sanctuary) for wealthy al-Qaeda members and allied Uzbekistani jihadis who fled to the region to escape the U.S.-led Coalition forces. When the Pakistanis invaded South Waziristan in the following year to hunt down al-Qaeda foreigners at the behest of the Americans, Nazir joined with Pakistani Taliban leader Nek Muhammad in fighting them off.

In 2004 Nazir was arrested by the Pakistani Army, but was released soon thereafter under the auspices of the notorious Shakai Peace Treaty, which was seen by the Americans as capitulation to Taliban leader Nek Muhammad. Based on this experience, Nazir subsequently began to create his own 3,000 man *lashkar* (tribal militia). He used his newfound authority to set up jihadi training camps in Wana, the largest city in South Waziristan, which became his headquarters. Fighters from these camps, both foreigners and local Pashtuns, then made raids across the border against Coalition forces in Afghanistan.

Nazir remained largely unknown outside of Pakistan despite all the activity, until his followers became engaged in a feud with Uzbekistani militants belonging to a splinter group known as the Islamic Jihad Group. The Uzbek militants were accused in March 2007 of killing local Waziri Pashtun elders. In response, Nazir's followers attacked their positions killing as many 200 Uzbek extremists—one fifth of their total force (*The Guardian*, April 5, 2007). [2] The Pakistanis trumpeted this 'red on red' violence as proof that the Shakai Peace Accords and other treaties had borne fruit. The Pakistanis proclaimed the campaign against the Uzbeks was "the result of the agreements the government made with tribal people, in which they pledged to expel foreigners and now they are doing it" (*Arab News*, April 5, 2007). The Pakistanis claimed that the moderate or "good Taliban" were turning on the foreign extremists linked to al-Qaeda, as agreed upon in the Shakai Accords. The Pakistanis also claimed to have supported Nazir's campaign against the Uzbek terrorists with weapons, funds and artillery support. [3]

When the North Waziristan-based TTP terrorist group led by Baitullah Mahsud began an open war with Pakistan, sending waves of suicide bombers against Pakistani targets, Nazir faithfully adhered to his 2007 and 2009 peace treaties with the government. He even had Mahsudi tribesmen living in the Wana region expelled in 2012 after he survived a suicide bombing attack that he blamed on Baitullah Mahsudi's TTP (*The News* [Islamabad], January 4). Pakistan has criticized the killing of Mullah Nazir and called it "illegal, counterproductive, unacceptable and a violation of its territorial integrity" (*Daily Times* [Lahore], January 5).

One Pakistani officer described the tension between the Americans and the Pakistanis over the issue: stating "The [drone] program is making things very difficult for us. Nazir [was] the sole remaining major militant leader willing to be an ally" (Reuters, January 3). It was similarly reported that the Pakistani security establishment considered him to be a friendly Taliban leader who the army could work with (*The News*, January 4).

The government's greatest fear is that Nazir's faction and his Ahmedzai tribe will blame them for the death of their leader and take up arms against the Pakistani military; it is well known in the FATA region that Pakistan aids and abets the drone strikes despite their public protestations against them. This would seriously destabilize South Waziristan, which has been relatively calm for the last three years in comparison to Mahsud-controlled North Waziristan.

For all of its allure, the premise that Mullah Nazir was a "Good Taliban" clumsily killed by self-interested Americans has its detractors most notably among the Americans themselves who claim to have had valid regions for killing him. An analysis of their argument will demonstrate that there was far more to Nazir than the simplistic "good Taliban" versus "bad Taliban" paradigm fostered by the Pakistanis.

## Mullah Nazir, the al-Qaeda Linked Militant

As previously stated, Nazir grew up raised by a father who waged jihad against the Russian *kafirs* (infidels) in Afghanistan. Nazir similarly fought across the border in the ranks of the Taliban in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001. He was intimately involved in the Islamic Emirate (as the Taliban regime was known) and developed close ties with foreign Arabs who fought alongside the Taliban in Bin Laden's 055 Brigade. When the al-Qaeda Arabs fled to South Waziristan in 2001, Nazir offered them sanctuary and bases for training. These Arabs had considerable cash and dedication and played a key role in adding a terrorist edge to the mounting Taliban insurgency; for example, they imported the alien tactic of suicide bombing. [4] Although the Shakai Peace Accords called upon the Taliban to turn over foreigners, Nazir continued to flaunt the accord's stipulations by protecting them.

Nazir and his followers turned on a faction of the foreigners in South Waziristan, the Uzbek jihadis, in March 2007 after blaming them for two crimes: killing Ahmedzai elders and, most interestingly, killing al-Qaeda Arabs. [5] It was the killing of an al-Qaeda associated Saudi skaykh named Asadullah in particular that infuriated Nazir and his followers. Thus, far from turning on all foreigners as Islamabad disingenuously claimed, Nazir and his tribesmen actually fought a sub-group of Uzbeks to gain *badal* (revenge) on them for killing the al-Qaeda members. Imtiaz Gul clearly stated at the time; "there is no sign the [Nazir] offensive has targeted Arabs associated with al-Qaeda." [6]

While many rank-and-file Taliban have a local perspective and simply want to expel the American 'infidels' from the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Nazir hinted in a 2011

interview that he would attack NATO interests “all over the world.” He also stated “al-Qaeda and the Taliban are one and the same. At an operational level we might have different strategies, but at the policy level we are one and the same.” As for the Americans in neighboring Afghanistan, he rejected calls for peace and said “At the moment, the Americans want breathing space. We don’t want to allow them any at all.” [7]

Nazir has translated such rhetoric into reality; his fighters have wreaked havoc in the neighboring Afghan provinces of Paktika, Zabul and Helmand where they have burnt schools, killed NATO and Afghan troops with small arms and IEDs, executed pro-government khans, and established Taliban shadow courts. Nazir also facilitated the transfer of so-called “Punjabi Taliban” to Afghanistan where they have played an increasing role as terrorist/insurgents (Reuters, May 30, 2010). In addition, he was closely tied to the Haqqani network which was responsible for many bloody outrages in Kabul and eastern Afghanistan (*Express Tribune* [Karachi], January 4).

Mullah Nazir additionally banned Pakistani government officials from carrying out polio vaccinations in his territory after announcing “In the garb of these vaccination campaigns, the U.S. and its allies are running their spying networks in FATA which has brought death and destruction on them in the form of drone strikes” (*Dawn* [Karachi], June 25, 2012).

The United States has thus described Nazir as “someone who has a great deal of blood on his hands” (*Express Tribune* [Karachi], January 4). One U.S. official summed up the charges against the Taliban leader as follows: “Commander Nazir and his men were directly involved in planning and executing cross-border attacks against U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan and in providing protection for al-Qaeda fighters in South Waziristan” (*Express Tribune* [Karachi], January 4).

The CIA, acting in a counter-insurgent role, launched 52 strikes on Nazir’s territory, including two failed attempts to assassinate him and one that killed his brother. Several top al-Qaeda leaders were killed in these strikes, including Ilyas Kashmiri, Abu Khabab al-Masri, Osama al-Kini, Shaykh Ahmad Salim Swedan and Abu Zaid al Iraqi.

With plans for a U.S. withdrawal of 66,000 U.S. troops from Afghanistan by 2014, it was clear that Nazir was a threat to the unstable southeast of the country and had to be eliminated prior to their departure. While the Pakistanis may mourn his loss, NATO and the Afghan government will hardly miss an insurgent leader who certainly qualifies in their books as a “bad Taliban.”

At least one Pakistani author and specialist on the Taliban, Imtiaz Gul, agrees with NATO and accused Nazir of having played a “double game” by offering sanctuary to al-Qaeda members who brought terrorism to Pakistan. Gul has summed up the Pakistani hypocrisy of creating *ad hoc* treaties/capitulations with terrorists who attack their neighbors writing: “Both Pakistan and the United States should be pleased he is gone because he was undermining Pakistan’s stated position of disrupting, denying and degrading al-Qaeda” (*Telegraph*, January 3).

*Brian Glyn Williams is Professor of Islamic History at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth and author of Afghanistan Declassified: A Guide to America’s Longest War (U. Penn, 2011) and the forthcoming Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda (Potomac, July 2012). His articles can be found on his website at: brianglynwilliams.com*

## Notes

1. Brian Glyn Williams, “The CIA’s Covert Drone War in Pakistan, 2004-2010: The History of an Assassination Campaign,” *Studies in Terrorism and Conflict*, Volume 33, Issue 10, (2010), 12.
2. For more on the Uzbeks of Waziristan see: Brian Glyn Williams, “Talibanistan: The History of a Trans-National Terrorist Sanctuary,” *Civil Wars*, Volume 10, Issue 1, (2008), 6.
3. Imtiaz Gul, *The Most Dangerous Place: Pakistan’s Lawless Frontier*, (Penguin Books, 2011), 55-60.
4. Brian Glyn Williams, “Mullah Omar’s Missiles: A Field Report on Suicide Bombers in Afghanistan,” *Middle East Policy*, Volume 15, Issue 4, (Winter 2008), 4.
5. Vern Liebel, “Pushtuns, Tribalism, Leadership, Islam,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Volume 18, Issue 3, (September 2007), 3.
6. Imtiaz Gul, *The Most Dangerous Place: Pakistan’s Lawless Frontier*, (2011), 60.
7. Syed Saleem Shahzad “Taliban and al-Qaeda: Friends in arms,” *Asia Times*, May 5, 2011; Anna Mahjar-Barducci, “Pakistani Journalist Killed for Exposing Al Qaeda’s Links to Pakistan’s Armed Forces,” *Gatestone Institute*, June 8, 2011.

## **Murder in Paris: Parsing the Murder of Female PKK Leader Sakine Cansiz**

*Michael Gunter*

Sakine Cansiz, Fidan Dogan and Leyla Soylemez, three female members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Parti Karkerani Kurdistan – PKK) were murdered in Paris on the night of January 9 (*The Kurdistan Tribune*, January 10). The three victims held varying levels of seniority. Sakine Cansiz was an important leader in the PKK movement but since the murder, her importance in the organization has been exaggerated.

### **Background**

Sakine Cansiz was an Alevi born in 1957—her precise birth date is unknown because at that time the Turkish government did not record birth data for Kurds. Cansiz was born in the southeastern Turkish province of Tunceli (a.k.a. Dersim by the Kurds), the site of the last major Kurdish uprising against Turkey between 1936-1938. She was present at the PKK's founding meeting on November 26-27, 1978. [1] Cansiz was one of many PKK members imprisoned in the notorious Diyarbakir prison where she was held from 1979-91—the Turkish government was cracking down on Kurdish dissidents, among many others, at the time, especially after the military coup of September 12, 1980. At least 34 PKK members died or committed suicide during their incarceration at Diyarbakir prison; although Cansiz was subjected to similar torture and other deprivations, she managed to survive and earned the esteem of her colleagues. [2] When she was finally released, Cansiz journeyed to the well-known PKK Mazlum Korkmaz training camp in the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley for further training. She subsequently moved to northern Iraq where she served under Osman Ocalan, the younger brother of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan.

In the early 1990s, Cansiz's PKK career almost came to a premature end when she was associated with the losing faction in the Vejin (Resurrection) affair. The Vejin affair involved PKK leader Ocalan's purge of his former wife Kesire Yildirim and Huseyin Yildirim, a Kurdish lawyer living in Sweden who for several years in the early 1980s had served as one of the European spokesmen for the PKK. After being held in detention by the PKK in a Syrian-controlled part of Lebanon, Kesire managed to escape to Europe where she joined Huseyin Yildirim and others in a failed attempt to establish an alternative movement called the PKK-Vejin.

## **The PKK's Internal Struggle and External Enemies**

Over the years, there were many such internal struggles within the PKK that resulted in failed breakaway movements. [3] Osman Ocalan himself was involved in one of the failed struggles in 2004 and claimed in 2008 that the PKK had tried to assassinate him on two occasions. Kani Yilmaz, another former high-ranking PKK leader, was assassinated in northern Iraq in 2006. The PPK was suspected of being responsible for the murder (Kurdishmedia.com, February 13, 2006; Ekurd.net, February 13, 2006). [4]

Cansiz made her peace with Abdullah Ocalan and was eventually sent to Germany, where as many as 800,000 Kurds live and the PKK has long been influential despite being formally banned by that state since 1993. Cansiz became particularly active in women's issues, a very important part of the PKK movement. [5] Cansiz also eventually became one of the few PKK members involved in the financial affairs of the organization (Hurriyet, January 14). [6] In recent years, Cansiz has also been responsible for other areas in Europe such as France.

As a result of an international arrest warrant issued by Turkey in 2007, Cansiz spent one month in a German prison, but was freed after the German authorities turned down a Turkish request for her extradition (*International Herald Tribune*, January 10). Subsequently, she was based in Paris where she ran afoul of French authorities who were under pressure by Turkey to crack down on the PKK (*The New York Times*, January 13).

Adem Uzun, a prominent member of the Kongreya Neteweyi ia Kurdistan (KNK – Kurdistan National Congress, associated with the PKK), was arrested by French police on October 6, 2012 while attending a conference in Paris on the Kurds in Syria (*The Kurdistan Tribune*, October 20, 2012). Uzun has been held in a French prison since then under precarious evidence. His situation may be related to the subsequent murder of Sakine as in both cases some person or persons with access to highly secret information was aware of the movements, meetings and contacts of both Cansiz and Uzun.

After her assassination, many media sources claimed that as a high-ranking PKK member Cansiz had been one of the PKK negotiators involved in the secretive 2010-2011 Oslo negotiations between Turkey and the PKK, but this claim exaggerated her importance. Uzun, however, had participated in this dialogue for peace, which had been halted in the summer of 2011 and then renewed just before Cansiz was murdered (*The New York Times*, January 2).

The timing of Cansiz's murder strongly suggested that it was

carried out by either rogue Turkish or Kurdish elements strongly opposed to the nascent negotiations. The ultra nationalist “Deep State” in Turkey—elements of which are now on trial in Turkey as part of the alleged Ergenekon military conspiracy against the AKP government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Dr. Fehman Huseyin (aka Bahoz Erdal) are both possible actors who might have been behind Cansiz’s assassination. Huseyin is a Syrian-based hardline PKK commander who supports the Assad government and is believed to be opposed to negotiations with Turkey. Cansiz’s murder might also have had something to do with her important role in PKK financial affairs.

Syria and Iran also have reason to sabotage Turkish initiatives that might strengthen their Turkish enemy—Turkey has become one of the main opponents of the embattled Assad regime in Syria that is still supported by Iran. Since there are numerous Kurds of Syrian and Iranian origin within the PKK, both states would have been able to hire disgruntled agents within the PKK. Iran was behind the assassination of the Iranian Kurdish leaders Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou in Vienna in 1989, and his successor Sadiq Sharafkindi in Berlin in 1992. On the other hand, both Iran and Syria seem to have their hands full with enough problems now for either to have taken part in the murder. Shortly after the murder, however, French police arrested Omer Guney, a murky character who did have PKK connections but was also mentally unstable (*Sabah* [Istanbul], January 23). Obviously there was much yet to be discovered in this case.

## Being a Woman in the PKK

Cansiz’s assassination called attention to the unusually prominent role women play in the PKK. Cansiz came from a traditional, conservative society; her important role in the PKK demonstrates the organization’s progressive nature. Abdullah Ocalan explained:

As to the question of women’s rights I have always tried a new approach, to break away from the fossilized thinking, and behavior prevalent in the Middle East. Women are the oppressed gender of a class society very deeply rooted in history...I supported them in their efforts to overcome their fear of struggling for their own emancipation. [7]

Cansiz’s support for Ocalan and high position within the PKK was a specific example of this philosophy.

At first, traditional Kurdish families opposed their daughters’ involvement in the PKK, especially given that they would be living with men. The organization’s policy of strictly prohibiting sexual relationships among its members,

however, helped alleviate these traditional conservative fears. In addition, given the PKK’s perceived legitimacy within Kurdish society, it became unpatriotic to oppose joining it. Currently, the PKK includes one of the largest groups of female fighters in the world. Women have joined the PKK not only to fight for Kurdish rights and nationalism, but also as a means of empowerment. The long-lasting PKK insurgency also radicalized Kurdish women who saw their husbands and sons killed and their homes destroyed. [8]

In conclusion, Cansiz—although a senior PKK member on favorable terms with leader Abdullah Ocalan—was not one of Ocalan’s closest confidantes or an intermediary for Ocalan in talks with Turkey. Though her role has been exaggerated since the murder, Yalcin Akdogan, the chief advisor to Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, declared that the murder “has strengthened public will for a solution to the Kurdish question, contrary to a common belief that it would derail the peace process” (*Today’s Zaman*, January 14).

*Michael M. Gunter is a professor of political science at Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee and teaches during the summer at the International University in Vienna, Austria. He was a former Senior Fulbright Lecturer in International Relations in Turkey and Israel.*

## Notes

1. Jongerden and Akkaya, “The Making of the PKK,” in Marlies Casier and Joost Jongerden, eds., *Nationalisms and Politics in Turkey*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 136.
2. Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds and the Future of Turkey* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 26.
3. Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief*, (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 89-96; 134-40.
4. Michael Gunter, *The Kurds Ascending*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 107-30.
5. Abdullah Ocalan, *Prison Writings: The PKK and the Kurdish Question in the 21st Century*, (London: Transmedia Publishing Ltd., 2011), 68.
6. As an officially designated terrorist organization, the PKK has been linked with drug trafficking by the U.S. government and others, a charge vehemently denied by the PKK.
7. Abdullah Ocalan, *Prison Writings*, 2011, p. 130.
8. Abdullah Ocalan, *Prison Writings*, 2011, 54, 64; Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief*, 2007, 172-74.