

# Sociology of Extremism and Terrorism in Jordan

An Empirical and Analytical Study

Dr. Mohammad Abu Rumman

Prof. Musa Shteivi



مركز الدراسات  
الاستراتيجية  
CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

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## Preface

The phenomenon of violent extremism has garnered unprecedented global interest both at the political and at the academic level. In fact, scholars and researchers have been preoccupied with the attempt to interpret and explain this phenomenon, and in particular the attempt is made to answer the question associated with the factors spurring some to join those radical organizations. Numerous studies have focused on the ideological and creedal dimensions associated with those transformations, while a dearth of sociological studies focused on the conditions driving people to their involvement in violent behavioral patterns, as well as studying the traits or profiles of those persons. However, despite a wealth of studies, there still appears to be a crucial gaps in forming a holistic image of factors contributing to violent extremism.

Due to its multifaceted nature and salience in the region over several years, perhaps the difficulty in understanding this phenomenon is due to lacking accurate information. Certainly, the mechanisms behind the radicalization of individuals tend to be highly complex.

This study emerges as an attempt to fill the knowledge gap by using personalized data concerned with respondents' social backgrounds. Through its focus on the economic, social, political and academic attributes of those involved in those organized groups, a more holistic image of susceptible individuals is draw. Moreover, through deep case studies, the study attempted to

investigate the various pathways for entering the domain of extremism, confirming that there are political, economic and social conditions which contribute to conversion to this extremist and violent behavior.

We encountered, as did other scholars, difficulty in obtaining personal data about those persons, particularly since some of them were killed, have left Jordan to fight with extremist organizations, or who are were sent to prison. However, this difficulty was, to a substantial degree, overcome by utilizing numerous qualitative methods to gather the required information. For example, data was collected from social media accounts of both members of extremist groups, including their family members, as well as through the courts and the judicial decisions rendered concerning convicted individuals. In the final analysis, the dataset included detailed information on a sample of 760 persons who were subject to statistical analysis determining traits and characteristics, as well as in-depth evaluations as particular case studies.

In conclusion it gives me pleasure to express deep gratitude to the research assistant Ruba Al-Tuweisi for collecting the data, Ahmad Saad Eddin for preparing the data for statistical analysis, Islam Bashayreh for assisting in data cleaning process, and to Mohammad Salameh for proofreading and editing the text.

I extend deep thanks and appreciation to Her Excellency the Norwegian Ambassador to Jordan and embassy staff for both their support and understanding of the difficulties we encountered in the data collection process.

**Director of the Center**

**Dr. Musa Shteivi**

## Introduction

For nearly three decades, Jordan has been embroiled in a confrontation with radical groups which rely on their conduct on violent extremism, and since the mid-nineties have adopted an ideological frame of reference affiliated to the Salafist Jihadi domain. Since 1995, Jordan has witnessed tens of limited attempts to use violence and implement small-scale operations by those belonging to this current. Of numerous cases, the most prominent include the “Alfiyyah conspiracy” in 2000, and an attempted attack on the General Intelligence Department in 2004 by “Kataeb Al-Tawhid” which was uncovered by security forces before the operation began. The largest and most successful operation however, were the 2005 Amman suicide bombings at three well-known hotels, which were carried out by “Qaedat Al-Zarqawi” based in Iraq, ultimately killing 60 people and injuring 115 others.

This noticeable escalating activity of the Salafi Jihadist current and its members in Jordan witnessed a “qualitative leap” with the growing activity of the protest movements in the region, named the “Arab Spring” at the outset of the year 2011. The threat is also propagated by the Syrian Crisis and Iraq, leading to the appearance of the so-called Islamic State and its declaration as a caliphate, along with the advent of Al-Nusra Front. This amalgamation of conflict inevitably has an impact on the security situation in Jordan; particular with the emergence of substantial activity of the Salafi Jihadist current’s adherents, alongside its

growing capacity to recruit and propagate its message and attract new members, as evidenced by the migration of hundreds of Jordanians to those hot spots to join those jihadi groups partaking in combat there.

Despite a relatively long history of the phenomenon, there remain considerable epistemic gaps in sociological studies. There are also substantial and noticeable deficiencies in accomplishing quantitative and qualitative scientific research addressing the Salafi Jihadist current, which elucidate its features, conceptualizing its causes, conditions and dynamics associated with its emergence and growth.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, there is severe incongruence in the actuality of figures, differences in the credibility of evaluations of the size of the current, and the numbers of its members who travelled abroad to partake in fighting on the side of jihadist groups. This is evidenced by, for example, some international reports asserting around 4000 Jordanians fighting with extremist groups, while semi-official local estimates speak of 900, and others refer to figures as low as 300.<sup>2</sup>

1 The most comprehensive and deepest study to date about the Jordanian Salafi Jihadist current, was conducted by Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh entailed: "The Islamic Solution in Jordan: The Islamists and the State and the Bets on Democracy and Security: (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's and the Center for Strategic Studies Jordan, Amman, 2014), and it contains chapters on the Salafi Jihadist current, its historical evolution, its ideological framework and the foremost issues associated with it.

2 See regarding the mentioned inconsistency: 900 Jordanians are fighting with ISIS in Iraq and Syria, the London-based Al-Hayat Newspaper, 3/5/2017. This figure is from a leading official speaking about ISIS and Al-Qaeda in combination, and the same also applies: Interview of the BBC with the Jordanian head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mahmood Freihath, where he stated that the number of Jordanians abroad is only 300; See: "Interview with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Jordanian Armed Forces."www.youtube.com, BBC Arabic, 30 Dec. 2016, and compare this to Samah

Moreover, studies using an empirical approach to gauge the socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of the current are quite rare. Principally, this is due to the problem of the unavailability of credible and precise sources of information on this subject.

As such, this renders much of what is published in the media or what is politically discussed as more akin to personal impressions, or ambiguous indicators of the phenomenon. This produces a situation which we may term as epistemic darkness on the subject, which spurred us at the Centre of Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan to conduct this study, primarily aiming to depict the economic and social features, and traits of those belonging to the Jordanian Salafi Jihadist current. This is done by gathering the largest possible amount of data, information and details on Jordanians who are members within the ranks of jihadist groups such as: ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and Al-Nusra as well as other Jihadist groups outside of Jordan who were sentenced in cases heard by the State Security Court in Jordan.

As to the second aim of this book, we attempt to provide a comprehensive study of pathways which drove some people to enlist in the various Salafi jihadist currents, be they familial, religious, social, psychological, economic, political factors, or certain combinations of these factors. This materialized through reviewing the major milestones which were pivotal to directing

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Baybars, 4 thousand Jordanian ISIS members in Syria and Iraq. Al-Ghad Newspaper, 2/4/2017, reported from a study issued by the US Congress. As to Soufan Institute known in the field of security consulting, it estimated the figure to be in excess of two thousand fighters: See: "The Number of Foreign Fighters in Syria 'Doubles in 16 Months.'" [www.bbc.com/Arabic/Middleeast](http://www.bbc.com/Arabic/Middleeast), 9 Dec. 2015

individuals in the direction of jihadist thought. In this regard, these reasons are explored through our focus on the case studies; to a greater extent involving Jordanians who went to fight, and were killed in Syria and Iraq among other areas such as Libya and Yemen. We were able to access around twenty cases within the context of a detailed and deep study, using information from diverse sources, including: social media, interviews with friends, families and the persons themselves if they were still alive and accepted to be interviewed.

Finally, based on the findings of the study, we present a set of policy recommendations regarding individuals susceptible to the radicalization process, and those already active within extremist groups.

This study is thus unprecedented on several accounts: the first is collecting data and information on hundreds of Jordanians within the Jihadi Salafist current, in the context of attempting to build the largest amount of indicators. The second is the thorough analyses of numerous case studies, and third is to draw close to the attempt of diagnosing the features this current: socially, culturally, psychologically, economically, and at an interplay of the aforementioned angles.

## **Methodological Framework**

The methodology of the study is conducted using several research tools in data collection and analysis, with special emphasis on the “Snow Ball” method. We find this method considerably suitable for studying those currents, particularly in the Arab

and Jordanian contexts, especially due to the lack of a reliable; epistemically sound base of data and information.

The “Snow Ball” idea is based on accessing available research subjects and information through social media, and from it expanding the data base through personal interviews, along with individuals connected to members of the current. For example, if we know individual “X” from those fighting in Syria, it is possible, in many cases, to know others through acquaintances on their page, including the list of friends. This method helps identify other individuals from the current through their personal pages, or other acquaintances who know or have communicated with said person. Thus, at the social level, some of the active members in Salafi Jihadism may lead researchers to numerous names, and facilitate the process of communication with the concerned persons or the quarters close to them, ultimately to finding desired information on the individual.

Moreover, the study refers to cases litigated at the State Security Court, which were monitored and used in the data collection process via both indictments and rulings that were issued concerning cases by the hundreds, while even further information was gathered using the aforementioned method.

The total number of cases in this study amounted to 760 “Jordanian jihadists” i.e. those that belong to the Salafi jihadist current, among whom are 190 persons killed abroad and 49 who continued to fight outside of Jordan, up until the time of preparing this study. This number constitutes 31.4% of the total cases on which data was gathered. As to the other persons in

this database, they are those who were involved in violent actions, enlisted or attempted to enlist in extremist groups, or who performed behaviors in conflict with the Anti-terrorism legislation. These cases were subject to simple statistical treatment after background information was collected on each of them. It is worth mentioning that we were unable to collect all indicators for all these cases, which include information on: age, academic level, professional status (employed/ unemployed), occupation, work sector, accusation (for cases inside Jordan), and the organization to which the person is affiliated. On the other hand, the qualitative study was sufficed with 11 cases from Jordan and who enlisted in extremist organizations both within and outside of Jordan. We shall focus on them in several chapters of the book, while also being guided by numerous other additional information obtained by studying other cases, and to a large extent the list of those killed abroad.

### **Who is the “Salafist jihadist”?**

There are key concepts associated with this study and its methodology; in this particular context determining who “the jihadists” are, and what is meant by the “Salafi jihadist” current in Jordan. In this section, we also identify how we classify the jihadist and determine that if the individual falls within the category of this study’s target sample.

Concerning the “Salafi jihadist” - whether referring to a current or person, is one who believes in the principle of Al-Hakimiyyah;

that is, the imperative of establishing Islamic rule, and to consider as having apostatized all existing Arab governments, and using armed struggle as a main method for change, either domestically or abroad. It also refers to the concept of Al-Wala`a and Al-Bara`a- allegiance and being dissociated from idol worship- and what is intended here is to frame relations with the other: culturally, religiously and politically, within the context of ideological concepts, which is what confirms belonging or allegiance to any of Al-Qaeda branches, so-called ISIS or Al-Nusra front.<sup>1</sup>

However, within this conceptual framework, how could we determine the concerned persons in the study? For this purpose we placed a myriad indicators for subjects qualified for study, such that they qualify within one category or multiple categories, considered within the study sample, including:

**First** - Any individual killed in Iraq or Syria or any other place while fighting with those groups and currents, such as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria "ISIS" (Daesh) or Al-Nusra, or Al-Qaeda either in Yemen or globally. They could also be individuals who joins and fights with the aforementioned groups, or is among those who believe in their ideology, in case they did not defect from them and abandon their ideas.

**Second** - Those that join those groups, continue to fight with them, or joined them and returned, even if they were to declare that they eschewed that thought, qualify at a minimum as "former Salafist jihadists". It remains possible and crucial to

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1 See Introduction to Salafi Jihadism: Mohammad Abu Rumman, Political Reform in Islamic Thought: Approaches, Forces, Priorities, Strategies, The Arab Network for Research and Publication, Beirut, 1st ed., 2010, pp.255-260.

study their case, and to place them within the context of the cases whose indicators and ideas are studied.

**Third** – One sentenced by virtue of a categorical ruling by the State Security Court, after cassation and appeal, and here we differentiate between three types of cases: the first is the formation of terrorism cells and groups or participating in operations linked to those groups. Second are the attempts to join those groups or return, and third is promotion, that is to evince support for those groups and their ideas through multitudinous means, either using social media or social encounters, and this type of case has become widespread in the rulings of the State Security Court in Jordan in recent years, in the wake of amending the Anti-terrorism legislation, which criminalizes praising or supporting those groups overtly.

**Fourth** – those who identifies themselves as a “Salafist jihadist” in clear terms, and was perhaps detained on such basis, and one who evinces in their speech and language a belief in the ideas and ideology of this current, even if they were not tried in court. These are cases which have no direct presence in the study, but we muster them within the context of analysis and interpretation, particularly when we discuss “Women Jihadists” in Jordan.

Hence, from an organizational standpoint, the existing cases were classified in a database in terms of organizational affiliation as follows: ISIS, Al-Nusra, Al-Qaeda, and other jihadi organizations beyond Jordan, and the followers of Takfiri (excommunicative) currents inside Jordan.

Accordingly, the book consists of interconnected main parts: a quantitative analysis of the total number of individuals in the study, quantitative analyses of partial indicators, and a qualitative analysis of a particular number of cases, which were subject to a deeper qualitative study. Qualitative analyses are concerned with questions on: the intellectual background of the person, the stages of conversion, the influences which catapulted them into the jihadi current: persons, ideas, social or economic conditions, with a view of investigating the subjective and objective motives, the economic standard, and the influence of the surrounding social environment.

As such, the book consists of main chapters revolving around a historical background of the jihadist current and its evolution, an attempt to diagnose the internal structure of the current and the impact of the environment from a sociological standpoint, based on the experience, research, analysis and information reached by the field research, and thence a social and economic study grounded in quantitative indicators which were gathered and classified. Finally, we conclude the analyses with a case study of numerous patterns within the current, followed by a chapter on main conclusions, deductions and policy recommendations.

The study will focus on the period from the beginning of 2011 until the middle of 2017. This is so due to the witnessed numerous transformations in the structure and spreading of this current, as well as the issues connected to it, making us face a case that is more amorphous and murky than during the years prior. Hence, a thorough investigation within the

confines of research presented in this book may considerably help in diagnosing and understanding the current situation of the Jordanian Jihadist current in general. With that said, some of the statistical information gathered originated prior to this timeframe, particularly regarding those who were involved in activities contravening the law inside Jordan.

## **Chapter I:**

# **The Salafist Jihadist Current: A Historical Framework**



## **Chapter I: The Salafist Jihadist Current: A Historical Framework**

The Salafi Jihadist current is neither an organization nor an organized movement underpinned by a single or uniform structure or administration. Rather, it is a network of groups without an institutional connection between them, at the macro level, with the exception of the ideological connection and personal relations between the members, lacking any institutional structural activity, and is characterized by amorphousness.

### **1- Formation of the Current in the Mid-Nineties**

It would be possible to date the formation of the current and its emergence at the level of the appearance of intellectual leaderships, and the crystallization of a comprehensive ideology as a frame of reference for its sons, held together by a single intellectual framework, ever since the declaration of the case of Pledge of Allegiance (Bayaan al Imam) in 1994. That is, in the mid-nineties. In this connection, personalities subsequently came to the surface which acquired a leadership and charismatic dimension, with Abu Mohammad Al-Maqdisi and Abu Mus`ab Al-Zarqawi as the most notable figures, alongside a group of personalities some of whom became among the prominent leaders of this current, domestically and abroad.

If we were to revert to the cases of the State Security Court and the foremost organizations, we would find that before them there was a the pattern of "Jaysh Mohammad" (1991), which is a mixture of radical Islamists, who favor armed activity in changing what is evil, but who lack an integrated ideology. This also applies to the Afghan Jordanians group (1994), which are groups formed after the return of the fighters from the arena of Afghan at the end of the decade and under the influence of Sheikkh Abdullah Azzam, who established a "services bureau" in Peshawar. There is also the case of Al-Nafir Al-Islami (1992), with two well-known Islamist deputies with Sufi rather than Salafi inclinations, and the Islamic Renewal Group, which is of an amorphous Islamic character, and the groups of the Ajloun explosives, namely three highly cultured young men with political goals and Sufi inclinations, the assassination attempt of a French diplomat, the Mu`ta military group, whose sons were accused of attempting to assassinate the late King Al-Hussein Bin Talal. These were said to have been influenced by the ideology of the Islamic Liberation Party.<sup>1</sup>

However, since 1995, at approximately the time of the Pledge of Allegiance (Bayaat al Imam), the jihadi situation was increasingly acquiring a military character, which is affiliated with the Salafi Jihadi space i.e. its adherents were generally influenced by the Salafi ideology. In fact, after the Pledge of Allegiance (Bayaat al Imam) in the years 1996-1997, group named "Reform and

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1 See Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh *The Islamic Solution in Jordan: The Islamists and the State and the Wagers on Democracy and Security: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's and the Center for Strategic Studies Jordan,* University of Jordan, Amman, 2nd ed., 2014, pp.290-301.

Challenge” appeared, where the Court of Cassation overturned the ruling of the State Security Court concerning it, but it included Salafi Jihadists among whom was Abu Qutadah the Palestinian, whose name began to be recognized in Britain as the ideologist of Salafi Jihadism globally, and particularly in North Africa. Abu Qutadah used to publish the “Al-Ansar” Bulletin which supported the armed Islamic Group in Algeria, and Al-Minhaj General Jihadi Journal. He was known for his articles under the heading Between the Two Methods (Bayn manhajayn), as a nod to his identity as a Jordanian of Palestinian roots.

During that period, the stage of the Jordanian Salafi Jihad formation commenced in prison and outside of it. There began to appear leaders and charismatic names, along with books that were secretly published, while small clandestine groups unified, which were brought together by a single organizational and ideological framework. As a matter of fact, at no time was there an all-embracing organization or group.

Among the names that started to rise to prominence in Jordan: Abu Mohammad Al-Maqdisi-Issam Al-Barqawi, who lived in Kuwait and the Gulf, and moved for a limited period to Afghanistan and Pakistan and encountered Arab fighters there. Al-Barqawi become became an influence on Abu Mus`ab Al-Zarqawi, whose relationship with Ahmad Fadeel Al-Khalayleh began to grow. Upon their return to Jordan they embarked on disseminating the ideas of Al-Maqdisi which laid a comprehensive foundation for Salafi Jihadism: globally and locally, and among the foremost of

those books was “The Creed of Abraham and the Methods of the Oppressors in Diluting it”, and “Manifest Lights on the Unbelief of the Saudi State”, as well as other books which were widely well received within the circles of radical groups and the zealous Islamic youth. These books were distributed secretly prior to the advent of the Internet, despite the arrest and imprisonment of Al-Maqdisi and Al-Zarqawi. “Bay`at Al-Imam- Pledge of Allegiance to the Imam” augured for the practical establishment of the current: ideologically and as a movement, even if it preserved an open-ended organizational modality, or even if there was no comprehensive organization to be more precise.<sup>1</sup>

During his time in prison, Al-Zarqawi wrested leaderships from Al-Maqdisi, and Al-Maqdisi became more akin to an ideological thinker and the spiritual father, while Al-Zarqawi was the charismatic leader of the movement, while outside of prison small radical groups began to form within a general ideological framework, and calling for the new thought materialized through the ideas and writings of Al-Maqdisi. The main nuclei

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1 The current found ease in spreading in that period, i.e. the mid nineties, and this could be explained by reference to political and social reasons, including a sense of disappointment at the defeat of Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War of 1991, after the Jordanian street placed great hope on him, and the Ikhwan were driven to support him, whereupon a large portion of the youths felt frustrated and angry with the Arab regimes, and perhaps with the approach of the Ikhwan, and subsequently the involvement of Jordan in peace negotiations and the signing of the Wadi Arab agreement in 1994, which was enacted as a law in the same period, which provoked a large portion of Jordanians, a large proportion of whom are of Palestinian origin, after they were nurtured to confront any culture or political positions advocating reconciliation and peace with Israel and recognition of its existence. It suffices to remember that the man that assassinated Anwar Sadat in 1981 was a member of the Islamic Jihad Group. Furthermore, there is the matter of the economic crisis of 1989 and an inclination to lift subsidies from major commodities and the quakes to which was exposed the middle class, particularly in the public sector, as a part of the economic-social conditions which produced general motives for a radicalization of a segment of the youths.

began to form in a number of areas by persons who espouse this thought, whereby connectivity mostly took place at a geographic level. That is to say, in the cities a group of individuals became associated through no-structural relations who support the idea of Al-Hakimiyyah (Sovereignty of God) and who consider the Arab regimes as infidel, who reject democracy and peaceful activity, and who strive to advocate this in society and to influence other persons.

This led to the emergence of key leaderships in a number of cities - Irbid, Zarqa, and Karak who are linked to this current, and which personally communicate with Al-Maqdisi or Al-Zarqawi in prison. During this time, new subsidiary cases appeared in the State Security Court represented in either small cells that believe in armed action or cases of libel against the king and accusing him of unbelief. Hence, the number of the current members in the prison and outside of it grew, and the communication revolution and the Internet in Jordan contributed towards the end of the 90s, to the propagation of the message and the recruitment processes.

## **2- External Spread and the Globalization of the Domestic Current**

In 1999 a royal amnesty was issued for most of the prisoners after King Abdullah the Second acceded to the throne, including the adherents to the Salafi Jihadist current, where Abu Mus`ab Al-Zarqawi, Al-Maqdisi and their comrades were released

from prison, leading to an encounter with their followers on the outside. However, Al-Zarqawi soon decided to depart from Jordan and go to Afghanistan, and a group joined him in the journey, while another group from the city of Salt proceeded to Iraqi Kurdistan, forging an alliance with Mullah Krekar to form Ansar Al-Sunnah (Partisans of the Sunnah) there, a number of which were killed in subsequent battles with Kurdish forces.

In the meantime, Al-Zarqawi gathered a number of Jordanians and Arabs in the “Herat” camp in Afghanistan, striving to establish a regional Salafi Jihadi organization. After the Afghan war, he moved to Iraq and formed “Al-Tawhid and Al-Jihad Group” in 2003, then joining Al-Qaeda in 2004 and became one of its prominent leaders on a Iraqi, Jordanian and global level.

Al-Maqdisi, on the hand, returned to prison shortly after being released, while Al-Zarqawi became in the eyes of the supporters a hero and a leader. It may be noted that in spite of his leaving Jordan, since the beginning he attempted to carry out operations targeting American and western interests in Jordan; targeting General Intelligence in particular, as reflected in the nature of the operations he personally oversaw and supported.

Among those operations was “Tandhim Al-Alfiyyah” (2000), which Jordanian authorities accused of targeting western and symbolic interests in Jordan. Among those accused was Al-Zarqawi and those closest to him, such as: Khader Abu Hoshar, Usama Sammar, Khaled Al-Arouri, Yasser Abu Ghallous, Al-Maqdisi (whom the court acquitted subsequently), Abu Qutadah the Palestinian (who was residing in London at the time); and

with them the leaders of Ansar Al-Sunnah in Iraq Mullah Krekar, Abu Al-Ghadiyah Al-Souri, Muwaffaq Al-Udwan and others.

After this group there was "Ansar Al-Islam", which included a number of persons close to Al-Zarqawi. The operation of assassinating the American diplomat Larry Foley was implemented in the year 2002, where Libyans were accused of committing it, and Al-Khalaya group which included a group of persons most of whom were among the residents of east Amman, and the attempt to assassinate Birjaq the General Intelligence officer who was the director of the Anti-Terrorism department, from which a number of adherents from the city of Salt were held responsible and charged.

The most prominent matter during that period was the arrest of a group named "Kata`eb Al-Tawhid" led by Azmi Al-Jayyousi, who was planning a huge operation under the supervision of Abu Mus`ab Al-Zarqawi, intending to bomb the buildings of the General Intelligence Department using car bombs, suicide bombers and an armed attack. This operation was indicative of the extent of Al-Zarqawi's interest in Jordan on the one hand, and his growing regional influence on the other. It also indicates the increasing number and capabilities of Jordanians loyal to him from among the adherents of Al-Salafiyyah Al-Jihadiyyah abroad, including Azmi Al-Jayyousi and Muwaffaq Udwan who was killed in the course of clashes when fighting alongside members of the current at the time.

The story of Al-Jayyousi did not end there, for another group subsequently attempted to arrange a suicide operation for his escape named "Al-Anjadi Group". Relative of the commander of the group was Suleiman Al-Anjadi, who was killed in the course of an armed confrontation with security personnel in Irbid in 2006. Actually, Al-Anjadi (was 32 years old), and is a Palestinian residing in Irbid refugee camp, held a Gaza passport, and with him in the group was Jamil Katkat and others.

In November of 2005, Al-Zarqawi succeeded in the operation of bombing three hotels, in the wake of numerous abortive terrorist operations targeting Jordan. He relied on Iraqi elements however, who implemented suicide operations while Majeda Al-Rishawi, one of the suicide bombers, failed to detonate her explosive belt and was detained and sentence to death, which took place recently.<sup>1</sup>

Also in 2006, a Libyan named Mohammad Al-Darsi was arrested along with Iraqis who were accused of an attempt to bomb Queen Alia International Airport. Their organization was akin to a farewell party involving A-Zarqaawi and Jordan, prior to his killing.

The features of that phase are represented in the rising star of Al-Zarqawi, and the migration of tens of adehrents of the Jihadist current abroad in an attempt to join their comrades. In their midst, there were numerous trials against the background of

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1 See concerning these issues: Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh, *The Islamic Solution in Jordan: Islamists, the State and the Ventures of Democracy and Security*. Fredrich Ebert and the Center for Strategic Studies, University of Jordan, Amman, 2013, p 340-353.

attempts to join comrades abroad, and to secure a foreign space or horizon for the adherents of the current in Jordan, whereupon it lost to a great extent its local character and became dual - that is domestic and foreign, and there emerged greater professionalism and sophistication in the operations of the current compared to a previous phase.

### **3- Appearance of Divisions and Fragmentation within the Current**

In 2006 Abu Mus`ab Al-Zarqawi was killed in Iraq by an American raid, but this did not end his influence in Jordan and the region. In the view of a substantial portion of the Jordanian, Arab and foreign jihadist current a martyr. To them, he had the stature of the spiritual leader of Al-Qaeda- Iraq, which subsequently became ISIS. In fact, he laid the foundations of the organization.

Prior to the killing of Al-Zarqawi there emerged on the surface differences between him and Abu Mohammad Al-Maqdisi, where the latter published (prior to the death of Al-Zarqawi) an article entitled "Al-Zarqawi, Support and Advise" in which he confirmed those differences. In the publication, he attacked Al-Zarqawi in an unprecedented manner, which spurred the colleagues and friends of Al-Zarqawi to attack Al-Maqdisi, and to exchange accusations. The aspects of division and fragmentation began to appear within the Jihadist circles, manifesting themselves in two currents: the first was supportive of Al-Maqdisi, and the second was supportive of Al-Zarqawi.

Differences between the two currents were consecrated and deepened after the killing of Al-Zarqawi, whereupon the so called "New Zarqawis" appeared, who accused Al-Maqqdisi of laxity and who differed with him. They were actually influenced by Al-Zarqawi, and on the other side the well-known leaders of the current in various areas supported Al-Maqqdisi, at the forefront of whom was Abed Shehadeh Al-Tahawi in Irbid, and in Salt Luqman Riyalat and Jarrah Al-Rahahleh, and in Amman Jawad Al-Faqih and others, and in Ma`an Abu Sayyaf. At that time Al-Madisi was intermittently in and out of prison.

During that period, and precisely during the four years since 2006-2010 a new generation of leaders was forming within the circles of the Salafi Jihadist current, not within its traditional environment. Actually, the most prominent of the newcomers were from the Salafi or Muslim Brotherhood movements, some of whom were known and other were unknown where subsequent developments revealed their connection to the Salafiyyah Jihadiyyah.<sup>1</sup> In fact, in that period the names of Dr. Sa`ad Al-Huneiti, Dr. Iyad Al-Qunaybi, Dr. Ayman Al-Balwi, and the physicians Munif Samara, Salah Anani, Bassam Al-Nu`aymi (Abu Bandar) rose to prominence as new effective personalities at the forefront of the jihadi current, and they were within the

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1 Among those names, for example is the doctor Hammam Al-Balawi, nicknamed Abu Dujana Al-Khurasani, who was linked to Al-Maqqdisi, in an unknown manner, and was not known within the Jihadist Jordanian current, at least by his real name, despite his electronic fame as Abu Dujana Al-Khurasani, until Intelligence uncovered his real identity, and tried to recruit him, and then he implemented his notorious operation in Khost in East Afghanistan, where a number of CIA personnel were killed along with a Jordanian officer in 2009. Also, it became evident that Dr. Riyadh Hadeeb, of whom we will later speak, and was a Muslim brother for a long period, frequented in a later period Al-Maqqdisi, prior to getting killed in Syria, while fighting alongside Al-Nusra, after eschewing his affiliation to the Muslim Brotherhood.

new relations of Al-Maqdisi group. Moreover, in that stage there were also persons close to a current calling itself "Current of the Nation" which was established in Kuwait by Dr. Hakem Al-Mteiri, which has extensions in Jordan.

In accordance with the classification of Jarir Al-Hasni, which is a pseudonym for a person who has a blog,<sup>1</sup> and who is loyal to ISIS, (it is believed that he himself is Umar Mahdi Zeidan, who later departed to Iraq, and was killed in American bombing in 2017), the jihadi current came to consist of three main groups: the first is Al-Maqdisi group, and with him the new row of leadership, the second is the group that was committed to the approach of Al-Zarqawi, and subsequently became supportive of ISIS, and the third was supportive of the Nation Current, and which once again subsequently separated from the jihadist current.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of the enlistment of a new group to the jihadi current-most of whom are educated and belong to the middle class- there was an attempt to undertake changes within the circles of the current, including the idea of framing a particular structural modality, even if informal, and to think of announcing the principle of "peaceful call"; that is repudiating armed action in Jordan, and reconsidering some of the ideas of the current, such as the enrollment of students in schools, given that Al-Maqdisi had authored a book entailed "Preparing the Knights to Eschew the Corruption of Schools", and the attempt to create Islamic schools closer to the ideas of the current.

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1 The citation and link of his blog is: Al-Hosni, Jareer. "Https://thabat111.Wordpress.com."

2 See: Al-Tawalbe, Mustafa. "Interview Reveals the Secrets of the Salafi Jihadists in Jordan and Their View on The Muslim Brotherhood." <https://www.assawsana.com/>, 3 June 2012

These ideas led to an initial attempt by the group, in 2010, and thence there was the idea of the schools or the Islamic Kuttab, which was rejected by the competent authorities, because they are outside of the official framework. However, the “Arab Spring” surprised all and its ferment began to impose itself on Jordan and the popular movement, and even on the Salafi Jihadist current and the new ideas within it.

A group from jihadist adherents close to Al-Maqdisi was of the view that the popular movement, democratic demands and the fragility of the Arab regimes was an opportunity to pressure the state in order to achieve gains for the current. This particularly related to the prisoners of the current and the attempt to improve their prison conditions or their release. It was also seen as an opportunity to spread their new ideas pertaining to the peacefulness of the call and its feasibility, and what relates to unifying the current within the framework of a general movement, as well as appearing in the media and public scene, so as to obtain the recognition of society of the presence of this current.<sup>1</sup>

The jihadist current organized a number of sit-ins, attended by hundreds of its supporters, and multiple slogans were raised combining demands for rights associated with improving the conditions of prisoners and political demands to apply the Shari`ah. Notably, the speeches of the speakers varied between their gatherings in Amman, Salt and various areas, and it appeared as though the current had imposed its presence on the scene, speaking overtly to all, and garnering media coverage.

1 Mohammad Aburumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh, *The Islamic Solution*, op.cit, p 434-460.

However, things went into decline in the wake of clashes between the supporters of the jihadist current and security forces in Zarqa mid-April of 2011, which was a watershed in the trajectory of the current, where more than two hundred supporters were arrested and pursued, who were referred to the State Security Court in what became known as the "Zarqa Events" case. This case that is important to us on more than one level, because it led to the end of the series of sit-ins, and ended what the new leadership of the current considered an accomplishment, by virtue of gaining societal recognition, where images of the current and its adherents bearing swords and knives appeared, and filmed statements of policemen and security showed their exposure to stabbings and assaults at their hands. In the final analysis, the state succeeded in undercutting the current, and returning them to square one, and indeed to spread fear in society of the risks of the sit-ins leading to the emergence of radical movements.<sup>1</sup>

The significance of those events lie in that they included most of the leaders and a high proportion of the members of the group close to Al-Maqdisi, who were previously calling for restructuring the movement and effecting transformations, where they became imprisoned or pursued. The names included a large number of new leaders such as Sa`ad Al-Huneiti, Ayman Al-Balwi, `Amer Dmour, and the traditional leaders in most of the areas.

Multiple people were arrested, and the number reached more than two hundred, and a large proportion were referred to the State Security Court. In the meantime, there were claims of

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1 Jordan: "Ten Injuries in Clashes Between Salafi and Pro-Government Protesters ." [Http://www.bbc.com/Arabic/Middleeast](http://www.bbc.com/Arabic/Middleeast), BBC, 15 Apr. 2011, 17:35 GMT

torture at the preventive security centers, and thence the overall majority were released on bail, and the status of the escapees was settled by the end of 2011.<sup>1</sup>

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of February in 2012, there was another attempt to structure and organize the movement in an indirect manner, and this was known as the “Dleil Meeting” (held in the farm of the jihadist leader Bassam Al-Nu`aymi- Abu Bandar), which was attended by more than one hundred persons, and around ten persons were selected to form what is akin to a Shura Council for the movement.<sup>2</sup>

However, the attempt did not succeed, and in fact the state of division and polarization intensified within the circles of the movement, and differences appeared between its members. Simultaneously, Syrian arena since the start of 2012 began to attract mounting numbers of Jordanians, especially members of the Salafi Jihadism current, whereby some who were released on bail as a result of the Zarqa events escaped via the Syrian-Jordanian border, including Mustaf Saleh, Iyad Al-Tobasi, Bilal Khreisat, and Sami Al-'Aridi, and others who became nuclei for other Jordanian jihadis, and formed a channel for encouraging

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1 See: 22 accused members in the Salafi current case are released on bail, Ad dustour 25/11/2011, and also: State Security Court considers requests of bail for 67 Salafis who are detained: <http://www.jordanzad.comprint.php?id=64601>

2 The names that were chosen are: Abu Sayyaf (from Ma'an), Rashad Shteiwi (from Baq'a refugee camp, Balqa Gvoernroate), Abed Al-Tahawi (from Irbid), Jarrah Al-Rahhaleh, Luqman Al-Riyalat ( from Salt), Sa`ad Huneiti, Jawad Al-Faqih ( from Amman), Usama Al-Masarweh, Ahmad Al-Kuweiti, Amer Dmour ( Zarqa and Ruseifeh). There was objection to Ahmad Al-Kuweiti, because he differed from the ideology of the organization, while Rashad Shteiwi withdrew on grounds that he is “feeble”. See the details of this: Zeidan, Omar Mahdi. “Ruler Al-Mutairi and the Meeting of Salafi Jihadists in Daleel.”<https://thabat111.wordpress.com/>, 21 Apr. 2012, [thabat111.wordpress.com/2012/04/21/](http://thabat111.wordpress.com/2012/04/21/)

the others to migrate. Since then, the numbers rose from tens to the hundreds in the following years, including a big proportion of those detained against the background of the events of Zarqa. Interestingly, the methods of escape were varied, ranging from smuggling across the border or departure via the airport to Turkey or other Arab countries, to exploiting the reason of travel to perform the 'Umra minor pilgrimage, and then to travel from Saudi Arabia to Turkey, and then arriving at the Syrian border, given that the road was easy from Turkey to Aleppo when it was under the control of the Syrian armed opposition, and was considered their capital at the time.

The issue of migration to ISIS, Al-Nusra and other jihadist groups was not confined to the adherents of the Salafi Jihadist current; that is those with a background and record in this domain, but also encompassed other segments, among whom are members of the Muslim Brotherhood. It also included youth from younger generations, namely those who were influenced by what happened in Syria, and found that the available reference point is Al-Nusra Front, thus joining the latter, and with the passage of time converted to jihadist thought, as will be observed in the book. There are also those from the traditional Salafi background and from the peaceful Jama`at Al-Da`wa W`al Tabligh, and there are youths who were rapidly recruited to the jihadist groups, and so within a short period of time joined those organizations there. In the final analysis, scenes of daily carnage from the events in Syria and Iraq, the initial Arab and Islamic media mobilization,

and the rising sectarianism in the region, contributed to bolstering the process of migration to those groups outside of Jordan, and the joining of numbers of the jihadist current, domestically and abroad.

In recent years, qualitative transformations occurred in contrast to quantitative-numerical expansion represented by the rise of the numbers of adherents from the educated middle class joining the current, and a movement from the individual to the familial case. Namely, there were women and juveniles who entered the records of the State Security Court, at the level of terrorism cases, and a special house was allocated for juveniles influenced by the thought of ISIS, who were tried by the State Security Court, some of whom were involved in terrorism cases, such as the Irbid juveniles, or other terrorist groups. Indeed, there was an increasing focus on the female element in the organization, and the movement of the woman to the role of logistical support and promotion of the ideas of ISIS and gaining sympathies for them, and these are the features, characteristics and qualitative transformations which we will tackle in the coming chapter.

Since the rise of ISIS and its declaration of the caliphate in the middle of 2014, followed by its defection from and difference with Al-Qaeda and Al-Nusra Front, the groups were involved in mutual accusations of apostasy, armed confrontations and electronic wars, revolving around who represents the true legitimacy of the Salafi jihadist current, and the division of the jihadi currents and movements into ISIS on the one hand, and

Al-Qaeda on the other. Those developments reflected on Jordan, where the divisions and differences within the Salafi jihadist current formed into two tendencies: the first is supportive of ISIS, and it began to grow in numbers, and the second includes Salafi jihadist leaders, foremost of whom are Abu Mohammad Al-Maqdisi, Abu Qutadah Al-Filastini, and with them Iyad Al-Quneibi, Dr. Aymad Al-Balwi, and other supporters of Al-Nusra and Al-Qaeda.

Those differences reached the point of vehement mutual attacks and accusations of misguidance and treason, and the impact of the local Jordanian conflict extended abroad, where the positioning of those leaders on the side of Al-Nusra and Al-Qaeda and their harsh overt criticisms of ISIS had strong reverberations on the conflict between the two groups in Syria and Iraq. This is due to the aforementioned Jordanian leaders being recognized as intellectual authorities in the circles of Al-Qaeda and the global jihadist current, with Al-Nusra Front in particular considering them an intellectual frame of reference, contributing to enhancing the fragmentation within the Jordanian jihadis.<sup>1</sup>

The internal cleavage between the ISIS and Al-Nusra currents intensified, and the Jordanian jihadist youths separated domestically and abroad, as a result of that conflict, for a large proportion of them are in Al-Nusra, who joined its ranks prior to the advent of ISIS and the emergence of the differences and conflict between them, while the majority of the members

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1 There are numerous statements, clear positions and writings prepared by Abu Mohammad Al-Maqdisi and Abu Qutadah Al-Filastini which harshly attack ISIS, and the converse is also true, for the other Jordanian leaderships in ISIS attacked Al-Maqdisi and Abu Qutadah.

subsequently joined ISIS. Also, numerous splinters emerged within the circles of Jordanians from Al-Nusra in the direction of ISIS, as was the case with numerous personalities, at the level of individuals and leaders, or from Al-Nusra without joining another side.<sup>1</sup>

#### **4- Current Situation**

Thus, the phase after the Zarqa event witnessed the migration of large numbers of Jordanians to the theaters of combat in Syria and Iraq, and this migration passed through stages: the first (since the end of 2011 until the middle of 2013) materialized by a myriad of means, most prominently by smuggling through the border, and the first installments were mostly from the sons of the Salafi jihadist adherents themselves, and here emerges prominently the story of those involved in the Zarqa events, and were released on bail, and then infiltrated the border to Syria. As to the second stage, it witnessed considerable security and military stringency on the border, whereby the attempts turned toward the road of travel and crossing from the Turkish border, and in this stage the numbers of those that do not belong to the jihadi current rose because they were not subject to security or judicial restrictions preventing them from travel.

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1 Among the defections that happened from Al-Nusra to ISIS, at the level of leaderships, is what happened with Dr. Saad Huneiti, Amer Dmour, and Abu Anas Al-Sahaba, and a group of religious experts in Al-Nusra Front in Dera; as to secessions of the leaders from Al-Nusra without joining ISIS, there is the example of the three leaders in Idlib: Sami Al-Aridi, who was acting as the religious mufti of Al-Nusra Front, Bilal Khreisat (Abu Khadijah Al-Urduni) who was a military commander responsible for the south, and Iyad Al-Tobassi (Abu Julaybib), who is also among the known commanders of Al-Nusra, in the south.

At another level, ISIS began to organize Jordanians to carry out terrorist attacks inside Jordan, after matters calmed down during several years, as a result of the well-known fatwa of Al-Maqdisi considering as impermissible military operations inside Jordan. However, the rise of the organization and its possession of territories and Jordanians joining it there, inaugurated communication lines through the virtual world between the inside and abroad.

There was also the role of media propaganda which the group transmitted about its operations, capabilities and what it accomplishes, such as a new, continual and abiding project, and will present the jihadists as an alternative to the Arab regimes. Such propaganda helped the organization to recruit and transmit their messages, which was reflected in more than one level: the first was expanded arrests and court cases against the background of promoting ISIS, and hence we witnessed tens of cases, during the few previous years, related to promotion of the jihadist groups, and other cases related to attempts to join ISIS, or return from Syria and Iraq, as well as attempts to carry out terrorist operations in Jordan, and to form cells and groups.

The event that shook Jordanian society was the occurrence of a series of successive events in 2016 which raised suspicion about the extent of the permeation of the ISIS current, and its thought within the circles of Jordanian youths. Thus, in March 2016 the Irbid confrontations occurred between Security and a cell affiliated to the current in Irbid<sup>1</sup> during which there was an

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1 See: "Violent Clashes between Jordanian Security and Armed Extremist Islamists in Irbid." [Http://Www.bbc.com/Arabic/Middleeast](http://www.bbc.com/Arabic/Middleeast), 2 Mar. 2016

exchange of fire, killing one officer of the Jordanian Security forces, and the elimination of some members of the cell who were holed up in a building in Irbid. Subsequently, in June one of the members of the Salafi jihadist current, from Al-Baq`a Refugee Camp, previously convicted for terrorist cases, penetrated the building of the Baq`a Intelligence (Mukhabarat ar.) killing a number of Intelligence personnel, prior to being captured by some citizens, and handed over to Security.<sup>1</sup> In the month of September, Jordanians awoke to the horrifying and unprecedented news in political life, namely the assassination of the leftist Jordanian writer, who posted a caricature on his page, which was construed as an insult to Islam, and it later became evident that the killer is an engineer who works in the Ministry of Education, and used to preach in mosques but was prohibited from doing so, then embarked on his action in a unilateral manner after being convinced that the victim insulted Islam.

The greater shock was the series of events in Karak at the end of 2016, when a group of ISIS members engaged in combat with Public Security and killed members of the latter, while attacking a police station, then taking refuge in the historical Karak citadel and taking tourists as hostages, prior to being killed, after members of Security were killed. This produced a state of terror and anxiety unprecedented within public opinion vis a vis this new pattern of operations.<sup>2</sup>

1 See: "The Offices of Baqa General Intelligence Office Is Subject to a Terrorist Attack." [Http://Www.petra.gov.jo](http://Www.petra.gov.jo), Petra, Jordan News Agency , 6 June 2016

2 See: Karak events and the ISIS cell: Al-Ghad exclusively prints details about the four terrorists in the Karak events, the Jordanian Al-Ghad Newspaper, 20/12/2016, and also: 19 charges are brought against nine persons involved in the Karak events, 9/4/2017, on Aljazeera.net, at the following link: <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic/2017/4/6/>

The Salafi jihadist current is associated today with hundreds of individuals who continue to fight in Iraq and Syria, after hundreds of them were killed, and hundreds are convicted in various terrorism cases and serving sentences at the Reform and Rehabilitation Centers. The current is also associated with hundreds who are out of prison, although most are subject to surveillance by the authorities, and differences continue to exist between the two wings of the current and its known Sheikhs such as Al-Maqdisi and Abu Qutadah Al-Filastini on the one hand, and the large proportion of youth in the other wing who believe in the thought of ISIS, and most of the newcomers subscribe to this thought.

On the opposing side, and as an official response to this escalation in terrorist operations and the growing Salafi jihadist current, the security authorities carried out an unprecedented campaign of arrests the scale of which had not been seen in decades, on the eve of the Karak events. This included hundreds of persons, most of whom were released months after the arrests, and others who were referred to the State Security Court.

What is a new development is that for the first time, women were tried in court as related to terrorism cases, and the questioning of a large number of them, not to mention much greater stringency in security measures.

Moreover, the State reverted to implementing capital punishment, after having ceased this practice for a long period of time, and hence executing the Iraqi woman Sajeda Al-Rishawi (convicted

for the operation of bombings in Amman in 2005), and Mu`ammar Al-Jaghbir (convicted in several cases, and sentenced to death). The State also hastened to implement the death sentences of those convicted in relation to the cells which were behind the last cases, namely the killer of Nahed Hattar, the attacker of the Baq`a Intelligence, and those convicted in the Irbid cell.

## **Chapter II:**

# **Sociology of Extremism in Jordan**



## Chapter II: Sociology of Extremism in Jordan

One of the most important questions connected to the rise of extremist currents is concerned with “push factors” instigating the process of propagating the ideology, the recruitment and mobilization processes. Despite the increasing volume of studies which tackled this phenomenon in numerous Arab countries, there is lack of general consensus on identifying those causes, or at least their rank of importance as factors producing attraction to this current.

With that said, scholars tend to become polarized between two orientations: the first assigns primary responsibility to the religious or jurisprudential (fiqh) text, and is of the view that the required reform is to reform the educational and religious curricula. In this school of reasoning, there is a myriad of varied opinions with some viewing that the problem lies in the religious text itself, and others of the view that it is present in the prevalent religious orientations, or at least some of them. As to the second orientation, it is of the view that the root of the problem are more objective causes, such as the political, economic or social conditions, both domestically and externally. Hence, advocates of this orientation believe in a remedy of practical and realistic reforms, going on to assert that what is occurring is an Islamization

of radicalism, in the sense that the latent conditions of radicalism or extremism are present, but they acquire ideological legitimacy through those movements.

Notwithstanding its importance, this book does not engage in this debate, although it is crucial to mention that the social factors and features are extremely important in studying, comprehending and interpreting this phenomenon. Nevertheless, it is very difficult to attain a profiling of the specific social, economic and cultural features of the adherents to the Salafi jihadist current in general. Thus, we are facing a vast space of varied characteristics of radicalized and susceptible individuals. Moreover, although the fact is that many characteristics can be found within a wide segment, they still do not represent a definitive feature identifying the social determinant of this current.

From another angle, the spread of extremist Islamic currents and rhetoric is somewhat ubiquitous. The phenomenon manifests in societies both “Western” and “Eastern”, and in some cases reaching unprecedented stages in terms of the ability to promote ideology and recruit individuals, largely due to the emergence of ISIS since 2013. Even so, the social factors vary in both significance and the extent to which some factors become pivotal in certain countries. In Saudi Arabia for example, in factors driving Saudis to these currents or merging with the armed organizations abroad, are not necessarily the same reasons prevailing in Europe, Arab Maghreb or Jordan which underlie this phenomenon. Perhaps some of these reasons are present in most sociological studies, but the fact is that they vary in strength and influence from one society to the other.

Based on the foregoing we attempt in this chapter to elucidate the social, economic, cultural and political factors behind enlisting in the Salafi jihadist current in Jordan. We also consider its relative ability to recruit and propagate, and the mounting number of those influenced by it during the previous years, in spite of all the security and cultural efforts exerted to both confront and mitigate it.

This Chapter is the product of field work conducted over several months of data collection, including interviews with members of the current who fell under its influence, the families of some who joined it and enlisted in ISIS or Al-Nusra abroad, and their friends. Data collection and analyses took place using social media networks which we were able to access, from among the adherents of the current or those sympathetic to it.

Data from these interviews culminated into a quantitative study presented in the following chapter. However, parallel to them in terms of epistemic significance is the “research experience”, which we acquired during the past months, through interviews and field encounters, and a study of the social media sites.

The “research experience” enables us to understand the social environment surrounding most of the studied cases, and elucidate factors which may not appear clearly in the figures or indicators of the study, but which we perceived through experiencing the encounters and interviews, and visiting the areas from which came those groups, and the observations acquired by the researchers during the period of study and comparison.

In the following pages, we draw closer and elucidate with greater clarity we may call the “community of the Jordanian jihadists”, whether belonging to ISIS or otherwise. While doing so, we focus on a set of key aspects of variance: by the governorates, geography and society; and the social, psychological economic characteristics, features and cultural backgrounds, and the dynamics of recruitment and its stages, along with the jihadi lineages.

### **1- Geography and Map of Extremism:**

In the course of monitoring the activity of the current, issues associated with it, and those who enlisted in the jihadi organizations, we found that the cities of Ruseifeh and Zarqa hold a unique merit. In the city of Ruseifeh there is a proliferation in more than one area, principally the city camp (Schneller Camp), and the areas near to it, such as Jebel Al-Amir Fesial and Al-Mhseirfeh, in addition to other areas, such as: King Talal housing area, and Al-Rashid quarter.

The main assumptions behind proliferation of the current in the governorate of Zarqa is the presence of the current’s main leaders such as Abu Mohammad Al-Maqdisi himself, the historic ideologist of the current, who is a resident of Al-Rashid quarter in Al-Ruseifeh. Another was Abu Mus`ab Al-Zarqawi (Ahmad Al-Khalayleh), a resident of Ma`soum Quarter in the city of Zarqa, along with numerous other names which became subsequently known, such as: Abu Anas al-Sahaba (Mustafa Saleh in the northern quarter, who became a commander in Al-Nusra, and

thence in ISIS), Abu Julaybib (Iyad Al-Toubasi, from Al-Nuzha Quarter in Zarqa, who is one of the military commanders in Al-Nusra), 'Amer Dmour (resides in Al-Zawahreh quarter), Mohammad Al-Harashseh (given the epithet of the Lion of Zanjibar, and was killed in American bombing of Al-Qaeda in Yemen), as well as names of tens of jihadists known in Zarqa and Ruseifeh, both at the local and international levels.

This assumption, even if formally correct, perhaps reflects more of an outcome rather than a causal reason. Essentially we should ask: why did Ruseifeh and Zarqa become fertile ground for producing the current and its leaders? Why did its leaders in those two neighboring cities find a favorable social environment for work and activity?

Perhaps there is a multidimensional analysis of the impact of society on the rise of the current, including the fact that there is a random social growth of the two cities. This is to say that a social formation without clear demographic homogeneity is present, where there is a Chechen minority and a wide segment of those of Palestinian origins, sons of the renowned Banu Hassan tribe, to which Al-Zarqawi belongs, and the sons of military personnel who worked in the Zarqa camp, in previous times, and who settled in the city.

As a result, in a city with a wide social admixture, most of whose inhabitants are from the lower middle class or the poor class, perhaps engendering a growth in feelings of social and economic

marginalization. Simultaneously, we find that there is an abject dearth of cultural presence from both state and civil society, where there are no theaters, clubs or recreational facilities. There are also no signs of genuine care by the state for this governorate, even though the population size is a substantial 1.4 million, with the district of Ruseifeh as the most densely populated in the Kingdom of Jordan.

If we revert to the ratio of those enlisted in the jihadist current in the governorate, to the proportion of fighters abroad, available figures indicate that Al-Ruseifeh and Zarqa have the highest numbers among the governorates. On the other hand, a large number of jihadists from the governorate are among those from poor socioeconomic backgrounds, without university education, and working temporary or informal jobs. That is, there is no fixed monthly income, with occupations including mobile trade activities, car mechanics, and household maintenance activities, which reflects a positive correlation between poor socioeconomic conditions and an presence of jihadists in the given governorate. This however, does not negate the fact that there is a minority of an educated middle class in Zarqa Governorate, who successfully completed tertiary education with diverse specializations.

Socially speaking, there is also diversity in the Governorate, though it is clear that there are larger proportions of those with Palestinian roots and members of the Bani Hassan tribe inhabiting both cities. Interesting, the Al-Khalyleh tribe (to which Al-Zarqawi belongs) is shared in name by many people involved in the current; a proportion of which are direct and direct relatives of Al-Zarqawi, while others members of the tribe itself. If we

attempt to analyze the reasons behind prominent appearance of the name “Al-Khalayleh”, the impact of Al-Zarqawi himself may be a reason behind its adoption. Furthermore, economic and social conditions prevalent in Zarqa and Al-Ruseifeh echo those faced by a the general east-Jordanian populace, indeed shared by residents who belong to the current.

On the other hand, in terms of quantity, number and proliferation, come east Amman and Irbid. In east Amman the current emerges in quarters such as Nazzal, Wihdat, and Abu Alanda, in addition to northern Marka, Jebel Al-Nasr, Al-Hashimi Al-Shamali, Sweileh and assorted areas. Cases also began to appear in areas close to western Amman such as Bayader Wadi Al-Seer, Tla`a Al-Ali, Dahiet Al-Rashid.

If we observe some of the backgrounds and indicators linked to east Amman and other quarters, we would find that there is a difference in quality. Prevalence of the current draws closer to the middle and lower class, even though the poorer class is not absent, and closer to the educated classes, students, and the segment of school teachers. As such, we find numerous cases of radicalization or susceptibility from various areas of specialization, religious belief, vocational skill, and degree of education.

With this in mind, a prevailing question is to any particularities to these areas. There are interpretations which may be availed of, where in the Nazzal quarter there are two main factors contributing to the current: the clear presence of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi movement, and the presence of the

Syrian refugees whether from older or recent stages of migration. Looking more precisely at this case, we would find that a large proportion of those that travelled and were killed from Nazzal quarter are from among university students involved in the Muslim Brotherhood, or who were brought up at an early stage in the various circles of the Group. There is also number of adherents who fall outside of the scope of the study, composed of Syrians who resided in Nazzal quarter then departed to join those groups, were killed, and had a history of involvement in Islamist social activities in Jordan. Observers in the quarter believe that the presence of the Syrians and the departure of youth to Syria encouraged others among Islamists to depart and enlist in extremist groups, indicating that Syrians in Nazzal were conduits to the radicalization of youth.

As for Sweileh and Al-Bayader the presence of adehrents to the current tended to be university graduates or belong to the middle class, such as the jihadists who reside in western Amman. Northern Marka, has also had a presence of the current, perhaps due to its proximity to Ruseifeh. Evidence to support this comes from existing relationships between adherents from the Schneller camp and residents of Marka, particularly around Al-Mazare' square in the poorer areas of norther Marka.

The jihadist current is also active in the Governorate of Irbid. It's prevalence is largely due to spillovers from the conflicting in neighboring Syria, particularly in Irbid Camp and adjacent areas. The current had a traditional activity in this area, epitomized by two main personalities: Abed Al-Tahawi, a well-known sheikh in the current based in Irbid Camp, and Umar Mahdi Zeidan,

who was considered a crucial ideological figure of ISIS in Jordan, prior to his departure to Iraq and getting killed by aerial bombardment in 2017.<sup>1</sup>

Confrontations between Security forces and adherents to the current in Irbid escalated the current. Azmi Al-Jayyousi, a prisoner who leads an extremist cell in Jordan is indicative of this fact, having attempted to bomb the General Intelligence Department. indicated by Azmi Al-Jayyousi's attempt to bomb the General Intelligence Department, followed by an attempt to free him from jail at the hands of radicalized adherents following the incident. Sueliman Ghiyad Al-Anjadi is another such example of rising tensions, having been a Gazan with a temporary Jordanian passport, and among the most prominent personalities of radicalized individuals, who was killed in an ambush raid operation. Subsequently, Al-Anjadi group announced their presence as one of the last remaining organizations in the Irbid cell, headed namely by Jamil Katkat, who was connected to Ibrahim Zein Al-Abidin (Jihad Al-Qashah) a fugitive from justice in Al-Jayyousi case. On his social media, Al-Abidin constantly praised Al-Anjadi, while other figures such as Ahmad Ali Qarmoul (from Al-Husn camp) were killed in confrontations with the Lebanese Army, fighting alongside "Fath Al-Islam", in Al-Bared River in 2007. As for Imad Al-Natour, an Irbid resident who was killed in Syria, he fought within the ranks of Al-Nusra

1 See: Ghaboon, Hadeel. "Who Is Omar Mahdi Zeidan, A Jordanian Who Announced (Naphir?) and Joined Daesh." <https://Arabic.cnn.com/Middleeast/>, CNN, 19 Oct. 2019, arabic.cnn.com/middleeast/2014/10/19/isis-jordan-omar-mahdi-zidanAlso: Ghaboon, Hadeel. "Who Is Omar Mahdi Zeidan, A Jordanian Who Announced (Naphir?) and Joined Daesh." <https://Arabic.cnn.com/Middleeast/>, CNN, 19 Oct. 2019, arabic.cnn.com/middleeast/2014/10/19/isis-jordan-omar-mahdi-zidan

Front in the following years, after fighting with Fateh Al-Islam in Al-Bared River as well.<sup>1</sup>

Inevitably, connections and frequent communication between these figures in Irbid occurred, from Azmi Al-Jayyousi to Al-Anjadi to Katkat, and a current with unclear relations to organizations abroad such as Fath Al-Islam, as well as leading personalities such as Al-Tahawi and Umar Mahdi Zaydan, whose brother (considered one of the religious personalities in the Afghani Taliban movement) was also killed in American raids of Pakistani Waziristan years ago.<sup>2</sup>

Geographically speaking, the presence of the jihadist current is most prominent in the Irbid camp and its surrounding areas, such as Turcoman Quarter. The presence of the current's adherents was particularly noticeable when the Irbid cell was uncovered upon confrontation with Jordanian security forces. After the incident, it became clear that many popular names in the cell belonged to those killed in camps in both Syria and Iraq, which were also associated with the State Security Court. Moreover, some of these same leading personalities had been influential in the Al-Nusra Front, such as Anwar Abu Fares, who was given the epithet of Abu Umar Al-Mukhtar. Abu Fares's biography reveals

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1 See about Al-Anjadi and his killing in Irbid: Jordan: Killing of the one of the elements of Al-Qaeda in a clash with security forces, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat Newspaper, 15/1/2017, and on Al-Tawhid battalions under the command of Azmi Al-Jayyousi, see: The leader of Kata'ib Al-Tawhid is given a life sentence in Jordan, Arabi21 website 21, 2-4/2014, and on Ahmad Ali Qarmol, see: Killing of a Jordanian in the clashes of Al-Bared River, Amman Net site, 23/8/2007.

2 See Mohammad Najjar, Jordanians celebrate the killing of their son in Pakistan, Al Jazeera net site, 11/1/2010, on the link: <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsand-interviews/2010/1/11/>

that he fought in Afghanistan and Iraq, and had considerable military experience. The Syria media celebrated his killing.<sup>1</sup>

As for notable names in Syria associated with Al-Nusra Front from Irbid, Khaled Shehadeh Al-Aloul, whose epithet is Abu Al-Mundhir, was killed there in the February of 2017, having influenced a number of adherents from the camp, which later followed in his steps at Al-Nusra in Syria.<sup>2</sup>

Other governorates in Jordan also house names of Jordanian jihadists including Salt and Ma'an, albeit on a smaller scale in number and popularity than Zarqa and Amman. In Salt there are numerous cases associated with the Salafi Jihadist current, with twenty names of those killed in Syria and Iraq following the Arab Spring, and before that more than 15 names, who were killed in Iraq, during the first rise of al-Zarqawi between 2003 and 2006. Actually, a group from Salt led by Raed Khraisat (whose nickname is Abu Abdel Rahman Al-Shami) was the one that first departed to Kurdistan, and forged an alliance with the Kurdish Jihadist movement around the year 2000, after which Al-Zarqawi was based following his involvement in the Afghan War in 2001 and 2002, then moving to Iraq. During those years a number of radicalized adherents from Salt moved and fought in Iraq, while others were arrested in Jordan and tried for several cases, including the attempt to assassinate Birjaq, and the attack

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1 ee Mu'ayyad Bajes, Killing of Mukhtar Al-Urduni, previously the military commander of Al-Nusra, in Dera, Assabeel Newspaper, 26 February 2016, and also: Al-Nusra Front announces the death of its commander in Houran: Who is Abu Umar Al-Urduni, Orient News site, 26 February 2016, on the following link: [http://orient-news.net/ar/news\\_show/85480/0/](http://orient-news.net/ar/news_show/85480/0/)

2 "Jordanian Khaled Alalwal Killed in Syria." <https://www.khaberni.com/>, 18 Feb. 2017, [www.khaberni.com/news/188530](http://www.khaberni.com/news/188530).

on the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad. Of those who received the death sentence, Mu`mmar Al-Jaghbir was one of the most prominent names, being considered among the Jordanians close to Al-Zarqawi.

Whereas the cleavage appears clearly in the city of Salt between the followers of Al-Maqdisi and ISIS, even if the followers of ISIS had become presently the majority, particularly among youth who joined the current and departed to fight in Syria and Iraq. Moreover, while there is a group of familiar names prominent in the city, there was also a mixture of well-educated persons in the fields of medicine, engineering and Islamic Law, uneducated individuals and members of the middle class (upper and lower), the poor classes, and of different ages involved in Salt's extremist current.

Some of the most popular names include Jarrah Al-Rahahleh and Luqman Riyalat, who were detained several times, and are considered as belonging to Al-Maqdisi current, while those involved in ISIS's current were Mamoun Atiyyat, and Hamdan Ghneimat. In 2016 however, a number of adherents to ISIS ideology in the city of Salt were arrested and sentenced to prison, due to what was construed as overt support for ISIS.

Notwithstanding the palpable activity and the noise associated with Salt, the number of those enlisted in the current from adherents within city compared to its population size appears modest. A generous estimate would be 200 radicalized individuals of the governorate's population of 500 thousand, and it may be stated that personal relations and salience of the tribal identity in

Salt played an effective role in recruitment and propaganda. This may be observed in the role of adherents of the city in Syria and Iraq in persuading their relatives or others within their personal network to join them, which we can confirm through interviews and fieldwork highlighting the importance of kinship, personal relations and friendship in attracting recruits to the current.

With that in mind, are there special influences of Salt's social environment on individuals? It is highly plausible that Salt is unique in the city's adherent's sense of pride and a feeling of distinctiveness in their quest for it, which they might not find in the circumstances of living in the governorate. For them, migration helps mitigate the absence of self-affirmation in Salt, becoming enticed by a powerful promotion of heroic discourse by fighting in battles, and defense of oppressed Syrians at the hands of the Syrian regime and Iran.

There is also an effective group of Salafi jihadist supports in Al-Baq`a camp, although it is difficult to estimate their number. They have however, implemented more than one operation targeting the Baq`a Intelligence, including the latest operation implemented by Mahmoud Al-Masharfeh, which led to the death of a number of Security personnel. Moreover, there are Baq`a residents who were killed in Syria, some of whom were imprisoned in relation to multiple cases, with the most prominent name belonging to Rashad Shtaiwi. However, compared to the Irbid, Ruseifeh or Wihdat camps, we find that the contribution of Baq`a to the Salafi jihadist current is modest, at least insofar as the State Security Court cases assert and in regards to number of those fighting or killed in Iraq and Syria.

As for the governorate of Ma`an, there is indeed noticeable activity within the Salafi Jihadi current. A number of supporters participated in combat in Iraq after 2003, and joined "Iraq Al-Qaeda" founded by Al-Zarqawi, with a number getting killed. There are also several who departed to Syria and Iraq to join both Al-Nusra and ISIS, with around 32 killed while some continue to fight. A portion however, managed to return to Jordan adding to the ranks of supporters who were convicted and imprisoned for explicit support of the current.

With characteristics of Ma`an's radicalized community in mind, we can note that there is indeed diversity in demographics, especially with age and level of education, although the proportion of those who fought and died in Syria is higher for individuals in their thirties compared to those in their twenties. A deeper demographic breakdown suggests that Ma`an's Salafi Jihadist base is largely composed of public sector employees or under-educated persons of less skilled vocational backgrounds, all tending to be from lower middle income or poorer socioeconomic status.

Ma`an is also quite particular in a social sense, due to a persistent problem between the population and the government. In 1989, 1996 and 2000, the city hosted multiple protests stemming from economic issues, whereas in later phases it witnessed confrontations between security forces and those wanted in criminal cases involving narcotics and arms trade. Conflict also broke out with those linked to the jihadist current there, which produced a situation of overlapping between those wanted for various cases on the one hand, and the local community which

found itself in the midst of frequent confrontation with state security.

The presence of multiple groups involved in the arms and narcotics trade to jihadists, has produced a situation in Ma'an which we may call the "coalition of the outlaws", along with a collusion and empathy for those groups. As a result, we observe the paradox of how confronting wanted persons with a background of criminal cases turns into future confrontation with the same radicalized people as part of "Jihadist current". The opposite can also be true; where confrontations with Jihadists and their affiliates only leads to further radicalization.

In fact, Ma`an is a "special case" of radicalization patterns not just at the level of what was characterized by the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan as the "open crisis", but also at the level of the possibility of the formation of a "social incubator" for the "jihadi current" there, especially if circumstances shaping the situation continue without actual remedies. In numerous cases we cannot differentiate between the background of the "wanted person" or the killed person, whether they are pursued at the level of criminal justice, arms smuggling or belonging to the "jihadist current", because there are frequent and large overlaps between those considerations which materialized at a special moment in the career of this person. This is clearly palpable in the case of Ahmad Mahdi Al-Azab and Qusay Al-Imami, who were killed in confrontations with security forces during operations of arrest.<sup>1</sup>

1 See on the killing of Qusay Al-Imami the Security report which states that he was killed by mistake in the course of clashes with wanted persons: The events of Ma'an after the killing of a citizen in an engagement with Security, Assabeel Newspaper,

Karak also began to witness a growth in number of radicalized individuals, leading up to the events of the “Karak Citadel” in 2016, highlighting the graveness of the situation due to the presence of a cell responsible, and the death of four supporters of the current in the course of those confrontations. There has also been a number of Karakis fighting in Syria and Iraq, with 7 of them killed to date, in addition to indicators of the ‘nuclei of female jihadists’ in the governorate. This combination of indicators suggests a plausible increase in prevalence of the current there.

Upon profiling cell members involved in the incident at “Karak Citadel”, as well as data on individuals killed in both the city and abroad, we will find that the predominant character of adherents tends to be their background as middle class, rather than of a poorer class, along with higher educational levels as a good percentage of them are university students or graduates. An overwhelming majority were ISIS members, with the ages ranging between the twenties and thirties.

The governorate also lists three extraordinary cases; the first involving the son of a former member of Parliament who was studying medicine in the Ukraine, and suddenly went to fight in Iraq and Syria, then dying in a suicide operation in Iraq.<sup>1</sup>

website, 23/4/2014. and kindly see a video clip of his funeral showing collective yells against the state and authority: “Thousands Participate in the Burial of Young Man ‘Al-Imami.” Wwww.youtube.com, 23 Apr. 2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDLK4844xYM> and on Ahmad Mahdi Al-Azab, kindly see the scene of his funeral and the yells against the regime, Burial of the Body of the Martyr Mahdi Al-Ajab.” Wwww.youtube.com, 19 Mar. 2013, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzSdsItI5Ts&t=53s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzSdsItI5Ts&t=53s) “The Martyrdom of Three Security Men and the Wanted Person ‘Al-Azab.” : Http:// Wwww.gerasanews.com/, 19 Mar. 2013

1 Son of a member of Parliament implements a suicide mission in Iraqi, the London-based Al-Hayat Newspaper, 3/10/2015.

The second is concerned with a Karaki university graduate woman from a middle class family who work in security. The psychology graduate tried to enter ISIS territory by travelling through Turkey, although she failed following the coordinated effort between a member of parliament and the Jordanian ambassador in Ankara which resulted in persuading her to change her decision. They arranged her escape from a house belonging to "ISIS" in Istanbul where she stayed as a prelude to her journey to Syria.<sup>1</sup>

The third case involves a Jordanian military pilot who left work with the air force to join ISIS in Syria. Several years later he died in a suicide operation there.<sup>2</sup>

Among the prominent names in Karak is Abdel Majid Majali, considered among the first Jordanians fighters in Afghanistan, who had a history of involvement with those groups, was convicted of terrorism, and then subject to psychiatric treatment for a period of time. Majali's two sons joined ISIS, with his eldest son considered a leader in the group, appearing in a video broadcast by ISIS attacking Jordan, and was considered a planner by the State Security Court in the events of the "Karak Citadel". His son was also one of the main persons responsible for recruiting adherents to radical ideology in the city, and facilitating the process of their departure to join ISIS.<sup>3</sup>

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1 "Arabi21" relates details of the attempt of a Jordanian woman to join ISIS, Arab21.com,12/11/2015.

2 Killing of a Jordanian who left the Air Force to fight in Syria, Khabbirni site, 19/8/2014.

3 See: Jibreel, Dana, and Doaa Ali. "Interactive Information: What Is There in Common Between the Four Terrorists of Karak Citadel." [Http://www.7iber.com/](http://www.7iber.com/), 7iber, 22 Dec. 2016, [www.7iber.com/politics-economics/interactive-visualisation-terrorists-in-karak-attack/](http://www.7iber.com/politics-economics/interactive-visualisation-terrorists-in-karak-attack/).

Among the prominent names that were killed there is Al-Muhibb Lillah Al-Qaysi, for whom ISIS devoted a long article in one of the issues of the well-known Dabiq Magazine in the English language. The report speaks about the movement of Muhibb from traditional Salafism to jihadism, and about the suicide operation which he implemented, where ISIS implemented a suicide mission named after him- "Abu Sahl Al-Urduni". Actually, Muhibb is a male nurse and a mosque preacher in Karak, while his brother Madallah Al-Qaysi was killed before him, and the latter was an engineer, and a mosque preacher and imam in Karak.

Other cities and governorates are less important insofar as geographic distribution of extremism in Jordan is concerned. Tafileh for example, which witnessed a political movement characterized by vehement slogans and speech during the "Arab Spring" in 2011 and 2012, does not have a noticeable proliferation of the jihadist current, even if there are individuals who are active on their own. Certainly, to the same extent as Salt and Ma'an, with only one of its adherents being killed in Syria, who was a nurse by profession. His brother mentions that he was influenced by some of the students coming from the Zarqa Governorate, who study in Tafila Technical University, while a small number from Al-Tafayleh quarter known in Amman enlisted with those groups.

Likewise, we do not find a noticeable presence in Aqaba, given that there are limited cases of those who joined the group there, with only one killed: a married university graduate. There are some allusions in the media to a young woman from Aqaba

who holds a degree in engineering, left Jordan, and attempted to join the group in Turkey, with an unknown fate.<sup>1</sup> Finally the governorates of Ajloun and Jerash show a limited presence, with the existence of some fighters of which some were killed, including the Jerash Camp, but with much fewer numbers relative to other governorates.

## **2- Social Indicators of Extremism:**

We mentioned previously that scholars and researchers tend to be inclined to stereotype radical extremist individuals, when profiling them to be of a particular age, poor socioeconomic status, by level of education and so forth, or even to the extent of particular psychological traits, such as saying that a terrorist is reclusive and introverted, or of an aggressive-peaceful dichotomy. Our research justifies the contrary, as facts and figures of this study show there is substantial diversity among adherents to this current, to a point where it would be impossible to build a unified framework for them.

While some trends occur, with a sizeable portion of radicalized individuals being in their early twenties or thirties, this does not negate the presence of juveniles within the circles of this current, from among those that went to those organizations or who were convicted of terrorism charges. In fact, there have been recent attempts to open juvenile center for extremists as a result of the rising number of juveniles in these cases, while there still remains a substantial proportion in their fifties or even sixties.

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1 See the details of the disappearance of a Jordanian engineer who attempted to join ISIS, the Jordanian Ad-Diyar Newspaper, 20/1/2016.

This “age scale” is also linked to the Salafi jihadist generations in Jordan. The perception of jihadists in terms of age must not be limited to an “ideal age” for involvement in radicalization during their twenties excludes certain correlations between the three “jihadi” generations in Jordan within the age variable. The first generation participating in combat was largely shaped by the Afghanistan wars and the charisma of Sheikh Abdullah Azzam during the eighties, and then returned at the start of the nineties.

Individuals still adhere to extremist ideology, are presumed today to be in their forties or fifties and highlight numerous examples within the circle of the jihadists today, such as the leaders: Abu Qutadah Al-Filistini, Abu Mohammad Al-Maqdisi, Khaled Arouri, Abu Anas al-Sahaba, Nasri Al-Tahayneh, Nabil Abu Harithiyah, Abu Sayyaf, Eng. Jarras Al-Rahahleh, Rashad Shteivi, Abed Shehadeh Al-Tahawi, and others.

The second generation of jihadists appeared in a subsequent stage, epitomized by the events of September 2001 and the occupation of Iraq in 2003, who fought in Iraq with Al-Zarqawi group and other locations, and were perpetrators in State Security Court cases, such as the Alkhalaya Organization, Al-Tawhid Brigades and Al-Alfiyyah. This generation was also involved in the attempt to assassinate Birjaq, the assassination of Foley, where this generation (which had been a part of this current for a decade) is between the thirties and forties, along with considerable numbers of this generation which are either in prison, recently released from prison, fought in Iraq and Syria, or who are currently at large.

As for the third generation, it's constituents, some of which have left university are those who have been radicalized and contributed to the current over the past six years, with particular relation to the events in Syria and Iraq at the end of 2011. The majority of this generation is primarily in their twenties and thirties, with a large proportion killed in combat alongside those organizations. With this in mind, we highlight how problematic it would be to classify an "optimal age" within twenties and thirties, when in fact the narrative constitutes several "generations" of Jihadists today.

In contrast, there are also diverse levels of educational backgrounds amongst jihadists, with a large ratio who did not complete their university education, and those that did. It also includes no specific specialization, for there are medical students, engineers, Islamic Law students, those studying the Arabic language, and computer science. As such, it would be inaccurate of researchers to attempt establishing a correlation between field of study and susceptibility to radicalization. In Jordan at least, there is certainly no indicator of a specific correlation between a particular specialization and inclination to enlist in this current.

There is however, a recent trend with newly enlisted jihadists having completed a degree in higher education, with distinguished university degrees in medicine and engineering. There are numerous well-known examples such as the former ideological thinker of Al-Nusra Front, Dr. Sami Al-Aridi, Dr. Sa`ad Al-Huneiti, Amer Dmour, and the two physicians Salah Anani and Munif Samara. Moreover, there are multiple male nurses and physicians who were convicted due to an attempt

to join extremist groups, with one specific group named the "Doctors' Group". Needless to say, the organization was composed by doctor and nurses, who were later convicted on terrorism charges.

On the level of specific universities, however, the current has a presence in several of them although particularly noticed in the Balqa Applied University and the Polytechnic Institute, which lies between Zarqa and Amman compared to others. Hashemite University also evinces a more noticeable presence than others.

While on the level of socioeconomic status, in terms of poverty and unemployment, there is also diversity in profiles of many cases, ranging from a social segment belonging to the poor, or perhaps the deprived segments of society, members of the middle class both upper and lower, along with a limited presence of the wealthy upper class. With that said, the majority belong to poorer and lower middle classes, particularly in the bastions of the current in Ruseifeh, Zarqa and the Irbid Camp.

The matter is no different at the level of employment and professions. There is a class of students, vocational workers particularly from East Amman, Zarqa and Ruseifeh, the unemployed, doctors, engineers and nurses. It is quite remarkable as well how a proportion of the current consists of public and private school teachers, along with mosque imams and preachers.

In the social and familial domains, we cannot identify definitive signs of those that belong to the current, be they an inclination to introversion or violence in dealing with adversity. Indeed,

there are varied and multitudinous examples of those with good relations with the surrounding community and the family, and those who are an antithesis of this by being hostile with criminal records; as such we have conflicting examples here and there.

The case is no different when we speak of the number of family members or family relations, where there is no solid hypothesis that can be built upon in this regard. Moreover, in view of the presence of contradictory and conflicting indicators, there are cohesive and also fragmented families, and there are small and large families, indicating that family structure has no correlation with susceptibility to radicalization.

### **3- Psychological Terrain:**

Psychological factors, as far as indicators of radicalization in the study, are much more complex and often inaccessible to a great extent when it comes to in-depth study to the lack of specific strong, peer-reviewed studies in Jordan, which were performed on persons involved in this current. Nevertheless, the testimonies of numerous relatives and friends emphasize some of the common features shared by the current's adherents, including intense emotional reactions in many instances. In other words, susceptible individuals are considered "emotional personalities", many of which have been largely affected by the events in Iraq and Syria, having witnessed horrific scenes of destruction on television and social media.

Upon conducting interviews and discussions with the social network of members in the current, common themes included the sense of initiative and love of leadership and excellence, along with the wish to attain self-actualization. While this does not necessarily apply to all cases, numerous interviewees characterized individuals who enlisted in Iraq or Syria as “a leader”, or person of “initiative”.

In general, we do indeed find that there are substantial differences in the psychological traits of adherents to the “Jihadist current”. There are personalities characterized by effectiveness, energy and social openness, and personalities at the opposite pole- tense and closed, introverted, while others tended to be peaceful in their relations with others, versus those that were hostile, simple or complex, resulting in great difficulty in lumping them all within a single profile.

#### **4- Jihadist Families:**

To a great extent, reference is made in the literature and articles to the ability of those groups to recruit and ideologically extend their influence through social media. The arguments involved published videos and other forms of media having a highly pervasive nature in radicalizing individuals. While this observation is relatively accurate, it should be construed to stating that the virtual world surpasses the abilities to recruit in the actual world, as the assumption is certainly incorrect in a Jordanian context, given that the basic social relations, and in particular family relations play an effective and substantial

role in the process of influence or recruitment. Scott Atran's "Talking to the Enemy: Faith, Brotherhood, and the (Un)Making of Terrorists" for example, supports this discourse, where he alludes to the role of social factors, such as brothers and friends in the neighborhood, in the club and otherwise, insofar as recruitment and influence, to the largest and primary extent in the worlds of the jihadists.<sup>1</sup>

The role of the Internet in blurring geographic and temporal distances. In its ability to and convey messages, images and recordings, it is a crucial tool that is pivotal to radicalization, but only functions as a facilitator of the radicalization process. The greater role is played by social relations, given that we find communication between the friends, relatives and brothers in those groups in Jordan, as a significant and basic factor in the process of recruitment via the Internet or by other methods.

**4-1 At the level of sons and brother** we find that there are tens of cases of brothers in the Jihadist current, and in some families there are more than two brothers with up to four or five, particularly in Zarqa, Ruseifeh, Irbid Camp and east Amman. This is evidenced in the State Security Court cases, arrests, and through the combatants in Syria and Iraq, with families having lost two or three sons in these organizations. It also includes two brothers or more were accused in terrorism cases, and within families which find that around 5 brothers belong to this current.

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1 Scott Atran, *Talking to the Enemy: Religion, Brotherhood, and the (Un)Making of Terrorists*, translated by Taher Libasi, Dar Al Jadawel Publishing & Distribution Co. (Beirut), and Mu`minun Bila Hudud (Rabat- Morocco), 1st ed., 2015, pp.151-165.

Accordingly the phenomenon of the “Jordanian jihadist brothers” became noticeable during the previous years, which reminds us completely of the phenomenon of terrorist brothers in the west, such as the brothers Abd Al-Salam, and the brothers Kawatchi, and numerous similar cases.

This is also applicable to the sons, for there is a noticeable influence of sons over their parents, and if we were to look at the first or second generation of Salafi Jihadists for example, we would find that many of the sons were influenced by their fathers and enlisted in the current, some of whom were detained while others were killed, and so forth.<sup>1</sup> In fact, in the case of the Irbid juveniles, one of the juveniles- according to the papers of the case- played the role of intermediary between the members of the organization abroad and the presumed cell within the country, and participated with his father in the group. The father and the son had prepared themselves to carry out operations linked to the cell together.

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1 Among the leaders we find that the majority of their sons became active members of the current, for instance Abu Qutadah Al-Filistini, who was arrested for his activities, and the sons of Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi, and some were killed, and there are those in jail abroad due to the activities of the current, such as the sons of Azmi Al-Jayyousi, and some were detained and joined the armed groups abroad, such as the son of Anwar Abu Fares, the son of Nabil Abu Harithiyah, who is a student who was tried against the background of association with a group that wished to go to fight abroad, along with his maternal uncle, a computer engineer, and another person, and so is the case for Mohammad Yasin Jarrad, the son of Yasin Jarrad, the father of the wife of Abu Mus`ab Al-Zarqawi, and the father was killed in a suicide operation targeting the procession of Mohammad Baqer Al-Hakim, the head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, 2003, while his son Mohammad was killed at the start of 2013, Thus we find the names of tens of cases of jihadists and their sons who manifest the great influence of the relationship.

**4-2 Jordanian “Jihadist Women”:** the presence of a number of brothers, parents and sons in the current reflected in turn on the family in its entirety - on the wives, the mothers and sisters, which is a phenomenon that began to increase lately. We find the manifestation of this through social media, whereby there are many websites for Jordanian women linked to jihadists, which is a connection that is not only emotional, but also became intellectual and ideological, sowing the seeds that grew a Jordanian “Jihadist women’s network”. The phenomenon is similar to other countries, such as Saudi Arabia, in which the role of women was initially confined to the emotional side in relation to the man (wife, mother, sister, daughter, relative), and then turned into a defense of the detained, and then to intermarriage within the circles of the “Saudi Jihadist community”, followed by the process of detention and trial of women influenced by the “jihadsti thought”. The movement grew, until it reached a subsequent stage of the emergence of lustrous names of Saudi jihadist women at a global level, such as Um Al-Rabab, Wafa`a Al-Shahri, Wafa Al-Yahya, the sister of Jleibeeb, Arwa Al-Baghdadi, Rima Al-Jreish, and others.<sup>1</sup>

There are indicators that this trend forms primarily from a social media following, and on another level of women being subjected to security investigation (interrogation) and trial (for the first time) in cases linked to promoting ISIS. Another layer is intermarriage within the circles of the current, and fourthly is at the level of Jordanian women who departed for Syria and Iraq

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1 See on the Saudi woman jihadist model: Mohammad Aburumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh, *Infatuated with Martyrdom: Female Jihadism from Al- Qaeda to the “Islamic State”*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Amman, 2017, p: 215-276

with their relatives and integrated with those groups or surrounding communities. Unfortunately, we do not have reliable figures on the numbers of radicalized Jordanian women, but it is certain that there are among them “those that are stranded” in the camps established by the Peshmerga forces in Iraq and Syria, for the families linked to the former state of ISIS.

Moreover, in contrast to the existence of “jihadist brothers”, “jihadist sisters” are becoming more prevalent as in the case of (H.A.) and (A.A) who joined ISIS, while their third sister (A.A.) is accused of forming a group on WhatsApp that bears the title “Sister in Allah” which supports ISIS. The three sisters, along with a fourth sister (B.A.) are standing trial before the State Security Court on charge of supporting ISIS along with a fifth woman named Tuqa.<sup>1</sup>

Social media presence of these women provide interesting case studies, with a clear influence of extremist thought although they vary in terms of discourse, slogans and the extent of influence. There are multitudinous levels, related to those heavily and clearly influenced based on the language, discourse and the posts on the page, and based on cases of women whose brothers and husbands were killed in Iraq and Syria. In this pattern we find a clear defense of and belief in this ideology, whether we are speaking of ISIS women or supporters of Al-Nusra. As to the second level, it has to do with emotional influence, without delving deeply into details as related to the ideology and ideological differences, given that the possessors of the Facebook

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1 The information is derived from the file of the case presented before the State Security Court.

accounts post the photos of their killed relatives and mention them, while empathizing that they are “martyrs”. As to the third level, it is nebulous inasmuch as it relates to religious women who discuss and share some ideas and terms that are associated with the “jihadist ideology”, emphasizing in their publications ideas and emotions close to this line, but there is naught which confirms their complete ideological or even emotional affiliation to the Salafi jihadist.<sup>1</sup>

The dynamics of this phenomenon are not confined to the limits of the presence of social media pages for women influenced by “jihadist thought”. Indeed the formation of a “social network” among these women is quite strong in forging solidarity between them. In identifying the members of this network, it suffices to peruse – for example- the list of friends in one of these pages, to discover that we have a network of names and relations between women influenced by this thought, and we also have before us a clear process of overlapping between the sisters, wives and mothers, which is indicative of the depth of the intermarriage connections and the strength of the familial relations.

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1 We found in the course of the investigation numerous webpages, whose links we do not wish to show or to mention the names circulated in them, given the social and cultural concerns, but the mentioned three levels are derived or inferred from the contents of those pages, for one of the pages, which disappeared from the Facebook state-when we tried to communicate with it, is that of a woman whose brother was killed in Iraq, who is from a well-known tribe residing in Zarqa, which posts the photographs of her brother and transmits the news of ISIS, and emphasizes her support of the organization on her page. Actually, many of the pages are for married women or mothers or sisters of jihadists who were killed there, and those pages are generally characterized by an Islamic character, where the main theme is Islamic, and they contain photographs of their killed relatives and publications that speak about them and characterize them as martyrs, while partially espousing some of the ideas close to that line.

These virtual networks (i.e. the realm of the Internet) are most prevalent in the governorates of Irbid, Zarak and Al-Ruseifeh district, and at times the possessor of the page assumes the title of "Um so and so- the mother of so and so", while at other times general Islamic names. Names of profiles often reflect the influence of jihadist thought, and in many cases the title of the page is linked to the name of the killed person, particularly the mothers, whereby the page possessor places the name of her killed son and before it the word um (mother), or the sister and the name of the killed or imprisoned person.

**4-3 Jihadist juveniles:** in such case, it is also expected for there to emerge an unusual recent case in Jordan represented in "jihadist juveniles". That is, those that did not reach the age of eighteen, where there are significant numbers on more than one category: those that went to fight in Iraq and Syria, among whom are ones who are still alive. Specifically, this refers to the sons of jihadists, such as the sons of Azmi Al-Jayyousi, and Anwar Abu Fares, who are still fighting there, or Qaswarah the son of Mohammad Jamal from Zarqa, whose father was killed while his son defected and enlisted with ISIS (although there is no news of his whereabouts), and the son of 'Amer Dmour, who was killed in Syria following his father. Hence, we have unknown numbers of sons who departed with their fathers or joined them there and became fighters, or were killed in the course of military operations.

Among the juveniles are those that travelled alone, and did not join their fathers, which is a more palpable pattern in the cities of Zarqa and Irbid particularly, notwithstanding that some of those do not belong to “jihadist families”, but their insistence on fighting there drove their families to accept the idea and to facilitate the travel of their sons to join those groups.<sup>1</sup>

We had mentioned the pattern of Abdullah Al-Sharif of the Irbid cell, who was tried in court along with the cell responsible for the juveniles, and his father Faraj Al-Sharif who was sentenced to death and executed, while Abdullah was in a juveniles facility along with other juveniles in respect of similar cases.

In the final analysis, the presence of fathers, sons, brothers, wives, sisters and daughters, and relations of kinship and intermarriage are all indicative of the nucleus of a “mini jihadist community”, with enhanced roles for women and children.

## **5- Political and Intellectual Backgrounds:**

If we suspend consideration of the sociological and psychological indicators, and investigate the intellectual backgrounds of the majority of the Salafi jihadist current, we would find that generally, the previous generations of the first in the nineties and the second in the first decade of the present century, did not emerge from a traditional Islamic ideological background. These generations emerged from loose Salafi backgrounds, or even non-Islamic origins; that is persons who were exposed to

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1 An example is (A.B.) who was 16 years of age when he went to fight in Syria, and was killed there months later.

the Islamic current through the “jihadist discourse” itself. There is indeed a naturally limited proportion who are connected to recognized Islamic movement backgrounds, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, or traditional Salafi circles or the Salafi movement.

However, the situation appears different with the third generation which emerged at the present time, particularly at the onset of the Arab Spring 2011. We notice its uniqueness in much more aggressive effort to recruit and spread propaganda, which led to relatively larger rates of growth compared to the size of the current. If indeed we project the analysis of these tendencies onto those who went to fight in Syria and Iraq, joined Al-Nusra and ISIS, we will find that we have five main orientations:

**First Current:** namely the sons of the Salafi jihadis of the current themselves, from the three generations which we discussed, where Syria and Iraq, Al-Nusra Front and ISIS thereafter, became a basic destination. If we return to the list of the detainees as related to the events of Zarqa in 2011, and individuals prosecuted in a court of law as a result, we would find that there is a large proportion (perhaps the majority) who were released on bail at the end of 2011. Following bail, these individuals departed for Syria and Iraq and enlisted with Al-Nusra Front there, while coming from various governorates - from Zarqa, Irbid, Amman, Salt and Ma`an. Well-known Salafi jihadist leaders strove to facilitate their relocation, particularly in the first period by means of smuggling through the border, where there was no strict monitoring by the Jordanian authorities of those borders.

Joining this group (participants in the Zarqa events) were other groups of jihadists endowed with previous experience in the theaters of war in both Iraq and Syria, whether in combat next to Abdullah Azzam in Afghanistan or Abu Mus`ab Al-Zarqawi in Iraq. This group also includes those who were released on bail as a result of royal amnesty for those convicted in terrorism cases issued at the end of 2011.

The matter was not confined to one current (within the circles of Jordanian jihadists), given that persons from the two currents (followers of Al-Maqqdisi, and followers of Al-Zarqawi previously) departed to Syria. All of them joined Al-Nusra Front, when it represented, in their view, an extension of the global and the Iraqi Al-Qaeda, before the emergence of differences between the two. When faced with this reality, the majority who went there, subsequently to join ISIS, rather than Al-Nusra, and indeed there were numerous cleavages in Jordanian circles of Al-Nusra, and so, they moved to ISIS.

**Second current:** belongs to the Salafi jihadist current, but one that was recruited hastily, and moved to fight with Al-Nusra or ISIS in Iraq and Syria. A large proportion of this current do not have any Islamic background, and indeed there are numerous cases of persons with criminal records who went and joined those groups within a short period of time. Prison was a transformative juncture given for that group of youths as they began to be influenced by the ideas of the jihadists in prison. In that time, they became religiously committed and upon release became members of the current, prior to departure for Syria and Iraq.

This matter does not appear shocking when considering that the background of many leaders of the jihadist current is the same. This includes Abu Mus`ab Al-Zarqawi, who was not religiously committed, drank alcohol and belonged to a world completely at odds with religion, but suddenly experienced an awakening and decided to change the course of his life. This involved becoming religiously committed, prior to joining the jihadist current, and indeed to become one of its founders in Jordan.

Instances entailing a religious transformation after an ideological influence by jihadists and moving from the world of crime and moral misdemeanors to religiosity will be mentioned later. There are numerous prison inmates, who fell under the influence of Salafi jihadist thought inside prison.

Among the cases we studied within the framework of more thorough investigation was one who entered prison in a case of forgery and was known for his reckless behavior, and association to gangs in his area. During his time in prison, he began to be come radicalized such that when he came out, and socialized with adherents to the current, he dediced to leave for Syria to join Al-Nusra Front. Syrian authorities arrested him, and had him make confessions which were broadcast on official state television.

Another case was that of a young man from a poor quarter in Amman. His background was not religiously committed during adolescence, and left school to work in construction. After being sent to prison in a case of attempted sexual harassment, he was exposed to jihadist thought and came out completely changed: religious, and committed to this ideology, and motivated to join

Al-Nusra Front. After his attempt however, he return from Syria and turned himself to the Jordanian state, and although he is currently free, remains eschewed by jihadist ideas.

Hence, we discover diverse patterns and cases in this context, for persons with criminal backgrounds or those without a religious background, who were rapidly influenced by this thought, despite lacking deeper roots in Islamic culture. There was also a tendency to not have any specific political affiliation, and most of them did not complete school education, with a majority working less specialized positions in maintenance, irregular trade, and general poor socioeconomic status. Moreover, it is clear even based on the testimonies of their families that they did not receive even a small dose of religious culture, but rather relied on some main ideas, as we shall analyze later.

**Third current:** from the circles of the Muslim Brotherhood in general, be they active members or those who left the group, and here emerges in prominence the “Nazzal quarter” group in Amman, which is one of the strongholds of the Muslim Brotherhood (we will address it in the case studies). There is also the case of Dr. Riyad Hadeeb, with longstanding experience in the Muslim Brotherhood and their activities, prior to converting in the latter years to Salafi jihadism; along with (A.Z.) from Tafileh, who also began his path with the Muslim Brotherhood, as is confirmed by one of his friends and acquaintances, and then converted to the Salafi jihadism, and finally the case of (H.Sh.), who is a university graduate, and a resident of Aqaba, and was also a Muslim Brotherhood activist during his time at university.

We also have other cases of youths whose families are from the circles of the Muslim Brotherhood, but their sons fell under the influence of what is happening in Syria moved there. Examples of this tendency include (A.A.) and (A.B.) both of whom are less than twenty years of age and from Irbid. The father of the former is a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the family of the second is from Muslim Brotherhood circles, as is evidenced by their social media accounts. Their Facebook, profiles indicate that the parents are influenced by the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood, and possess a profound sympathy for Al-Qassam Brigades.

These cases will be considered in greater depth in the following chapter, but it is important to state here that we, even concerning the Muslim Brotherhood member who converted to jihadism, do not encounter one single incentive, or an identical/ unified model. Rather, there are multiple models, the first being the Muslim Brotherhood member model who fell under the influence of events in Syria and decided to travel there, and could only find Al-Nusra Front. The majority of those with Muslim Brotherhood backgrounds moved to Al-Nusra Front, and the latter in the beginning tried to camouflage its identity and connection to Al-Qaeda, and so was akin to being the only available address for the migrants or those coming from abroad. There is also another pattern that actually was influenced by the Salafi Jihadist thought and departed there, though not all of them attained the same level of faith in Salafi jihadism as an alternative to their previous orientation. Moreover, there are indeed those who, post Al-Nusra, became a vehement critic of the Muslim Brotherhood, while others maintained good relations with the latter, despite

moving to the jihadist current known for its animosity towards the Muslim Brotherhood.

**Fourth current:** this belongs to other Salafi and Islamist currents that are non-jihadi. In this connection we have three main groups:

The **first group** consists of traditional Salafiyyah, is numerically few, and from among those influenced by the sheikhs of this current. This current is known for its opposition to the jihadists, and its support for the Jordanian Government. From this group is Muhibb Eddin Al-Qaysi, who is one of the prominent members of ISIS, and his nickname is Abu Sahl Al-Urduni Dabiq notably published an article about his belonging previously to the traditional Salfi current.

The **second group** is composed of the activist Salafi movement, which is larger in number, and perhaps influenced by the personality of Abu Anas Al-Shami - Umar Yousef, who was one of the most prominent Salafi personalities in Jordan.<sup>1</sup> This line, founded by Al-Shami did not subsequently end, given that it was espoused by a number of his students and disciples. Even those that fell under its influence and his followers are distinguished by an interest in religious sciences, and by nearness to the Al-Surouri thought previously, which is an activist Salafi thought that also does not converge with the jihadists. Among the names that moved towards jihadism is Amer Dmour himself, who in a particular period was influenced by the ideas of Abu Anas Al-

1 He worked as a mosque imam in Sweileh area (Al-Irsal area), and a circle of students and disciples formed around him. He was influenced by the sheikhs of Al-Sahwa (religious awakening) in Saudi Arabia (particularly Dr. Sifr Al-Hawali) prior to moving in 2003 to Iraq, and joining the Zarqawi group, and becoming its religious mufti, and thence getting killed in Iraq in 2004.

Shami and his experience. This also applies to Dr. (M.S.), who has a doctoral degree in Islamic Law, and is presently imprisoned for attempting to enlist with ISIS, having left work as a religious consultant in a well-known banking institution. He had been financially well to do, with his brother also being arrested for falling under the influence of “jihadi ideas”, while completing his higher studies in Saudi Arabia. Although he was not tried or arraigned, individuals close to them believe the two brothers are influenced by the ideas of Al-Shami.

It would appear that the presence of famous Salafi personalities who converge with activist and Jihadi Salafiyyah contributed to eliminating the demarcation lines between the Salafiyyahs. This is an issue which we shall later address, but personalities such as Dr. Mohammad Abu Rahim, who is well known amongst Arabs as a professor of Islamic theology, is among the famous Salafi activist personalities, two of whose sons fought alongside Al-Nusra Front, where one of them was killed, while the third brother is in prison in Jordan and is accused of promoting “jihadist groups”. Abu Rahim’s family was thus influenced by those ideas before his students and disciples; and even Dr. Iyad Al-Qunaybi was in an intermediate position between the jihadi and movement-oriented Salafism, and has disciples from both tendencies. This also applies to Dr. Ayman Al-Balwi, while the intellectual background of Dr. Sa`ad Al-Huneiti, which is also closer to the Salafiyyah movement, indicates that this Salafi tendency was a influential in Jordan for the Salafi jihadism and migration to the battle fields in Syria and Iraq.

Added to this and that is the influence of Syrian Salafis present in Jordan, some of whom- as we previously mentioned- departed to fight in Syria, for it is known that the active Salafi currents are connected to Syrian founders and pioneers, where one of the prominent symbols of the Salafai Surouriyah movement is Mohammad Bin Nayef Zein Al-Abidin, who is a Syrian, and was originally a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and subsequently founded in Saudi Arabia a new current known as "Al-Salafiyyah Al-Soururiyyah", and he had Syrian and Arab followers, and became a substantial current, with a presence in Jordan, and a following, and among those are Jordanians and Syrians.

The **third group** are persons who fell under the influence of Al-Da`wa W'al Tabligh group, and were members for a time until moving to Salafi Jihadism. The number is difficult to determine, but is most likely substantial, because the nature of this group is amorphous and is not a formal organization, as it shuns intervention in politics and controversy in argumentation. Additionally, its views in many instances are akin to a "passage" rather than an abode in the Islamic movement in between the various groups and currents, as is exemplified in Abu Qutadah Al-Filistini who was a prominent member of Jama`at Al-Tabligh and later became one of the prominent ideologists of Al-Salafiyyah Al-Jihadiyyah.

At other times, Jama`at Al-Tabligh, due its amorphousness and acceptance by the security bodies, is used as a veil or cover for the activity of some of the members of the jihadist current to avoid security problems. In cases when some groups were accused of

attempting to carry out terror attack, there were clear signs of trying to use the Jama`a as a cover by the jihadists, firstly to avoid being uncovered, and second to influence the members of those groups, especially since it is known that its members are usually simple, who are not very concerned with religious sciences, but are rather concerned with spiritual preaching. Hence it is easier to recruit and influence them through other groups and parties, who are more sophisticated, intellectually and organizationally.

**Fifth tendency-** this is a small elite, which belongs to other political currents and parties, which was previously influenced by leftist or nationalist ideas and ideologies or even Palestinian groups, but they converted into an Islamic form, and then moved to the "jihadist current", but in an elitist manner. Despite these conversion still kept them remote from this current, with some of those personalities deciding to secede from the jihadists, and perhaps Al-Ummah current at a Jordanian level is the model or glaring example of this tendency. Its leaderships and well known personalities tend to belong to Palestinian organizations, and to a time period in which Islamic groups emerged within the Fateh movement. Thus those personalities attempted during a particular period to influence the "jihadists", but after these efforts failed those personalities inclined to defect and to operate in an independent manner.<sup>1</sup>

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1 It would be possible to peruse in a detailed and expanded manner a model of this trend in the personality of Naim Al-Tillawi, in: Mohammad Abu Rumman, "I Am A Salafi: A Study of The Actual And Imagined. Identities of Salafis", Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's, Beirut, 1st ed., and there are of course other Jordanian personalities in Al-Umma current, some of whom are from no-Islamic political backgrounds, but this current weakened in the recent few years, not only at the Jordanian level, but also at the Arab level, and Hakem Al-Mateiri Al-Kuwaiti is one of its prominent symbols and leaders. About Al-Umma current see: -----

## 6- Trajectories of Recruitment and its Tools:

The main factor in recruitment in Jordan is the direct social relations network, which is divided into multitudinous tributaries such as friends or relatives. A large proportion of the cases that we observed during the period of research are linked to the influence of friends, whether in the neighborhood or the university, as well as first and also second-degree relatives.

The presence of deep relations of friendship makes the task of uncovering cells and groups or infiltrating them more difficult, except after the enlistment of new members or individuals, but what is more powerful than the relations of friendship, which began to emerge- as previously mentioned- in Jordan is the relations of kinship and intermarriage, which acquired greater strength in the latter years. In this context, we find in numerous cases brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers, and first-degree relatives becoming radicalized, whereby strong influence underpinning relations emerges, which makes the process of unraveling, isolation and confronting those ideas more difficult. That is to say that the family turned in many cases, as far as the jihadists, into a factor of strength and support for the jihadists. It also differed in that instead of the family feeling that the person belonging to this current represents a problem for his family or a burden on it, the situation became different as far as many families thereafter, which became sympathetic with its detained members or those fighting abroad with those organizations, while falling under the influence of their ideas and vision of matters.

Most cases are not outside of the boundaries of friendship or kinship, and in many instances those friendships form in the mosque or at school, and in other instances at fitness or martial arts centers; frequented by new generations. We can observe that they started to appear in the Jordanian case, for one can deduce their interest in fitness or body building through photos of some young men who went to Syria and Iraq. Indeed, one of those accused in the case of 9-11-2012 was a karate trainer, with members of the currents socializing at physical fitness clubs, indicating that the relationship is not only confined to the mosque or school or university, even though those arenas are present in the processes of recruitment, networking and relations between individuals.

Prisons have become in turn, as previously mentioned, an environment enabling recruitment and influence, despite the attentiveness of the authorities to this matter, and their preparation of dormitories and special places for jihadist prisoners. In some Reform Centers (Al-Muwaqqar 1) dangerous individuals are placed in solitary confinement, but in spite of this, results indicate that the prisons remain important and basic means for recruitment, and indeed for preparation and instruction, particularly for new individuals who are tried in cases of supporting extremist groups and promoting them, without having reached an advanced stage of ideological instruction. Placing them in reform centers and the dormitories of the supporters of those groups however, renders the "task of recruitment" easier, and limits the option of the attempt to convince those new extremists- so to speak- to change course, whereby we have at hand a service of delivery that the authorities

offer to adherents of those groups in prisons by providing persons or candidates to perform the required process of recruitment and ideological instruction.

By necessity, added to those levels and frameworks – family, friends, prisons, clubs and otherwise- is the virtual world as one the sources of recruitment, which is presently a highly significant factor in constructing the required narratives. It is also relevant in communicating images, slogans, chants and networking, thereby facilitating the process of radicalization and recruitment, given that it circumvents geography and time. The internet also opens the doors of prohibited matters, and limits the ability of the authorities to monitor in respect of the conveyance of ideas and images, and even relations through the virtual world.<sup>1</sup>

The main contribution of the Internet to recruitment and mobilization in Jordan emerged in multiple ways. Essentially, it contributed to overcoming the obstacles of communication between Jordanian extremist organizations and their families, friends and peers in the “jihadist current” among other currents. Via social media, adherents to the current strove to persuade others in joining their organizations, intellectually influence them or even coordinate and prepare for terrorist operations that could be implemented in Jordan, which is what we clearly observe in most cases. For example, there are two cells in Karak

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1 The anthropologist, Scott Atran, *Talking to the Enemy: Religion, Brotherhood, and the (Un)Making of Terrorists*, says that the relations of family and friendship play a vital role in the process of recruitment and mutual support, and he mentions the friendships of the sports club and the mosque and kinship relations as main networks that are akin to a “social club” for the extremists, through numerous extremist groups globally, which is what we find applies to the Jordanian case. See Scott Atran, *Talking to the Enemy: Religion, Brotherhood, and the (Un)Making of Terrorists*, op. cit., 151-165.

and Irbid directly linked to ISIS, and many Jordanians who joined those organizations from influence by either friends or relatives present there, as attested to in interviews, and as we shall notice in the next chapter through detailed case studies.

Another feature of internet's influence extends to the bridging of geographic and temporal boundaries between what is happening in Iraq and Syria. Through videos of recorded operations conducted by extremist organizations, some depicting members present in Jordan, the current manages to entrench shared feelings between adherents or sympathizers. This method successfully bolsters the narrative offered by those groups, and render them perpetually present through sound and image, whereby there is no more meaning to context of specific historical events nor geographic distance between such individuals. It is quite pervasive, in how easy one could access the heart of the battle, virtually participating with those groups in their struggles or even internal dialogues, which facilitates the process of recruitment, organization and mobilization in the circles of the current. It has also created other phenomena, such as lone wolves as with the case of Riyadh Abdullah, who was responsible for the murder of Jordanian writer Nahed Hattar. Other cases include the former officer Anwar Abu Zeid, who killed American trainers working at a military base,<sup>1</sup> and Mahmoud Masharfeh, who ambushed the General Intelligence building in the Baqa refugee camp, killing a number of persons, and gave a statement on his actions as a response to the call of Abu Mohammad Al-Adnan, the official spokesman of ISIS at the time.

1 The Jordanian officer Anwar Abu Zeid: Was he on a journey to heaven or hell, the Qatari Al Sharq Newspaper, 12/11/2015.

The virtual world, with particular emphasis on social media, represents today a powerful tool for recruitment and influence for those groups, which has become substantially easier in targeting a considerable proportion of Jordanian Internet users. The proliferation of smart phones and applications providing data encryption for the process of communication makes it easier for groups to coordinate off state security's radar. Indeed, among the beneficial observations is that many of the cases related to promoting ISIS and its media propaganda which were presented to the Jordanian military courts we spread on "WhatsApp groups", consisting of male or female friends and relatives with closed WhatsApp groups, through which they share the ideas and propaganda of the organization.<sup>1</sup>

## 7- **Why do people become radicalized?**

It is a crucial question that is perpetually posed - why would a particular person become an extremist or engage in terrorism? Why would Jordanian youth join those organizations abroad, and why would hundreds of Jordanians conduct suicide operations

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1 The scholar Frazer Egerton provides an important approach on the role of the virtual world in negating temporal and geographic distances and reinforcing the construction of archetypal narratives or the imagined identity of the jihadists, which transported the media and political propaganda and the mechanism and strategies of recruitment to an unfrequented and different level, and the author gives primacy insofar as this vital role of the virtual world in building the narratives behind the emergence of the jihadist salafisms over the factors which garnered the interest of scholars and politicians in the West in expanding the rise of those currents, which focused on the theme of identity and difficulties of integration faced by the jihadists in the western world, which are factors whose importance Egerton minimizes while casting doubt on in his approach. See Frazer Egerton, "Jihad in the West: The Rise of Militant Salafism", translated by Fadi Milhem, the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Beirut, 1st ed., 2017, pp.77-200.

while fighting on the side of those organizations? Moreover, why would a number of them conduct terrorist operations targeting the Jordanian public and its institutions?

In the previous chapters, we provided a profiling of who jihadists were, where they come from geographically, and how they became radicalized in terms of dynamics of recruitment. Having also considered the sociological and psychological dimensions, a crucial remaining question asks what factors drove those persons to choose this path. That is, were motivations mainly psychologically, socioeconomic, political or related to religious ideologies, or were they more centered on conflicts shaping and changing the nature of individuals?

In previous years, this was a subject of major debate in the Jordanian and broader Arab communities, stemming from a shock due to the rise of ISIS and its unprecedented ability to recruit; galvanized by the boom it produced in the world of extremism and terrorism. The unprecedented extent to this phenomenon can be gauged via two main modes of interpretation:

**The first** is focused on religious and jurisprudential tradition, along with the prevalent discourse that to a large extent, is denied a role in political, economic and social spheres of society, or what we generally call the “objective factor”. Accordingly, there were numerous calls for reforming education’s curricula and focusing on the Friday sermons, Islamic missionary associations and others.

**The second** interpretation emphasizes the role of objective conditions, while recognizing their varying weights and order of importance from one society to another. This refers to conditions providing an environment conducive to radical extremism, and preparing the individual(s) psychologically and socially to reach a stage of anger towards the status quo. A subsequent stage would be ideological or religious factors provides the “legitimate cover” and “intellectual framework” for this objective radicalism, and here emerges the term “Islamizing radicalism” by contrast to the term “radicalizing Islam”.<sup>1</sup>

In the context of Jordan, differentiating between the two interpretation proves quite difficult: the objective and ideological-religious cannot be separated, for example. This is likely attributable to the conditions of “organic pairing” between them, for there are objective factors which may be strongly upheld in the matter of arguing for radicalism and extremism, and there is also a strong and impactful discourse for the “jihadist current”, given the presence of its pivotal theoreticians at the global level. In Jordan specifically, these figures include Abu Qutadah, Al-Maqdisi and others, which in many cases facilitates the interplay between these factors, and perhaps- in other cases- the ideological discourse is the first and secondary variable in other cases.

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1 Various scholars have used the phrase “Islamization of radicalism” to refer to the notion that the objective factor- associated with real conditions and circumstances, such as the identity crisis or the feeling of disenchantment with the existing reality- is the foundation which produces the radical impulse, rather than the “text” or the “religious tradition”; see for example, Olivier Roy, *Jihad and Death*, Jihad and Death, translated by Saleh Al-Ashmar, Dar Al-Saqi, Beirut, 1st ed., pp. 71-123.

Procedurally at the Jordanian level, this research deconstructs and reconstructs many cases. In the dissection process, we explore objective and intellectual factors which may have influenced many youths and spurred them to join the current internally and abroad.

We have previously mentioned that some geographic areas provide more fertile ground for radicalization than others, such as Ruseifeh, Zarqa, Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan (such as Irbid camp, Schneller, Wihdat, or east Amman in general). These areas share a common Jordanian-Palestinian identity, suggesting two main hypotheses: the first are factors linked to the Palestinian issue itself, which remained a main part of the identity of the Palestinian generations born in exile or dream of returning to the "homeland", but have lost confidence in the existing political parties and regimes, thus coming to seek an alternative outside of this rejected reality. The second hypothesis proposes a link between a crisis of identity and citizenship experienced by Jordanians of Palestinian origin: in Jordan, there is a certain dialectic between the feeling that Jordan as their homeland but concurrently feeling that the state in numerous cases, is not theirs, rather belonging to East Bankers, who represent the main element of a ratio reaching 90% in military and security institutions, chiefly in political and sovereign positions.

In essence, this produces a four-wheel vehicle spurring individuals to seek an "alternative" to change an awkward, and sometimes paradoxical, position in society, so to speak. A myriad of factors causes this kind of crisis, in an environment of alienation from the "state", yearning for a "cause", and disenchantment with

the “political reality” in the context of possibility of change. Add questions related to identity, especially in refugee camps or other popular areas are other factors, and difficult logistical needs caused by unemployment and social deprivation, and a lack of social justice fuel an anti-status quo sentiment, to say the least. This state of being perpetuates an ideology of hopelessness with bureaucratic institutions, especially in politics, resulting in demand for or inclination towards radical ideas which are especially attractive to younger generations who have both a greater desire for change and rejection of what is available. From his conception emerges the “jihadist narrative” which views the regime as derelict and infidel, unjust, removed from Islam and hence to provide appropriate validation of this radical proclivity, and to afford it religious and cultural legitimacy, as well as place it within a new modality: socially, politically and symbolically.

That “formula” for the process of “producing” the jihadist may apply at different levels and proportions to a portion of Jordanian jihadists. Jihadists themselves however, are divided into different categories themselves: some are closer to the cultural-intellectual aspect, such as “the new line of leadership”, of whom we spoke earlier, from among those who completed their higher studies, or received university degrees with specializations indicative of a high level of education, whereby those are an elite that is persuaded to a large extent, and with awareness, of the jihadist ideology and the radical options. Although, this category is a small segment in the Salafi jihadist current, given a comprehension of the complex intellectual and cultural tools to justify the ideology and to believe in it.

On the other hand, there is a segment of jihadists that are completely influenced by this thought, despite a complete lack of awareness or understanding of it. In a sense, ideology becomes more akin to the "attire" worn by the person, to feel it suitable for their psychological state in facing the reality in which they live, or that is harmonious with his radical psychological inclinations and anger at the current situation. Here, we find a wide segment, largely consisting of earlier generations of jihadists, who tend to be uneducated, working vocational positions or are unemployed, of low socioeconomic status, and generally suffer from economic conditions. This segment feels difficulty in adapting to them, and concurrently perceive that there is injustice in the political system. Thus, we found perpetual commentary by their relatives or friends indicative of their limited religious and jurisprudential knowledge, or awareness of Islamic discussions related to the intellectual and religious options which they adopted. In effect, they mostly suffice themselves with some religious "texts" representing their choice, such as some Quranic verses associated with religious rules and excommunicating those who do not govern by the Islamic Shari`ah, or those that render Jihad to be a duty in resisting and defending the lands of Muslims, fatwas supporting this position, without a general existence of a convincing and robust foundation buttressing this "ideological discourse".

On a parallel platform of Jordan's societal scene, there are groups that joined this thought from Jordanian East Bank governorates, namely Salt, Karak and Ma`an, and those that reside in the Zarqa Governorate, from among the sons of the tribes. As previously

mentioned, there is a significant proportion from Salt and Karak of the educated and middle classes, whereby the stereotype of unemployment, poverty and lack of education does not apply to the current's adherents in these governorates.

If we try to closely examine the objective conditions for the formation of these groups amongst East Jordanian jihadists, we will find that they are part of broader radical conditions which started to appear in the previous years. Around the period since two decades ago, economic transformations associated with the decline in the ability of the state to provide employment is associated with an increase in the emergence of radicalization, along with a decline in the role of the public sector, which represented the spine of employment of this wide social segment. There is also a parallel decline in monthly income relative to the rise in prices, which placed a large proportion of this segment in dire economic and financial conditions. With a generally ambivalent culture towards the state, we find a growing proportion of East Jordanians from families of the working class and public sector facing the specter of unemployment and lower income status. This was an especially salient issue in the absence of a vigorous private sector in the remote governorates compared to its effectiveness in Amman, Zarqa and Irbid.<sup>1</sup>

The complex problems in the relationship between east Jordanians and the regime are quite palpable, whose manifestations came to the surface in recent years. The Arab Spring's popular rebellions

1 We remain in need of deep economic-social research to become better aware of the structural transformations that have visited this segment, in the previous decades, from poverty and reliance on agriculture and pastoralism to an essential and major role of the state in the process of employment and social promotion, and thence the decline in the role of the state.

parallel the domestic popular movement, a part of which assumed a radical character, especially amongst members of tribes, such as: military retirees of Group 36 and other groups such as the movement of the Tafilis quarter. There was also a high ceiling of demands in the youth movement, which emerged in the period of the Arab popular rebellions, and those groups adopted slogans and discourses characterizing the regime as corrupt to explain the difficult economic conditions.

Nevertheless, the Salafi jihadist discourse remains marginal at a social and cultural level, and those groups did not possess in most of the regions and governorates societal legitimacy, nor the social incubator, even though there is ferment indicating formation in recent times and in some areas. However, what gave strength and greater presence to this current in Jordan during the previous years were events in Syria and Iraq, and the emergence of ISIS which succeeded in making substantial headway in propaganda and recruitment at more than one level, most importantly the evocation of the symbolism of the caliphate and the Islamic paradigm in state and governance. This is something that most of the Islamic movements were unable to translate into reality, and hence those symbolisms much served the propaganda of the organization and its ability to recruit, alongside the significant capabilities in the virtual world, whereby the propaganda became substantial and impactful as relates to this new model in the Arab region.

Coupled with the foregoing was the fact that the organization excelled in marshaling the Sunni crisis in the region, which is intermeshed with the Sunni Arab state crisis and the enhancement

of Iranian influence. It harnessed the state of anger and dismay in Arab streets over what is occurring in massacres and torture, and so was able to elaborate a powerful narrative of events within its discourse replete with actual images (broadcast by satellite television stations, virtual and social media sites). These images, which were grounded in presenting the organization itself as the defender of millions of Sunnis facing an existential and identity challenge, were concomitant with the incapability of Arab states to fill the strategic vacuum in the region, and in the shadow of the dereliction of the US president Obama in confronting the Syrian regime.<sup>1</sup>

The amalgamation of these factors produced a state of psychological mobilization in the Arab region and inordinate tension, spurring a wide social segment of Arab youth to attempt

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1 Opinion polls show the magnitude of the transformation in the Jordanian popular position towards Hezbollah and the influence of the Syrian crisis, in the latter years, which could be characterized as a total turn around in the position. In this connection an opinion poll conducted by the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan, in the year 2015, found that 71% of the national sample stated that the policies of Iran represent a threat to stability in the region, and comes directly after Israel (78%). The paradox here is that Iran comes before the US (only 64%), while Turkey is at the bottom of the list (22%). As to the Syrian regime, it garnered 54% and Hezbollah, the ratio of those characterizing it as a terrorist organization was 66%, that is an absolute majority, while in a previous poll (February 2015) it was above half 5.5% and this transformation appears stark when comparing this ratio (66%) with 3% which considered the party to be terrorist around ten years ago (2004), where those that considered it a legitimate organization reached 84%. Hence, consider the size of the great transformation in the image of this party and its leader and Iran in the view of Jordanian public opinion. Most probably, the direct cause of this is the participation of the party in the internal Syrian war, and the dissipation of the image of resistance and rejectionism, to be supplanted by the sectarian scene and dependence on Iran. It would be possible to observe the beginning of the transformation in the position towards the party through the chart of the survey in the year 2012. However, this new popular position became clear in 2015, where the new picture was consecrated as an alternative to the previous picture. See: A Reading of the Opinion Survey through: Mohammad Abu Rumman, A radical transformation among the Jordanians, *Al-Ghad Jordanian Newspaper*, 4/5/2015.

to do any action to mitigate the psychological pressures to which they are exposed. These actions included travelling to those same conflicted areas and to integrate with extremist organizations, such as ISIS or Al-Nusra Front, with ISIS posing as a greater influence with capability to attract the youth, due to its superior propaganda, recruitment and discourse compared to Al-Nusra which is ambivalent in its discourse and identity.

Those regional conditions were powerfully reflected in the domestic front, and did not only attract youths from adherents to the Jihadist Salafi current, but from all other communities of the alienated or facing a crisis in identity, including youths without a deep background and awareness of Islamic currents, as previously mentioned. As such, if we look beyond the scope hardcore Salafi jihadists in terms of strong ideological belief, there is a large proportion which entered the Salafi jihadist fold and were recruited only after joining Al-Nusra or ISIS but not before. Within their ranks, the radicalization process intensified, especially amongst members or supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood who relocated to fight in Syria in hopes of helping the Syrians, under the heading of jihad. Actually, absence of the Muslim Brotherhood from the battlefield in Syria, and the unclear beginnings of Al-Nusra was a motive to join it, but those youths themselves started to alter their ideas with time, and fell under the influence of the discourse of the Jihadists, which lead to leaving their commitment to the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, or to criticize it in certain cases.

What is absent from the consciousness of many experts in the field of Islamic movements and fundamentalism is an archetypal

model in the religious culture of many Muslims, as well as in their emotional culture – namely, the dream of a puritanical Islamic state. This is often conceived of as a state committed to the rules of religion, applying to Islamic Shariah. On a higher level of this archetype, the caliphate exists, which is the “imaginary identity” which ISIS skillfully generated, and hence attracted large numbers. This archetypical conception of an “Islamic state” infatuated a wide social segment of Arab societies, and mobilized some of them to enlist, or at least live in the shadow of a “a state which governs according to Shariah”. Here emerges the role of the ideological factor, grounded in religious discourse and the intellectual and jurisprudential tradition, which birthed an identity linked to a form of historical mentality that may have not originally existed. This is however, an efficacious construct in the social imagination as a result of the curricula and religious discourse in society.

To a large extent, these facts explain why thousands of Jordanians enlist within the “Jihadist current” or their joining the fighting groups abroad, but the question of Jordanian “suicide” fighters remains unique in and of itself. It specifically refers to those that went beyond the stage of recruitment to the stage of implementing suicide operations during their integration into those groups, and we are speaking of a minimum of tens of Jordanians who implemented operations which were declared by these two organizations.

If we examine the stories of a group of youths who implemented these operations, we would find that it is an advanced stage of falling under the influence of "Jihadist thought". Statements are deeply rooted in ideological justifications linked to the concept of martyrdom in a religious sense, and the lofty standing it represents in the world of the Hereafter, in sacred texts. Actually, the jurisprudential (fiqh) and intellectual machine of the "Jihadist current" strove to subject the concept of martyrdom to accept suicide operations, and to consider them an essential part of the value of martyrdom and its significance. Perhaps what may be observed is that ISIS, since the days of its first leader Al-Zarqawi, has expanded those operations, which is quite contrary to other viewpoints such as Al-Maqdisi and the "international Al-Qaeda", who favored reticence in the subject of suicide missions.

Suicide operations became a recognized trademark for both ISIS and Al-Nusra, and were performed expansively. These operations were quite heavily relied upon as a tactic given their efficacious impact in combat engagements there, and we find the names of Jordanians who implemented suicide operations targeting Shiite leaders, in markets for Shiites, against the Free Army in Dera, and against Syrian or Iraqi forces or Hezbollah.

Complimentary to ideological justifications, ISIS and Al-Nusra succeeded in glorifying the image of the suicidal combatant as a courageous hero performing a sacred mission. In many instances, the implementation of suicide missions is followed by broadcasting video clips on the operation, and posting them

online on YouTube and other social media. We also find that there are countless clips of Jordanians who implemented those suicide missions, contextualized as heroes who performed a noble mission and sacrificed their lives in defense of Syrians or Iraqis, and in confronting the enemies.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Compare this to Farhad Khosrokhavar, the book "Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs", translated by Jahida Laund, Dar Almada Publishers, 1st ed., 2007, pp.54-117.



## **Chapter III:**

### **Economic and Social Traits**



## Chapter III: Economic and Social Traits

### Introduction

The methodology of the study is grounded the “snow ball” method, as mentioned earlier, which involves accessing names and information through public media and social media, thence proceeding to expand the dataset by conducting personal interviews with those connected to radicalized individuals. For example, if we know of person “X” who is a fighter in Syria, we could in many instances, know others who are in communication through their webpage and list of friends, and from it get introduced to others in the current either from their private pages, or other acquaintances who know that person with whom communication is undertaken from a social perspective. Hence, this method is successfully in leading researchers to numerous names both former and active members of Salafi jihadism, and facilitate communication with their social circles, be they close family or acquaintances to gather more information.

Another tool relied on in this chapter is monitoring numerous cases referred to the State Security Court, which were followed up on to gather information through hundreds of indictments , as well as judgment rendered in court. Snowballing was used to

take these cases a step further to develop a more holistic image of the individual, involving some of the attorneys who represented the litigants in these cases, or through some of the attorneys who pleaded in these cases.

In the final analysis, the overall number of this study amounted to 760 “Jordanian jihadists” belonging to the Salafi Jihadist current. Among them are 190 persons who were killed abroad with extremist groups, and 49 who are still fighting outside of Jordan up to the preparation of this study. This number represented 31.4% of the total cases on which data was collected. As to the remaining persons in this database, they represent those that were involved in violent activity, joined and defected or attempted join the extremist groups, as well as those who conducted themselves in a manner contravening the Terrorism Prevention Law.

Those cases were subject to statistical analyses, after background information was gathered on each person from among them. It is worth mentioning that we were not able to collect all information on all these cases, with data categorized in the following main variables: age, geographic location (governorate, city, village), educational level, professional status (employed/unemployed), occupation, work sector, accusation (for cases inside Jordan), and the group to which the person belongs. As a matter of fact, we were unable to fill observations for variables in some of the cases.

Moreover, it is necessary to emphasize that this statistical study and the results arising from it relied, to a great extent, on the availability of information on the studied cases. As such, this study represents indicators and signs on the condition of this current and its traits and characteristics, and is not necessarily considered from a scientific standpoint as strict and rigorous, due to incomplete information in cases where data was unavailable. This is largely due to the presence of social and security sensitivities and mutual apprehensions, both official and societal, associated with any scientific or research effort addressing this current and its condition.

From another angle, some cases subject to statistical treatment proved difficult in terms of truly reliable source, as a result of the absence of certain detailed official information. During data collection however, we were keen to verify any detailed pieces of information from multiple sources. For example, if information was lacking on (x) from among those present in the table, we would try to access it through their family, social media sites, the surrounding social environment, and attorneys who worked on their cases.

We mentioned in the course of the analysis and in the chapter that there is a ratio of adherents to the “takfiri-excommunicative” current, with reference to what is known in political and media literature as the “Salafi Jihadist current”, without defining their detailed ideological commitment, whether they are with Al-Nusra Front or ISIS. Reference to them in this general description

occurs in the documents of the State Security Court, without there being certain details concerning whether they are more intellectual inclined towards ISIS or Al-Nusra, even though this general characterization does not necessarily negate the presence of intellectual or emotional inclinations in favor of this or that group.

### 1- Age and Marital Status

The data in Figure [1] shows that enlistment in the extremist organizations is distributed across all age groups, but it becomes in evidence that the overwhelming majority is concentrated in the young age groups, where around 77% of them are concentrated in the age groups below the age of thirty, and around a third in the years twenty five and below.

Hence, it can be stated that enlistment in extremist organizations is a phenomenon associated with youth, although is distributed across all age groups, This could indicate that younger generations were attracted to these extremist organizations in Syria and Iraqi, while the higher age groups reflect intellectual and political affiliation to these groups in a previous period. Figure [2] on the other hand, provides further context in showing that two-thirds of these cases are from among those married while the remaining third are single.

Figure [1]: Age distribution of those enrolled in extremist organizations

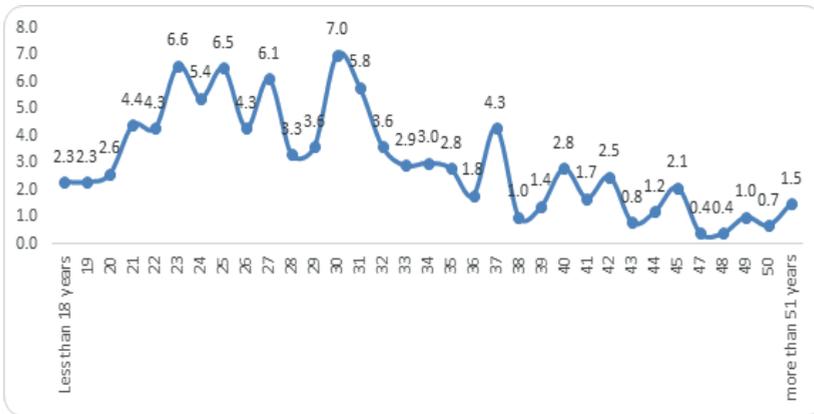
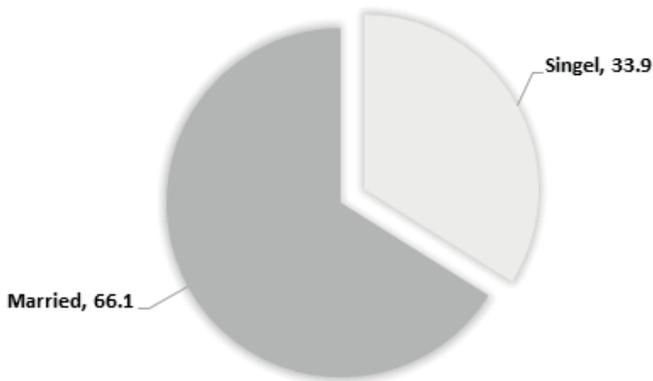


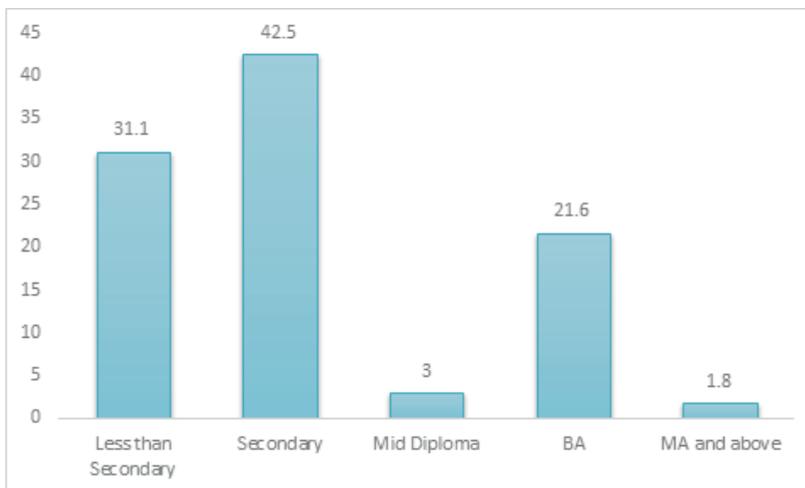
Figure [2]: Marital status of those enrolled in extremist organizations



## 2- Educational Level

The overwhelming majority of those enlisted with extremist organizations hold a secondary school degree or lower, while there is a weighty proportion of those with an educational level above secondary school, particularly those with a bachelor's degree. This is in addition to the existence of a small ratio of holders of higher degrees, indicating that these organizations include members with both an advanced educational attainment, as well as those with lower academic attainment. This is a reflection of the nature of extremist organizations, in terms of the importance of their ideological and intellectual dimension, and concurrently the involvement or attempted involvement of these organizations in violent activity partaking in terrorist operations whether domestically or abroad.

Figure [3]: Educational level of those enrolled in extremist organizations



### 3- Professional State and the Employment Sector

As indicated by Figure [4], the majority of those enlisted in extremist organizations used to work prior to joining. Conversely, more than a fourth of them are unemployed, which indicates that enlistment in those organizations is not confined to one segment to the exclusion of another in relation to professional experience. Moreover, one can notice the higher ratio of unemployed persons compared to the national unemployment rate in Jordan, which is indicative that those extremist organizations target the socioeconomically vulnerable segments in the recruitment process.

Regarding individuals constituting the employed demographic of Jordan, it should be noted that although more than 70% of the population works in the private sector, more than a fifth of the members of these organizations are public and governmental sector employees, which reflects the ideological capability of these groups to reach public sector and governmental organizations employees, as shown in Figure [5].

Figure [4]: Employment status before joining extremist organizations

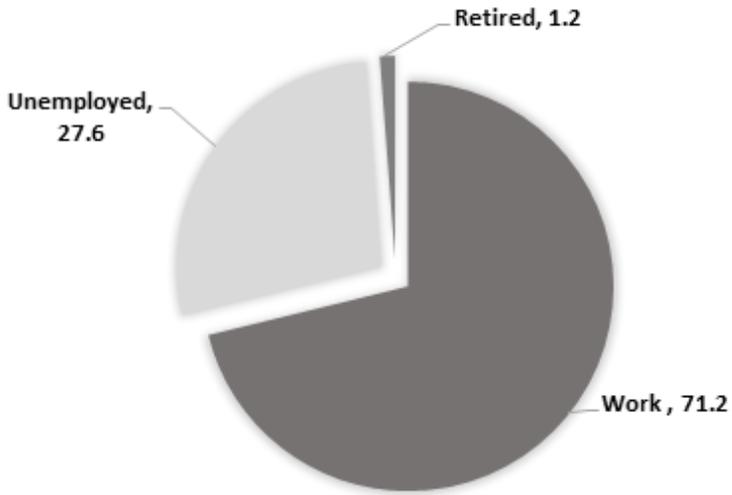
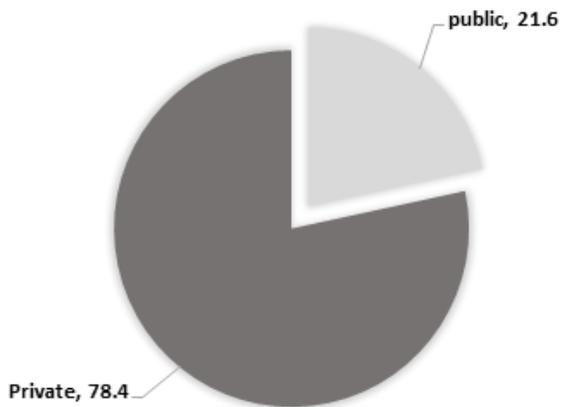


Figure [5]: Employment sector before joining extremist organizations

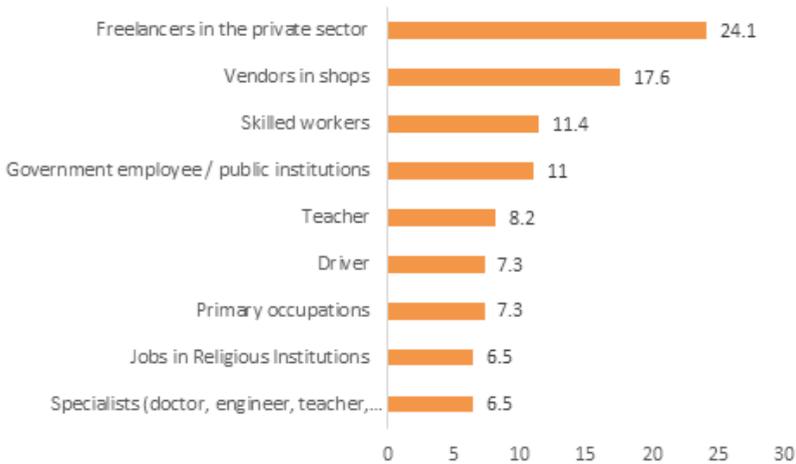


#### 4- Occupation

Figure [6] shows that members of extremists organizations are distributed across myriad professional sectors, preeminently freelancers in the private sectors; that is the owners of economic installations of varied sizes in the private sector, while 17.6% work in small or medium commercial shops. The remaining portion are distributed across varying professions of skilled labor, general employment, and primary occupations, followed by those working in educational and religious institutions and those with specialization.

It is worth mentioning that the professional distribution was prominently and clearly evidenced in an important segment that may be characterized as middle class. Namely free enterprise at 24.1%, specialists at 6.5%, teachers at 8.2%, and governmental and employees at 11%. The other segment, on the other hand, may be classified as being composed of the working class or economically marginalized, within retail at 17.6%, construction at 11.4%, drivers at 7.3%, and other primary occupations) which constitute an important part of the informal economy.

Figure [6]: Profession before joining radical organizations



## 5- Geographic Distribution

The phenomenon of affiliation with extremist organizations is spread across six of Jordan's 12 governorates, to varying degrees. The largest presence is in Zarqa where 40% of extremists in the dataset originated. It is remarkable that there is an equal share between the two districts of Ruseifah and Qassabat Al-Zarqa, while those organizations do not have a presence in Al-Hashimiyah district.

Housing the second largest share of the movement is Irbid, which accounts for 17.4% of the total members. What is also noticeable is that in the governorate, three-quarters of the members are from the Irbid Qassabah districts followed by the

North Ghor district at 13.7%, while the contribution of other districts are an infinitesimal contributor to the membership of those organizations. Balqa comes in third place with 13%, where 72% of this portion come from Qassabat Al-Salt and 25.5% from 'Ayn Al-Basha, while the contribution of other districts is almost nil. The capital governorate occupies fourth place, accounting for 12% of all the members, concentrated in five main districts, namely: Qassabat Amman 41.7%, Marka district 24%, Al-Qweismeh District 14.6%, Al-Jami`ah Disitrc 11.5%, Wadi Al-Seer district 7.3%, while the other districts did not account for any of the members of the organizations.

Next is the Governorate of Ma`an at 9.3%, and almost all the members of those organizations are from Qassabat Ma`an district, while the other districts do not account for members of those organizations.

And finally, the Karak Governorate accounts for 4.9% of the total members in the Kingdom, where the majority is concentrated in the Karak Qassabah district. The other governorates accounts for an insignificant portion of radical extremists, with some governorates are devoid of members of those organizations.

In the quest to understand and combat extremism, one must be attentive to what may be called the "ecology of extremism" or the concentration of the members in particular governorates and specific districts within these governorates. Specifically, the economic and social compositions, along with living and demographic conditions prevalent in those areas, given that some governorates contribute several-fold their ratio of the population in Jordan, and some are considerably less than the

overall size concerning the population of Jordan or do not make any contribution to those organizations.

Figure [7]: Distribution of Enrollment in Extremist Organizations by Governorate and Districts

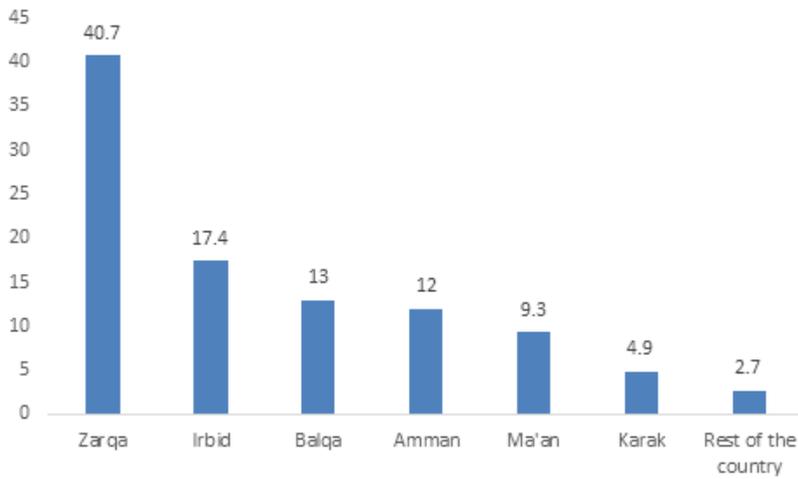


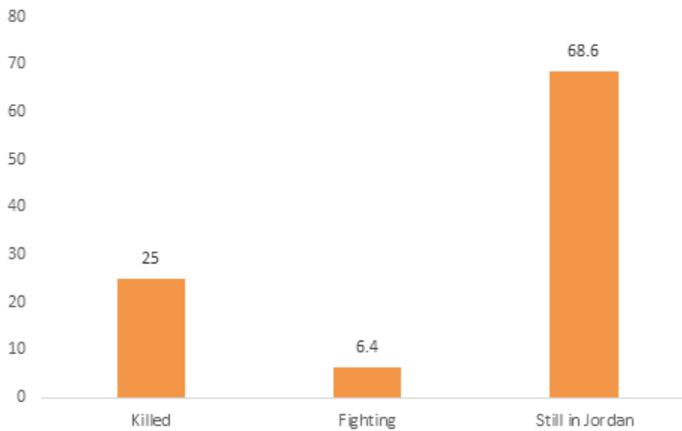
Table [1]: Place of Residence (Governorate / District)

| Governorate | District               | Count | %     |
|-------------|------------------------|-------|-------|
| Amman       | Amman                  | 40    | 41.7  |
|             | Marka                  | 23    | 24.0  |
|             | Qweismeh               | 14    | 14.6  |
|             | the University         | 11    | 11.5  |
|             | Wadi Sir               | 7     | 7.3   |
|             | Sahab                  | 1     | 1.0   |
|             | Giza                   | 0     | 0.0   |
|             | Naour                  | 0     | 0.0   |
|             | Almoaqar               | 0     | 0.0   |
|             | <b>Total</b>           | 96    | 100.0 |
| Balqa       | Salt                   | 68    | 72.3  |
|             | South Shouna           | 2     | 2.1   |
|             | Deir Ala               | 0     | 0.0   |
|             | Ain Al-Basha           | 24    | 25.5  |
|             | Mahes & Fuhais         | 0     | 0.0   |
|             | <b>Total</b>           | 94    | 100.0 |
| Zarqa       | Zarqa                  | 133   | 42.8  |
|             | Russiefh               | 178   | 57.2  |
|             | Hashimeh               | 0     | 0.0   |
|             | <b>Total</b>           | 311   | 100.0 |
| Madaba      | Madaba                 | 0     | 0.0   |
|             | Deeban                 | 2     | 100.0 |
|             | <b>Total</b>           | 2     | 1.7   |
| Irbid       | Irbif                  | 88    | 75.2  |
|             | Ramtha                 | 4     | 3.4   |
|             | Kourah                 | 7     | 6.0   |
|             | Bani Kenaneh           | 1     | 0.9   |
|             | Northern Jordan Valley | 16    | 13.7  |
|             | Bani Obaid             | 1     | 0.9   |
|             | Mazar Shamali          | 0     | 0.0   |
|             | Taebbeh                | 0     | 0.0   |
|             | Westeha                | 0     | 0.0   |
|             | <b>Total</b>           | 117   | 100.0 |

|         |                  |    |       |
|---------|------------------|----|-------|
| Mafrq   | Mafrq            | 4  | 80.0  |
|         | Northern Badia   | 0  | 0.0   |
|         | North West Badia | 1  | 20.0  |
|         | Al-Ruwaished     | 0  | 0.0   |
|         | <b>Total</b>     | 5  | 100.0 |
| Jerash  | Jerash           | 4  | 80.0  |
| Ajloun  | Ajloun           | 1  | 20.0  |
|         | Kofranjeh        | 0  | 0.0   |
|         | <b>Total</b>     | 5  | 100.0 |
| Karak   | Karak            | 25 | 75.8  |
|         | Mazar Janobi     | 2  | 6.1   |
|         | Southern Valley  | 0  | 0.0   |
|         | Al Qaser         | 6  | 18.2  |
|         | Aai              | 0  | 0.0   |
|         | 'Faqou           | 0  | 0.0   |
|         | Qatraneh         | 0  | 0.0   |
|         | <b>Total</b>     | 33 | 100.0 |
| Tafilah | Tafileh          | 0  | 0.0   |
|         | Bsera            | 1  | 100.0 |
|         | Hasa             | 0  | 0.0   |
|         | <b>Total</b>     | 1  | 100.0 |
| Ma'an   | Ma'an            | 67 | 100.0 |
|         | Petra            | 0  | 0.0   |
|         | Husseiniya       | 0  | 0.0   |
|         | Shobak           | 0  | 0.0   |
|         | <b>Total</b>     | 67 | 100.0 |
| Aqaba   | Aqaba            | 1  | 100.0 |
|         | Al-Qweira        | 0  | 0.0   |
|         | <b>Total</b>     | 1  | 100.0 |

The majority of those included in the study or the database remain in Jordan 68.6%, while 25% of them were killed and 16.3% continue to fight in Syria.

Figure 8: Status of those enrolled in extremist organizations

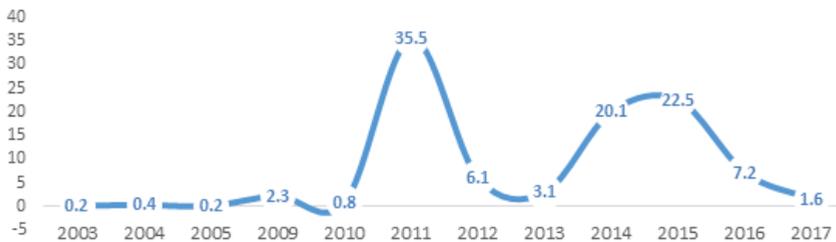


## 6- History of Detention

The history of imprisonment applies only to those in the dataset which are present Jordan, where it may be observed that there are small ratios of those detained prior to the outbreak of the civil wars in Iraq and Syria. This could be linked to previous conflicts, particularly with the emergence of Al-Qaeda in Iraq after the American invasion. However, what is noticeable is that the year 2011 witnessed a substantial increase in the ratio of prisoners which could be directly linked to the Syrian crisis, while there was a relative decline in cases of imprisonment in the years 2012 and 2013, a rise again in the years 2014 and 2015 concurrently with the control of ISIS of vast swathes of territory in Iraq, and the declaration of the so-called “Islamic State”, followed by a decline once again in the years 2016 and 2017, which clearly signifies that the mounting membership of those organizations

is linked to their growth and rise as a result of regional conflicts in neighboring countries more than a linkage to international transformations in Jordan. Certainly, this does not connote the absence of factors helping the growth of this phenomenon in Jordan, but the growth in the rate of enlisting in these organizations is considerably connected to external developments, particularly in neighboring countries. This indicates the nature of these organizations and the sectarian pattern acquired by the conflict in Syria and Iraq, which could also indicate an intensification of terrorist activity in Jordan.

Figure [9]: The date of detention of those enrolled in radical organizations in Jordan

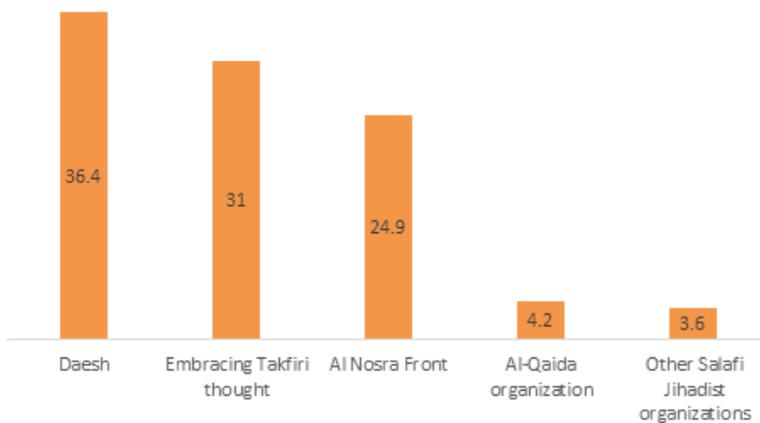


## 7- Members by Organization

It is clear from Figure [10] that more than a third of the members are affiliated to ISIS (36.4%) while approximately less than a third are affiliated to the Salafi Jihadist currents in Jordan or among the adherents of the takfiri-excommunicative thought in general. By contrast, a fourth of the members are members of Al-Nusra, while a small percentage belong to Al-Qaeda and Salafi

jihadist organizations outside of Jordan. This finding emphasizes from another angle, that the rise of the phenomenon of violent extremism in Jordan is essentially and directly linked to the rise of extremist organizations in neighboring countries, and is specifically an offshoot of Al-Qaeda. This is an allusion to “ISIS” and “Al-Nusra Front”, but on the other hand, it is necessary to state that the jihadist organizations present in Jordan provide the basic reservoir for joining those extremist groups, and could have constituted the ideological support or foundation for them conceptually and in terms of recruitment.

Figure [10]: Enrollment by Organization



### 7-1 Age and Organization

Around half of the youths in the age group of 22 years and less are from among members of ISIS at 47.6%, and more than a third were members of Al-Nusra at 36.2%, while a low percentage of those belong to takfiri thought in general. This indicates that there are no clear signs of whether they are closer to ISIS and Al-Nusra, particularly in State Security Court Cases, where the ruling reveals the affiliation of a person to the takfiri current in general. As to the age group of the youth of 23-29 years, more than a third belong to ISIS at 38%, while around a third are subscribers of takfiri thought, and more than a fifth belong to Al-Nusra Front.

Notwithstanding the fact that belonging to ISIS and Al-Nusra Front is present in all age groups, when the age group rises it is noticeable that the ratio of those belonging to ISIS and Al-Nusra declines relatively. On the other hand, the ratio of the exponents of takfiri excommunicative thought rises in general whenever their age group increases. Furthermore, if we take into consideration that these extremist organizations need fighters on the one hand, and intellectual and political supporters on the other, they would target varied age groups, which could reflect the time period of joining this thought and these organization where it would be possible for the more advanced in age to have joined in previous periods compared to the youth segments who were attracted in the other ten years, as a direct result of the regional global developments.

**Table [2]: Age and Organization**

|              | Daesh | Al-Qaida organization | Al Nosra Front | Embracing Takfiri thought | Other Salafi Jihadist organizations | Total |
|--------------|-------|-----------------------|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Less than 22 | 47.6  | 1.0                   | 36.2           | 12.4                      | 2.9                                 | 100.0 |
| 23-29        | 38.0  | 4.7                   | 22.6           | 32.1                      | 2.6                                 | 100.0 |
| 30-39        | 31.5  | 3.3                   | 22.1           | 38.0                      | 5.2                                 | 100.0 |
| and above 40 | 31.3  | 7.1                   | 19.2           | 38.4                      | 4.0                                 | 100.0 |
| Total        | 36.4  | 4.0                   | 24.1           | 31.8                      | 3.7                                 | 100.0 |

## 7-2 Education and the Organization

With regards to education, we observe that those with a secondary school certificate and below are almost equally distributed between ISIS and Al-Nusra, or adhere to the organizational thought in general. Moreover, it is observed that there is an increase in the proportion of members of ISIS concomitantly with the increase in the educational level (secondary school: 37.6% and above secondary school 38.1%), but around half of the members of ISIS are holders of the secondary school certificate, and the second half are distributed between the group with less than secondary education level and above it. As to Al-Nusra Front, we may observe a decline in the ratio of joining the organization concomitantly with the rise in the educational level, while for those who subscribe to excommunicative thought in general, it became evident that around half are holders of the secondary school certificate, and third have an educational level less than secondary school. This is to say that 80% of adherents to

excommunicative thought are of a secondary school level or less, while the rest are of a segment above secondary school.

The main finding related to education and enlistment in extremist organizations is that most of the members of those organizations are of low educational levels with the presence of a weighty proportion who have an educational level higher than secondary school, and particularly holders of the first university degree, as previously shown.

**Table [3]: Education and Organization**

|                     | Daesh | Al-Qaida organization | Al Nosra Front | Embracing Takfiri thought | Other Salafi Jihadist organizations | Total |
|---------------------|-------|-----------------------|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Less than Secondary | 32.0  | 0.0                   | 30.4           | 34.8                      | 2.8                                 | 100.0 |
| Secondary           | 37.6  | 5.8                   | 17.5           | 35.8                      | 3.3                                 | 100.0 |
| Above Secondary     | 38.1  | 4.8                   | 27.9           | 25.9                      | 3.4                                 | 100.0 |
| Total               | 36.0  | 3.8                   | 23.9           | 33.1                      | 3.2                                 | 100.0 |

### Occupational Status and Organization

69.4% of the database is consisted of those who are employed, while the unemployed constitute 30.6%, and the proportion of members of ISIS who are employed is more than a third 35.5%, which represents more than two-thirds of the members of ISIS ay 67%, while the remaining third are unemployed. Moreover, a fourth of the employed are members of Al-Nusra 25.1% which

represents 62.4% of all the members of Al-Nusra, while 30.3% of the employed are those that espouse excommunicative thought, but constitute 81% of all those who adhere to excommunicative thought.

As to the ratio of the unemployed, they constitute 33% of all the members of ISIS, while representing 42.9% of the members of Al-Qaeda, 37.6% of the members of Al-Nusra, and 19% of the exponents of excommunicative thought. The main inference is that the employed are distributed with varying degrees across the various organizations, but they represent the majority of those that subscribe to excommunicative thought. On the other hand, the unemployed are distributed to a greater extent across the violent extremist organizations at 80.7%, and are present to a lesser extent among those who adhere to excommunicative thought in general.

**Table [4]: Employment Status and Organization**

|            | Daesh | Al-Qaida organization | Al Nosra Front | Embracing Takfiri thought | Other Salafi Jihadist organizations | Total |
|------------|-------|-----------------------|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Work       | 35.5  | 3.8                   | 25.1           | 30.3                      | 5.2                                 | 100.0 |
| Unemployed | 39.8  | 6.5                   | 34.4           | 16.1                      | 3.2                                 | 100.0 |
| Total      | 36.8  | 4.6                   | 28.0           | 26.0                      | 4.6                                 | 100.0 |

### 7-3 Employment Sector and Organization

Notwithstanding the fact that most of the members of these organizations are from the private sector at 78.4%, 21.6% belong to the public sector. Table [5] below suggests that the higher ratio of 41.5% belong to Al-Nusra Front, 34.1% belong to ISIS and a ratio of less than a fifth at 17.1% espouse excommunicative thought. This means that the majority of people in the database employed by the public sector are affiliated with violent extremist organizations at 79.4%, and the remaining are from among those who espouse excommunicative thought. On the other hand, 61.25% of individuals in the dataset employed in the private sector belong to violent extremist organizations, and around a third espouse excommunicative thought at 33.5%. In other words, 90% of individuals in the dataset who adopted excommunicative thought worked in the private sector. We may also infer that the members of the public sector are more inclined to join violent extremist organizations than the private sector, and it may be observed that the private sector has a varying distribution between the violent organizations, but represents the majority of those that associate with excommunicative thought in general.

**Table [5]: Labor Sector and Organization**

|         | Daesh | Al-Qaida organization | Al Nosra Front | Embracing Takfiri thought | Other Salafi Jihadist organizations | Total |
|---------|-------|-----------------------|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Public  | 34.1  | 2.4                   | 41.5           | 17.1                      | 4.9                                 | 100.0 |
| Private | 35.9  | 4.1                   | 21.2           | 33.5                      | 5.3                                 | 100.0 |
| Total   | 35.5  | 3.8                   | 25.1           | 30.3                      | 5.2                                 | 100.0 |

#### 7-4 Profession and Organization

The distribution of various professions across the organizations reflects interesting patterns worthy of exploration, given that around two-thirds of this segment are members of extremist organizations. However, the other third belongs to the adherents of excommunicative thought in general. We observe a similar pattern among the segment of specialists, for the majority belong to extremist organizations, and more than a third to excommunicative organizations in general. Those working in retail reflect the same pattern as those that own private business, even if there are slight differences.

The skilled workers and drivers also display similar pattern, where they are distributed between membership of ISIS and adherence to excommunicative thought. As to those that work in religious institutions, the overwhelming majority from among members of ISIS, Al-Nusra and Al-Qaeda have utterly no presence among

the adherents of excommunicative thought, while teachers are distributed consecutively across ISIS, excommunicative thought and then Al-Nusra.

We could also interpret the data in a different way, to find that the professions that most belong to ISIS are the primary professions and jobs in religious institutions and teachers, followed by the owners of free enterprises (freelancers). As to Al-Nusra Front, we find that the profession with the greatest affiliation tends to be governmental employees and those working in religious institutions, and specialists. As to the adherents of excommunicative thought, the professions with the greatest affiliation are skilled workers, then drivers followed by specialists, free enterprise owners, and teachers.

**Table [6]: Profession and Organization**

| Profession   | Daesh | Al-Qaida organization | Al-Nusra Front | Embracing Takfiri thought | Other Salafi Jhadist organizations | Total |
|--|-------|-----------------------|----------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|-------|
| Freelancers in the private sector                                    | 37.3  | 3.9                   | 23.5           | 31.4                      | 3.9                                | 100.0 |
| Specialists (doctor, engineer, teacher, university professor, nurse) | 15.4  | 7.7                   | 38.5           | 38.5                      | 0.0                                | 100.0 |
| Vendors in shops   | 34.2  | 2.6                   | 26.3           | 28.9                      | 7.9                                | 100.0 |
| Skilled workers  | 29.2  | 0.0                   | 16.7           | 50.0                      | 4.2                                | 100.0 |
| Primary occupations  | 55.6  | 0.0                   | 16.7           | 27.8                      | 0.0                                | 100.0 |
| Jobs in Religious Institutions                                       | 46.2  | 7.7                   | 46.2           | 0.0                       | 0.0                                | 100.0 |
| Government employee / public institutions                            | 28.6  | 0.0                   | 47.6           | 14.3                      | 9.5                                | 100.0 |
| Driver   | 29.4  | 17.6                  | 5.9            | 41.2                      | 5.9                                | 100.0 |
| Teacher  | 43.8  | 0.0                   | 12.5           | 31.3                      | 12.5                               | 100.0 |
| Total  | 35.5  | 3.8                   | 25.1           | 30.3                      | 5.2                                | 100.0 |

### 7-5 Governorates and Organization

The results of the analysis have shown that the highest membership of ISIS came from the Karak Governorate, where they constituted 88.5% of all the members of organizations from Governorate. As to Balqa, the ratio of the members of ISIS was 53.6% and the ratio of these adhering to excommunicative thought was 29.8%, while in Irbid the ratio of the members of ISIS was 42.9% followed by the adherents of excommunicative thought and then by followers of Al-Nusra Front.

The highest presence of the adherents to excommunicative thought was in Zarqa Governorate at 45.6% followed by Balqa then Irbid.

In Ma'an Governorate, most of the persons belonging to terrorist organizations were members of Al-Nusra Front at 64.6%, and the remaining governorates- where most of the members were affiliated to ISIS or those that adhere to excommunicative thought in general. Moreover, the highest ratio of support for the espousers of excommunicative thought was in Zarqa Governorate, thereby being distinguished from the other governorates in which support is distributed across various currents, and then the members of other Salafi Jihadist organizations at 13.8%.

**Table [7]: Governorate and Organization**

| Governorate         | Daesh | Al-Qaida organization | Al Nosra Front | Embracing Takfiri thought | Other Salafi Jihadist organizations | Total |
|---------------------|-------|-----------------------|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Irbid               | 42.9  | 1.6                   | 25.4           | 29.4                      | 0.8                                 | 100.0 |
| Balqa               | 53.6  | 1.2                   | 11.9           | 29.8                      | 3.6                                 | 100.0 |
| Zarqa               | 27.2  | 6.3                   | 18.8           | 45.6                      | 2.2                                 | 100.0 |
| Amman               | 40.5  | 5.1                   | 27.8           | 20.3                      | 6.3                                 | 100.0 |
| Karak               | 88.5  | 0.0                   | 11.5           | 0.0                       | 0.0                                 | 100.0 |
| Ma'an               | 12.3  | 4.6                   | 64.6           | 4.6                       | 13.8                                | 100.0 |
| Rest of the country | 50.0  | 0.0                   | 35.7           | 14.3                      | 0.0                                 | 100.0 |
| Total               | 36.5  | 4.1                   | 24.8           | 31.1                      | 3.6                                 | 100.0 |

## 7-6 Charge and Organization

Regarding the accusation of stirring sectarian prejudices directed at individuals, 91.7% of them adhered to excommunicative thought, while 77.3% of those charged with attempting to carry out terrorist actions espoused excommunicative thought. As for those charged with supporting and promoting terrorist groups, 85.9% of them belonged to ISIS, while the charge for attempting to join armed terrorist groups is split between 48.3% belonging to ISIS, and 41.1% to Al-Nusra Front. Concerning possession and production of explosive materials and possession of arms, 66.3% belonged to ISIS, and 19.4% belonged to Al-Qaeda.

Concerning the charge of attempting to enter and exit from the Kingdom by illegitimate means, 55.4% belonged to Al-Nusra, and 26.1% belonged to ISIS, whereas the charge of carrying out actions subjecting the interests of the state and the citizens to peril, 58.2% belonged to ISIS, and 28.6% belonged to Al-Nusra. Finally, regarding the charge of conspiracy with the intent to carry out terrorist acts, 63.2% belonged to ISIS, and 21.1% to Al-Qaeda.

Table [8]: Charge and Organization

| The Charge  | Daesh | Al-Qaida organization | Al Nosra Front | Embracing Takfiri thought | Other Salafi Jihadist organizations | Total |
|---|-------|-----------------------|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Stimulating sectarian strife  | 3.5   | 0.9                   | 3.8            | 91.7                      | 0.0                                 | 100.0 |
| Attempting / carrying out terrorist acts                                    | 12.5  | 8.                    | 7.8            | 77.3                      | 1.6                                 | 100.0 |
| Support and promote terrorist groups  | 85.9  | 1.6                   | 9.8            | 2.2                       | 0.5                                 | 100.0 |
| Enrollment and attempt to join armed terrorist groups                       | 48.3  | 3.3                   | 41.1           | 2.2                       | 5.0                                 | 100.0 |
| Possession and manufacture of explosives and weapons possession             | 66.3  | 19.4                  | 5.1            | 3.1                       | 6.1                                 | 100.0 |
| Attempting to enter and leave the Kingdom in illegal ways                   | 26.1  | 2.2                   | 55.4           | 0.0                       | 16.3                                | 100.0 |
| To carry out acts that endanger the interests of the state and the citizens | 58.2  | 3.3                   | 28.6           | 0.0                       | 9.9                                 | 100.0 |
| Conspiracy to carry out terrorist acts                                      | 63.2  | 21.1                  | 5.3            | 7.9                       | 2.6                                 | 100.0 |
| Total   | 33.6  | 3.4                   | 15.6           | 44.1                      | 3.3                                 | 100.0 |

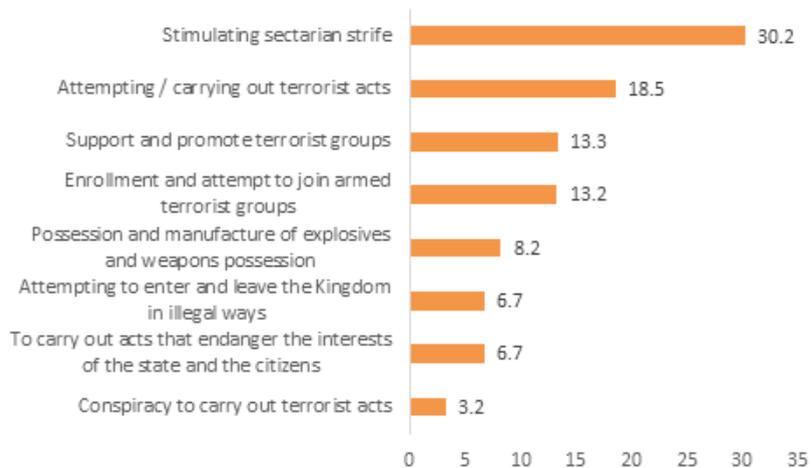
Therefore, ISIS garnered a higher ratio of charges associated with the promotion of the Organization on the one hand, and charges associated with violent behavior or which leads to violence. As to Al-Nusra Front, it garnered some charges linked to joining or attempting to join or crossing the border to join the group. Regarding the espousers of excommunicative thought, their charges were focused on stirring sectarian strife and attempting to carry out terrorist acts inside Jordan. Those findings indicate that most of the charges against ISIS and Al-Nusra were associated with carrying out terrorist acts or attempting and abetting the commission of terrorist acts outside of Jordan primarily (Jordan is also targeted, but to a lesser extent), while we find that the espousers of excommunicative thought focused their actions inside Jordan whether through inciting prejudices or attempting to commit terrorist acts.

## **8- Charges**

The charges were distributed as follows: incitement of sectarian strife accounting for a little less than a third, while the remaining charges were “attempting to or carrying out terrorist acts or preparing to carry out terrorist acts whether inside or outside Jordan or providing support by promoting and propagandizing in favor of extremist organizations.” In this context, the charge of attempting or carrying out terrorist acts inside Jordan came in second place, followed by the accusations of supporting and promoting terrorist groups or joining and attempting to join armed terrorist groups. As for the remaining charges, they

were distributed across attempting to enter and depart from the Kingdom, and carrying out acts which subject the interests of the state and citizens to peril. The nature of the charges levelled indicates that the majority are accusations associated with acts whether promotional or actual aiming to achieve the interests of those organizations in Jordan on the one hand, and supporting organizations or attempting to go to areas in which those organizations have a presence outside of Jordan on the other.

**Figure [11]: Charges for Terrorist Organizations**



### **8-1 Age and Charge**

It is evident from Table [7] below, that the foremost activities for the age group of 22 years and below, are support and promotion of terrorist organizations at 25.1%, and joining and attempting to join armed terrorist groups with 25.7%, while the remaining

charges were distributed across carrying out acts which may expose the interests of the state and citizens to peril, and stirring sectarian strife.

Meanwhile, the second highest age group between 23-34 years, involved charged levels of stirring sectarian strife at 30.8%, followed in frequency by the attempt and actually carrying out terrorist acts, and support and promotion of terrorist groups. Regarding the older age groups, we may observe that the pattern of accusations is somewhat similar, where the ratio increases for the charge of inciting sectarian prejudices and attempting to carry out or actually carrying out terrorist acts inside Jordan in contrast to the previous groups of lower age which evinced a greater inclination for violent behavior inside and abroad Jordan.

**Table [9]: Age and Charge**

|              | Stimulating sectarian strife | Attempting / carrying out terrorist acts | Support and promote terrorist groups | Enrollment and attempt to join armed terrorist groups | Possession and manufacture of explosives and weapons possession | To carry out acts that endanger the interests of the state and the citizens | Attempting to enter and leave the Kingdom in illegal ways | Conspiracy to carry out terrorist acts | Total |
|--------------|------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|-------|
| Less than 22 | 12.9                         | 6.4                                      | 25.1                                 | 25.7  | 7.6   | 13.5  | 7.0   | 1.8                                    | 100.0 |
| 23-29        | 30.8                         | 18.7                                     | 13.2                                 | 13.0  | 6.9   | 7.3   | 6.9   | 3.1                                    | 100.0 |
| 30-39        | 35.2                         | 22.7                                     | 9.7                                  | 8.9   | 9.7   | 5.0   | 6.0   | 2.8                                    | 100.0 |
| and 40 above | 32.5                         | 18.4                                     | 12.4                                 | 12.8  | 7.3   | 4.7   | 7.3   | 4.7                                    | 100.0 |
| Total        | 30.5                         | 18.6                                     | 13.3                                 | 13.1  | 8.1   | 6.8   | 6.6   | 3.1                                    | 100.0 |

## 8-2 Educational Level and Charge

As is shown in Table [10] below, data does not refer to any patterns distinguishing the accused and the type of charge based on educational level, given that there is correspondence between the educational level insofar as three charges representing around two-thirds of the accused, namely inciting prejudices, and the attempt/carrying out terrorist acts, and support and promotion of terrorist groups. On the other hand, there are slight differences related to joining and attempting to join armed terrorist groups, where we observe similarity and greater congruence regarding the groups that have less than secondary education and higher than university, while we find a high ratio of those accused of possessing and producing explosive materials and possession of arms among the holders of university degree.

Table [10]: Educational level and Charge

|                     | Stimulating sectarian strife | Attempting / carrying out terrorist acts | Support and promote terrorist groups | Enrollment and attempt to join armed terrorist groups | Possession and manufacture of explosives and weapons possession | To carry out acts that endanger the interests of the state and the citizens | Attempting to enter and leave the Kingdom in illegal ways | Conspiracy to carry out terrorist acts | Total |
|---------------------|------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|-------|
| Less than Secondary | 32.5                         | 20.0                                     | 13.0                                 | 15.4  | 6.4   | 7.1   | 2.9   | 2.7                                    | 100.0 |
| Secondary           | 31.1                         | 19.3                                     | 12.1                                 | 8.5   | 11.0  | 6.9   | 7.8   | 3.3                                    | 100.0 |
| Above Secondary     | 32.0                         | 18.1                                     | 14.3                                 | 18.1  | 2.3   | 5.0   | 8.1   | 1.9                                    | 100.0 |
| Total               | 31.7                         | 19.3                                     | 12.8                                 | 12.6  | 7.8   | 6.6   | 6.3   | 2.9                                    | 100.0 |

### 8-3 Occupation and Charge

There is palpable variance regarding the nature of the profession and the type of charge, and there are of course convergences; for as Table [11] shows the three highest charges for freelancers are inciting sectarian prejudice, attempting or actually carrying out terrorist acts, and possessing and manufacturing explosive materials and possessing arms. Whereas for specialists, the two highest charges are: inciting sectarian prejudices, and joining or attempting to join terrorist groups. Retail shops salesmen are similar insofar as charges with the self-employed in the private sector are concerned. As to skilled labor and primary occupations, their accusations pivot around: inciting sectarian prejudices, and carrying out or attempting to carry out terrorist acts, and possession and manufacture of explosives and arms.

The charges leveled against the employees working in religious institutions pivot around: enlisting or trying to enlist with terrorist groups, support and promotion of terrorist organizations, and attempting to depart from the Kingdom by illegitimate means.

As to employees in governmental or public institutions, their charges were focused on: support and promotion of terrorist organizations, and attempting to depart from and enter the Kingdom by illegitimate methods. This is also the case concerning teachers and school headmasters, where the highest ratio of accusations levelled at them is incitement of sectarian prejudices, but the majority of professions are distributed across: attempting to carry out acts of terror, and joining or attempting to join armed

terrorist groups, and carrying out actions which are a risk to the security of the Kingdom.

Even though there is variety in the charges leveled based on profession, two clear patterns emerge which indicate a divergence or difference between some professions. Hence, for instance, we observe that there is variety in charges leveled at the freelancers and those working in the private sector, but the highest was in stirring prejudices, and the least was carrying out acts exposing the interests of the state and the citizens to danger. The second pattern is in those working in religious institutions whose charges are embodied in only four charges, where the highest was supporting and promoting terrorist organizations, attempting to enter and depart from the Kingdom by illegitimate methods, joining or attempting to join terrorist organizations, and carrying out actions subjecting security to danger, but not characterized by violence. This applies also to the profession of governmental employees notwithstanding the broad extent of public servants.

As to teachers/principals; due to the nature of the profession, the highest charge was incitement of sectarian strife, but the charges for this category are also distributed across other varied violent behaviors.

Table [11]: Profession and Charge

|  | Stimulating sectarian strife | Attempting / carrying out terrorist acts | Support and promote terrorist groups | Enrollment and attempt to join armed terrorist groups | Possession and manufacture of explosives and weapons possession | To carry out acts that endanger the interests of the state and the citizens | Attempting to enter and leave the Kingdom in illegal ways | Conspiracy to carry out terrorist acts | Total |
|--|------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|-------|
| Freelancers in the private sector                                    | 32.8                         | 22.4                                     | 14.7                                 | 6.9   | 7.8   | 6.9   | 3.4   | 5.2                                    | 100.0 |
| Specialists (doctor, engineer, teacher, university professor, nurse) | 33.3                         | 14.3                                     | 0.0                                  | 23.8  | 9.5   | 9.5   | 9.5   | 0.0                                    | 100.0 |
| Vendors in shops   | 28.4                         | 22.7                                     | 19.3                                 | 6.8   | 5.7   | 5.7   | 8.0   | 3.4                                    | 100.0 |
| Skilled workers  | 35.2                         | 24.1                                     | 14.8                                 | 7.4   | 9.3   | 5.6   | 1.9   | 1.9                                    | 100.0 |
| Primary occupations  | 24.0                         | 20.0                                     | 20.0                                 | 4.0   | 14.0  | 6.0   | 6.0   | 6.0                                    | 100.0 |
| Jobs in Religious Institutions                                       | 0.0                          | 0.0                                      | 0.0                                  | 18.2  | 31.8  | 31.8  | 18.2  | 0.0                                    | 100.0 |
| Government employee / public institutions                            | 15.8                         | 15.8                                     | 0.0                                  | 34.2  | 13.2  | 21.1  | 0.0   | 0.0                                    | 100.0 |
| Driver   | 35.7                         | 16.7                                     | 14.3                                 | 4.8   | 4.8   | 9.5   | 14.3  | 0.0                                    | 100.0 |
| Teacher  | 35.7                         | 17.9                                     | 0.0                                  | 17.9  | 14.3  | 10.7  | 3.6   | 0.0                                    | 100.0 |
| Total  | 28.8                         | 19.6                                     | 12.6                                 | 10.7  | 10.0  | 9.4   | 6.1   | 2.8                                    | 100.0 |

#### **7-4 Governorate and Charge**

There was variance between the governorates and the nature of the charges; for regarding the charge of inciting prejudices, it was observed that it was the highest in Zarqa followed by Balqa and Irbid, and they decline in the other governorates and completely lack presence in Karak. As to the charge of attempting to carry out terrorist acts, it is the highest in Ma`an Governorate, followed by Zarqa, Irbid, and is absent in Karak.

Concerning the charge of support and promotion, the highest was in the other governorates (that is, the other governorates which do not occur in the following table), and then Karak, followed by Balqa and the capital Amman. Ma`an emerges as the highest ratio terms of the charge of joining or attempting to join armed terrorist groups, while Karak is predominant in terms of the charge of possession and manufacture of explosive materials and possession of arms.

Table 12: Governorate and Charge

|                     | Stimulating sectarian strife | Attempting / carrying out terrorist acts | Support and promote terrorist groups | Enrollment and attempt to join armed terrorist groups | Possession and manufacture of explosives and weapons possession | To carry out acts that endanger the interests of the state and the citizens | Attempting to enter and leave the Kingdom in illegal ways | Conspiracy to carry out terrorist acts | Total |
|---------------------|------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|-------|
| Irbid               | 26.0                         | 18.8                                     | 13.5                                 | 6.6   | 15.3  | 6.9   | 8.7   | 4.2                                    | 100.0 |
| Balqa               | 33.6                         | 17.5                                     | 20.3                                 | 15.4  | 2.1   | 2.8   | 7.7   | 0.7                                    | 100.0 |
| Zarqa               | 41.2                         | 21.4                                     | 9.3                                  | 8.7   | 5.0   | 6.8   | 5.3   | 2.5                                    | 100.0 |
| Amman               | 17.7                         | 12.2                                     | 16.5                                 | 20.1  | 9.8   | 11.6  | 9.1   | 3.0                                    | 100.0 |
| Karak               | 0.0                          | 0.0                                      | 30.2                                 | 15.1  | 24.5  | 9.4   | 9.4   | 11.3                                   | 100.0 |
| Ma'an               | 6.9                          | 25.3                                     | 8.0                                  | 47.1  | 3.4   | 3.4   | 3.4   | 2.3                                    | 100.0 |
| Rest of the Country | 9.1                          | 4.5                                      | 45.5                                 | 22.7  | 9.1   | 0.0   | 0.0   | 9.1                                    | 100.0 |
| Total               | 30.4                         | 18.5                                     | 13.4                                 | 13.1  | 8.1   | 6.8   | 6.6   | 3.1                                    | 100.0 |

**Chapter IV:**

**Why and How Did they Become**

**Jihadists?**



## Chapter IV: Why and How Did they Become Jihadists? “Case Studies”

### Introduction

In this chapter we tackle specific case studies in greater depth. The aim of this chapter is to better understand the pathways adopted by personalities who eventually reached the point of adhering to the “Salafi Jihadist current”, and enlisting with jihadist groups abroad such as Al-Nusra Front and ISIS.

By investigating deeper context on the radicalization process, we hope to acquire a specific approach that gauges the factors of attraction and repulsion in equal measure, in terms of what drives those youth away from society towards those groups, and the factors of attraction which lure youth to them. Another benefit is the potential to map know the path from intellectual and psychological influence thereby arriving at this point, to whether they joining the jihadists, to emigrate and integrate in those groups or even to carry out suicide missions.

Such cases also clarify the significance of the ideological, psychological or societal factors which contributed to the process of “producing jihadists”, and the steps taken by them through stages of radicalization.

We will observe in this chapter that before us are multiple trajectories: the first is those that belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood either intellectually or organizationally, and converted to jihadism or to other Islamic currents such Jama`at Al-Da`wa W`al Tabligh and the traditional Salafiyyah movement. The second is the pathway of those that became religious inside prison due to formation of relationships with members of this current, and third is those with no previous experience in Jihadist currents but who were increasingly influenced by their discourse and events in the region.

Given that 6 of 11 cases are concerned with a certain affiliation to the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan), we stress that mere affiliation does not reflect the reality of the radicalization process. In other words, while there is a connection, it does not necessarily signify the presence of a significant proportion which converted to the "Jihadist current", or who integrated with Al-Nusra or ISIS, from an intellectual or organizational background affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood. What actually reinforced this model in the present chapter is merely the availability of sources, and the well-known rejection of members of the Jihadi current to speak about their experiences, in contrast to the easier process of having access to those with Ikhwani roots in their social circles.

By necessity, we faced the same obstacles when we embarked on studying the cases in greater detail. The greatest negative factor which we faced was the lack of desire of the family members to talk about their sons, and an apprehension of mentioning their

names, whereby numerous families opted for silence, due to governmental directives to many who joined those organizations and then withdrew from them not to meet with media people or researchers, nor state anything.

The mission, therefore was not easy or readily accessible. In fact, we encountered numerous hurdles and walls preventing access to many important case studies, which we longed to present in this chapter, and we relied as is the case with other chapters of the study on the “snowball” methodology, that is reaching through one case to the other, until enabled to compose this chapter and to study the cases presented in it.

The models and examples presented in this chapter are not all that we gathered, for there are other cases and examples, both different and varied about which we collected detailed information. However, because the sources were not direct, including the information present, we did not include them in this chapter. We also avoided the examples and patterns known in mainstream media and politics, which including narratives on which studies were conducted and where books were written treating their history, including those of internationally known Jordanian “Jihadist” leaderships, such as Abu Mohammad Al-Maqdisi, Abu Qutadah Al-Filistini, Abu Mus`ab Al-Zarqawi, Abu Anas Al-Shami (Umar Yousef). This is because their experiences and biographies received substantial media and academic attention already, beyond the purview of the present study.

We likewise avoided the new leadership models, which have spawned previous studies and were given media coverage such as: Dr. Sa`ad Al-Huneiti, the physician Munif Samara, Umar Mahdi Zeidan, the physician Hammam Al-Balwi, the physician Salah Anani, Abu Sayyaf Al-Ma`ani, Abu Mohammad Al-Tahawi, and others.

Hence, we attempted to focus on new models particular to this study and to access main primary sources, from among family and friends, or the persons themselves if such were possible, while benefiting from previous cases. This also includes information gathered from detailed studies about other cases from adherents to the "Jihadist current", particularly in the stage of the preparation of the study.

It remains for us to state that we intentionally mention the first names only in most these cases with consent from families and friends, and in some cases substitute them, which would be mentioned in the index of the study.

-1-

### **Nazzal Neighborhood Group: From Ikhwan to Al-Nusra**

During 2012 and 2013, the three young men went to Syria to fight against the Syrian regime: Abdullah, Anas and Jihad, successively, and then Saleh followed them. They were friends through the mosque in Nazzal quarter, which is situated in the east of Amman, the capital city.<sup>1</sup>

They had no historical background of association with the Salafi Jihadist current, and they were not detained or accused on this basis in the past, as is the case with many of those that went to Syria to fight. Completely to the contrary, the three were closer to the Muslim Brotherhood, and were not active members, and were educated in circles close to the group in the mosques of Nazzal quarter. They were known within the circles of the youths of the group, and one of them named Jihad, was a known activist in the Jordanian movement demanding political reform and combatting corruption in the year 2011.<sup>2</sup>

We have here an important model demanding deeper study, represented by the presence of a group of youths who share basic features, for they are from the same residential area - Nazzal

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1 We will suffice to mention the first names of the personalities, unless there are in the sources and references titles connected to their full names, whereby we shall keep them.

2 See: Abu Hamad, Ahmad, and Duha Barqawi. "The Spraying Man' from Colors to Carrying Arms." [Http://Ar.ammannet.net/](http://Ar.ammannet.net/), 3 Nov. 2014, [ar.ammannet.net/news/239253](http://Ar.ammannet.net/news/239253) and also: Sue, Alice. "The Boy Named Jihad: From the Ashes of the Arab Spring to the Battlefields of Syria." Translated by Taqwa Mosa'ade, [Https://Www.7iber.Com/](https://www.7iber.com/), 7iber, 3 Nov. 2014, [www.7iber.com/politics-economics/jihad-jordan-syria-isis](http://www.7iber.com/politics-economics/jihad-jordan-syria-isis) also see, Mohammad Fdeilat, the Jordanian Jihad Sha'rawi the reformist chewing gum distributor, is killed in Syria, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed Newspaper, 25/10/2013.

Quarter, born between 1991 and 1995 meaning they are of the sage age demographic of the early twenties, and are also either members of the Muslim Brotherhood, or close to it. Moreover, they all moved from the Muslim Brotherhood to Al-Nusra in Syria, rather than to ISIS. Their socioeconomic status also falls between the lower middle class and the poor class, with backgrounds as university students.

Their personal attributes vary, as some of their friends mentioned. Anas is described as having a sharp temperament, and if he is convinced of something he would go to extremes, and is stubborn while Jihad was open to various trends, even though he has a substantial capacity for work and activity, but is of tranquil temperament. Saleh is closer to the comic or satirical nature in many instances, while Abdullah was inclined to calmness, and activities linked to the call in the mosque, removed from direct engagement with domestic political issues.

Even though the four belong to the Muslim Brotherhood, or are close to it, the only one among them known for an interest in the issues of internal political reform and the popular movement, and was active to the greatest extent, was Jihad, while friends and those close to Abdullah and Anas and even Saleh state that they were not convinced of the importance of the domestic situation and the story of democratic reform, for they were more interested in the Palestine issue, prior to being confronted with the events of the Arab Spring, which preoccupied them, and in what was happening in Syria specifically, as opposed to being concerned

with the domestic movement, as was Jihad, who was originally in the stages of participation in the movement not officially a member of the Ikhwan, prior to friends of his emphasizing that he became closer to the Ikhwan upon entering university.

In the following pages, we will treat three main models (from among the four, given the availability of information), namely: Jihad, Anas, and Abdullah, and we will observe how the trek of shifting from Ikhwan to Al-Nusra happened in Syria.

### **1- Jihad and the “Collapse of the Arab Spring Dream”**

Jihad is a resident of Nazzal Quarter, and was born on 27 January 1994, and belongs to a family closer to the poor class. His father is a worker in a shoes factory, and his mother also works in a factory, and has an English language diploma from a community college in Amman. He is the eldest son, and has a small brother, and a sister who is younger than him.<sup>1</sup>

One of the friends of Jihad mentions that the great transformative moment in his life came when he was 16 years old in high school, in the year 2011, when he observed the events of the Arab Spring, and the collapse of the Egyptian and Tunisian regimes. He partook in the various popular activities and events, which began in Amman afterwards, demanding political reform and combatting corruption.<sup>2</sup>

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1 See the Facebook page of his mother – Um Jihad Ghaben: [https://www.facebook.com/umjihad.ghaben?hc\\_ref=SEARCH&fref=nf](https://www.facebook.com/umjihad.ghaben?hc_ref=SEARCH&fref=nf)

2 A special interview with a friend of his (M.G.) on 14/7/2017.

His friends in the movement describe him as extremely active, who did not miss any activity or event which he read or heard about, even if he did not know the organizers, and at other times, he would write graffiti in public spaces, containing reform phrases. His acquaintances called him the “spray man”, and because he was from a poor family of limited income, he had to work in a well-known chewing gum factory in Jordan (Sharawi factory) to try to defray expenses of his activities in the movement, and they nicknamed him “Abu Sharawi”.<sup>1</sup>

One of his friends, who particularly had an influence over in the incipient stages of his integration in the movement, interpret this considerable activity of Jihad in the movement, despite his young age, as having his consciousness enhanced due to the Arab Spring, and the scenes transmitted by the media to obliterate the dictatorships and the symbols of despotism, whereupon he came to feel that the Arab Spring is the dream and the project for which he was searching. Because he possessed inordinate courage and insistence, particularly if he believed in something, he was immersed in the movement to the greatest possible extent, he became known with the circles of the youth movement in a noticeable manner.<sup>2</sup>

In a subsequent stage he evinced leftist leanings: “religiously, he was closer to the Ikhwan and in the movement he was closer to the left”, as described one of his friends, but the greater influence was the independent youth movement, which suited

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1 See for example: Ahmad Abu Ahmad and Duha Barqawi, Jihad Ghobn “Spray Man” op.cit., and also Alice Su, “The Boy Named Jihad: From the Ashes of the Arab Spring to the Battlefields of Syria”, op.cit.

2 An interview with his friend (M.G.), op.cit.

his character more than being committed to political parties, leaders and routine work.<sup>1</sup>

Even though he had not matured ideologically, in the sense that he was not grounded in intellectual and political foundations, as is the case with party youths, he had embraced the moment of the Arab Spring with all his being and ideas, and that moment was the key to getting to know various groups of the youths active in the movement, from among Ikhwan and Islamists, leftists, particular to the Party of Popular Unity, independents, and so he drew nigh to all of them, and started to educate himself politically, and to ask intensively about the ideological differences, ideas and opinions, during the stage of his participation in the movement, to a point where he joined the youth of the Popular Unity Party for a period of time, for several months, prior to disconnecting with them as a result of substantive differences between him and them regarding the issue of religion, as a friend of his mentioned.<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime Jihad was passionate about social media and believed in its importance, which spurred him to like the media and to wish to study it, but the specialization availed to him in the University of Jordan, Faculty of Arts, was the Arabic Language. And at a particular stage he loved the Jordanian Army, and was attached to the idea of work in the armed forces, under the influence of Jordanian friends who adulated Jordanian patriotism, from the Zamzam current which separated from the Muslim Brotherhood, but he abandoned the idea due to reasons associated with the Jordanian composition, for he

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1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

is of Palestinian roots, while the majority of the army are east Jordanian tribesmen.<sup>1</sup>

Jihad participated in the processions demanding political reform in Jordan, intensively, and concurrently he joined other activists, Syrians and Jordanians, in numerous events in support of the Syrian revolution against the Asad regime initially, whereby he stood with them for long periods in front of the Syrian Embassy in Amman, or at other places, where he only rarely was absent from any event, or even a seminar addressing public affairs.<sup>2</sup>

His personality was formed by the moment of the Arab Spring and the Jordanian popular movement, while the scene of Tahrir Square in Egypt and Tunisia and the torture in Syria captivated his political imagination. But what happened, then, whereby the direction of the journey of Jihad of hope in a spring that is produced in Jordan, changes towards abroad Jordan, and joining Al-Nusra, which does not originally espouse democracy, and rejects the concept of the civil state, and believes in Syria establishing an Islamic state, not a democratic one similar to what the Syrian or Arab and Jordanian activists were advocating, with whom Jihad himself participated in Amman nearby the Syrian Embassy.

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1 Ibid. Concerning the Zamzam current, it includes a group of Ikhwani leaders and personalities linked to the doves wing, who are mostly East Bank Jordanians, and other personalities, who grouped together and launched an initiative named Zamzam (relative to the name of the hotel in which it was declared), and then they established a new political party.

See: "The Zamzam Initiative, Which Splintered from the Muslim Brotherhood Became a Political Party Founded in Jordan." [Http://Www.raialyoum.com](http://www.raialyoum.com), Rai Alyoum, 27 Mar. 2016, [www.raialyoum.com/?p=412994](http://www.raialyoum.com/?p=412994)

2 An interview with a friend of his, who asked not to be identified, dated 17/6/2017, at the Center for Strategic Studies in the University of Jordan.

Friends of his answer by referring to two main reasons:<sup>1</sup>

The first reason is represented in the recession of the Jordanian popular movement come the year 2012, while the momentum of the various marches activities and events receded, along with the appearance of signs of frustration on the part of youths, at the inability to mature a peaceful popular condition similar to what occurred in Egypt and Tunisia, coupled with the limited ability to mobilize and unify the youths in Jordan, and the concurrence of this with the coming of the high school year for Jihad, and freeing himself partially for study and work, to be able to pass this stage, and he complained to his friends about this year, which he wanted to pass by any means possible, in order to enroll in university. This actually materialized, when Jihad was accepted in the University of Jordan in the Faculty of Arts, where he found himself, again, closer to the sons of the Islamic tendency, that is those who are members of the Muslim Brotherhood, and some of his friends are of the view that he actually joined the Ikhwan during the first months of the academic year, after being previously close to them and their circles, while being hesitant to officially join, which is what happened in the first year of university.

The expiry of the flame of the movement in Jordan did not weigh lightly on the soul and mind of the young man Jihad when the Arab revolutions turned into domestic wars in each of Syria and Yemen, all of which produced big holes in the project which he

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1 An interview with his friend (M.G.), heretofore cited, and also an interview with another friend (M.A.), dated 20/7/2017.

envisaged for the coming period, a part of which he felt he is writing, by participating in the movement and even the slogans on the walls.

In spite of this it is necessary to mention here that Jihad had a revolutionary inclination which went beyond what the Muslim Brotherhood postulated or proposed, where he partook in what is known as the uprising of October 2012 protesting the rise in the prices of commodities, and he was enthusiastic for the slogans of the youth to surpass the ceiling of demands for reforming the regime to dislodging it, and he blamed the Ikhwan in Egypt for accepting reconciliation with the remnants of the regime of the former president Husni Mubarak after the revolution, which he viewed as a mistake, and is a position where it appears Jihad was influenced by leftist ideas.<sup>1</sup>

He was not enthusiastic concerning democracy or political reform, in the sense presented in the discourse of the Jordanian opposition, but was more interested in freedom in the broad sense, and his conception of democracy is linked to his religious background or conservatism more than being associated with the absolute liberal ideas of the West, which seek to establish a democratic edifice on a secular foundation. Moreover, during chats in social media about the civil state and democratic freedoms he used to insist that Arab societies are Muslim, and public freedoms should be framed within this framework.<sup>2</sup>

In the month of August 2012, Jihad posted a video on YouTube, not more than 18 seconds in length, in which he declared

1 A special interview with his friend (M.G.), op.cit.

2 Ibid.

boycotting the following parliamentary elections in which the Islamists did not participate, and in it he reproduced the approach of the defecting Syrian soldiers, whereby he exhibited his ID and declared boycotting the elections, and behind are two Jordanian flags of small size, calling upon the people to boycotting them because they are based on the one vote, on grounds that they will produce a fake House of Representatives that will forsake the resources of the homeland and will exonerate the corruptors, ending his words with “long live the Jordanian people of lofty standing”, which is a phrase inspired by the discourse of the popular movement, which was more radical and of a higher threshold of criticism than the classical Muslim Brotherhood discourse.<sup>1</sup>

A friend of his mentions how during the morning standing rows of the students of his government school he chanted long live the Jordanian people, and other students (with whom he previously agreed) repeated the slogan after him, which is the most radical slogan of the movement, as we mentioned before, which terrified the school principal and the teachers, and they summoned him, and tried to persuade him not to repeat what he did, for fear that the matter would reach the security departments, which may cause him and the administration itself harm.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps these inclinations and ideas held by Jihad were a reason facilitating his journey to Al-Nusra Front, without real psychological and intellectual obstacles, for he was not a member

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1 See: Similar to the Defections of the Syrian Army: A Citizen calls for boycotting the elections, albosala.com news website, 23/8/2017 on the following link: <http://www.albosala.com/News/Jordan/2012/8/23/%>

2 Interview (M.G.), op.cit.

of the movement in the traditional partisan sense, but was more a young man whose consciousness was ushered in at the moment of the “Arab Spring”, and he integrated in the movement to the greatest extent, and immersed in the most radical orientations, of high limits (of demands), which were not subject to the framing of the political parties, particularly the Islamists.

As to the second reason, it is represented in the scene of the Syrian revolution which moved from peaceful demonstration confronted by a killing machine, arrests and harsh reactions from the Syrian regime, to an armed clash between the rebels on the one hand and the regime on the other, whereupon the Syrian scene dominated gradually the thinking and emotions of Jihad, in the events in which he participated in the university and other areas, whereby he recited poems and delivered speeches in support of the Syrian revolution and confronting the regime there.<sup>1</sup>

With the receding ambition of reform in Jordan, on the part of Jihad, and the rise of the scene of bloodshed and conflict in Syria, and his intensified emotional feeling as a result of the images broadcast by the media on the situation there, he began to think of change and to partake in it through the domestic scene, which closed- at least at the current moment- through the Syrian scene, and he started to apply pressure to his family insistently for them to accept his departure for Syria to fight, which is what actually

1 See poems and participations of Jihad Al-Ghobn in YouTube about Syrian, “A Poem: My Will, for the Soul of the Martyr Jihad Ghaben.” [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), 25 Oct. 2014, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fb63HS05EoQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fb63HS05EoQ). (Page 82) “A Poem for the Syrian Revolution.” [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), 26 Apr. 2012, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMKc4ZeatXE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMKc4ZeatXE). (Page 82) “A Video about The Martyr Jihad Ghaben Made by His Friends.” [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), 6 Mar. 2015, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBIGGE1QOVM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBIGGE1QOVM)

materialized after they felt that the situation there was having a dominant effect on their youngest son, and because his family- as his friends also say- is a simple and religious family, which did not have strong reasons to object to the departure of their son there.<sup>1</sup>

By pondering the reasons that produced his decision to travel to Syria, or which was the vehicle that moved him from the stage of sympathizing to the stage of travel and participation there, the first factor coming to mind is the factor of friendship, for he and Anas, who went on the first journey before him, and Abdullah, and Saleh who joined him, and others, were close friends in the neighborhood, the mosque and the group, and hence they encouraged each other to travel and to join the Syrian armed groups.

Added to the preceding is another factor, represented in the opinion of some of the friends of Jihad, concerning the presence of members of the Salafi Jihadist current in Nazzal Quarter who surreptitiously played the role of facilitator and organizer of the process of the travel of Jihad and his friends, and perhaps persuading them to join Al-Nusra specifically, which in the beginnings had still not declared allegiance to Al-Qaeda, and possesses a substantial capacity to mobilize, recruit and train, as well as military capabilities and experience not possessed by most of the other Syrian groups, particularly prior to the middle of 2013, and the emergence of ISIS.

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1 Interview with (M.G.), op.cit.

Prior to departing for Syria the picture for him was not completely clear, for he was mentally confused and went to Syria expecting for there to be a new project, a part of which he wants to become, and he believed that the departure of Asad is a matter of several years, and that he would collaborate with others on building Syria. He was extremely optimistic, or so he was led to be, and instead of standing in front of the Syrian Embassy, without the ability to expel the ambassador, he could in Syria kill the soldiers of Bashar and defend the Muslims.

Jihad continued to mull the idea of departing for Syria, for many months, and it would appear that the departure of his friends before him (Abdullah and Anas), and their role in urging others from the sons of the neighborhood and their friends in the Muslim Brotherhood, affected Jihad, while reinforcing his belief in the necessity of going there, which is what materialized in mid-2013, after he went to Saudi Arabia to perform the 'Umra pilgrimage, and upon returning, he was consumed with the idea of migrating and fighting in Syria.

Prior to departing he promised a friend of his who opposed his travel, that he was joining Al-Nusra, and would not become involved in military activity, and would remain active at the level of the media, and this Jihad did not abide by.<sup>1</sup>

Prior to embracing the ideology of Al-Nusra in Amman he was open to dialogue, discussions and he attended lectures and was exposed to other views, to an extent of- as we mentioned before- joining for a period of time the Jordanian Democratic Popular

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1 Ibid.

Unity Party, but after he departed for Syria and joined Al-Nusra his positions and ideas towards others changed, which began to be clearly manifested in his social media pages. In one instance he wrote in the course of confrontations between Al-Nusra and Communists that it would be necessary to exterminate the infidel communists, and this shocked his friends, with who he formed relations during the popular movement demanding political reform in Jordan.

His friends mention that his ideas changed while being with Al-Nusra, where he became more stringent in his position towards those that disagree, and in his views as relates to the establishment of an Islamic state, and he rejected democracy. He had intended to marry in Syria prior to being killed on 20/10/2014.

## **2- Anas: Product of the Ikhwani “Jihadist Education”**

Anas was born in Amman, Nazzal Quarter in 1993 from a middle class family that is religiously committed and conservative. His father has a diploma in civil engineering, but worked as an accountant in a bakery owned by his in-laws. The maternal uncles of Anas are religious, but are divided between the Salafi current and the Muslim Brotherhood. His mother is not a university graduate and is a housewife, and Anas is the eldest between his brothers, and has one brother and there sisters.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Interview with his father and maternal uncle on 7/8/2016.

Ever since his early years he kept prayer and was religious, and since an early phase he assiduously prayed in the mosque, and there he was influenced by the circles held by members of the Muslim Brotherhood for the children, and his friends and those close to him became of the same group, like Jihad and Abdullah. He partied in the usual activities of the group, which perennially talked about the Palestine issue and jihad in Islam, whereby he was heavily influenced by this matter, perhaps consumed by it, particularly given that at a very young age he listened to tapes of the Kuwaiti preacher Tariq Sweidan, who talked about the Prophet's battles, which were brought to him by his maternal uncle because his parents were concerned that he was of excessive fear since the age of 3 years, and hence his uncle tried to develop his strength and courage by bringing those tapes, which spoke of character building and the battles in great detail, and they captured the imagination of the small child since an early phase.<sup>1</sup>

The main transformative point (watershed) in his life, as his father noted, which enhanced his interest in religious activities and political circumstances was in the year 2007: the war on Gaza, when he was around 14 years of age, whereby he intensively interacted with the events, and was emotionally affected by the images and news from Gaza, which reinforced in his fertile imagination the themes of jihad and its stories.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

Among the books that influenced him early on and magnified the importance of the subject of jihad in his mind was the book "Mashare` Al-Ashwaq Ila Masaer` Al-'Ushaq Wa Muthir Al-Gharam ILa Dar Al-Islam" by Ibn Al-Nahhas, which was edited by one of the professors of Islamic Law who is a notable member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Dr. Salah Khalidi, which is a book that discusses jihad in Islam and its importance and virtues. The book had a great influence on the personality and ideas of Anas.

In the opinion of his uncle "the child was charged early in his life in the topic of jihad, and acquired a passion for it, through Ikhwani mobilization for the Palestine issue and the subject of Hamas, but he practically unloaded the charge in Syria, after the outbreak of the Syrian revolution."<sup>1</sup>

We have then founding a structural element in the personality of the young man, for he is from a religious family, his upbringing was religious, and has a fertile imagination resulting from reading and Ikhwani mobilization in the field of jihad specifically, and as relates to the Palestine issue, as a result of the huge emotional charge in favor of Hamas, at the hands of the youth of the Muslim Brotherhood and their supporters, which are ideas that found a strong echo and positive response in the personality of Anas.

As to the second element of influence, it was in the events of the Syrian revolution, in March 2011, when he was 18 years of age, for it is clear from following the video clips of his activities in Amman, while reciting poetry, and based on the testimonies of his friends, that he was emotionally responsive to what was

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1 A special interview with his maternal uncle, Ibid.

happening there to the greatest extent, to a point where- as his father mentions- he simulated the scene of the defecting Syrian soldiers of the Syrian army, where he would raise his ID and declare his defection like them.<sup>1</sup>

The Syrian events commenced while being on the threshold of university, and he was greatly influenced by them, and he composed poetry in the rap genre in which spoke of the Syrian revolution and criticized Bashar Asad, and he came to seriously think of going there to move from theoretical mobilization on the subject of jihad to practical implementation, for in one of the poems recorded on YouTube under the titled "I do not say bombastic words": speaking of Bashar Asad, Hamzah Al-Khatib and the scenes of killing in Syria, while crying during the recital of the poem, which he composed, while saying "shame on us for remaining actionless, while Bashar continues to laugh in conferences."<sup>2</sup>

He participated in the movement to a very limited extent in 2011, and it appears that he was not convinced- as one of his friends mentions- of the feasibility of political reform in Jordan, nor in calls for changing the electoral law, for he was more interested in the Syrian arena, and in the fighting ongoing there, which was what dominated his discussion with his friends in the group and outside it, particularly within the Muslim Brotherhood.

A number of his friends mention that he is of a sharper character than his other friends, in discussions and dialogues, and inclines

1 A special interview with his father, op.cit.

2 See: Poem by Anas about Syria "A Poem: I Do Not Say Bombastic Words." [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), 13 Mar. 2012, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzn\\_5Dhcr14](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzn_5Dhcr14).

to strict ideas in handling the subject of intellectual differences, and would feel a sense of distress at the religious disobediences occurring in society, such as viewing women in immodest attire, and empty beer bottles nearby the bakery where he worked, where he was intrepid in his religiosity and positions, and was closer even within the Ikhwan to the trend influenced by the ideas of Sayyed Qutb, than the other currents, even though he did not read a lot, and was uninterested in studying, and in school he was not an excellent student.<sup>1</sup>

He travelled with his family in 2011 to perform the 'Umra, and in the following year he travelled with others, and there he met his friend Abdullah and they agreed, as his father supposed, to go to Syria and partake in fighting.<sup>2</sup>

He enrolled in the World Islamic Science & Education University, in the year 2012, majoring in Islamic Law, and when his father wanted after his travel to return him to university, he was surprised that all his grades were "fail", because he did not study that year, and in fact used money that his father gave him to pay the tuition fees for financing his trip to Turkey, and then to Syria.<sup>3</sup>

His friends and family concur that he was not interested in studying and reading, and that he was a vigorous personality, endowed with great energy and intense emotions, for he is generally an emotional person.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Interview with his friend Anas, on 20/6/2017 in Amman.

2 Interview with his father, op.cit.

3 Special interview with his father, op.cit.

4 This is the opinion of his maternal uncle, his father and two friends of his. Those sources were previously cited.

He was influenced by the sermon of the Saudi Sheikh Mohammad Al-'Ureifi, and the sermons of the Jordanian Sheikh Abu Qutaybah, who stresses jihad themes in his sermons, and he is personally barred from delivering sermons. This charged atmosphere, as a result of what is happening in Syrian and scenes of killing and destruction, coupled with his upbringing which inflamed his imagination regarding jihad, played the greater role in spurring his first trip to Syria.<sup>1</sup>

Through repeated questions to persons in Nazzal Quarter, who are informed of matters in Syria, and with experience with the revolutionary groups there he began to seek a path to go to Syria, and one of those was a Syrian whose family has resided in Amman since decades ago, who moved to Syria at the start of the revolution, and Anas began to communicate with him, and subsequently he decided to go there.

Anas departed on 12/9/2012 from Queen Alia International Airport for Turkey, and from Istanbul Airport he went to a local airport that is nearby Antakya. His father is surprised how he made this voyage, while being 19 years old, and does not have a word of English, and how he was able to handle the taxi drivers and others without knowing their language.<sup>2</sup>

He arrived in Antakya and there began to look for his Syrian friend to communicate with him, until he found him after a number of days. He insisted for him to move him to Syria to join one of the groups, and his friend was trying to persuade him to return, but Anas was insistent to a point of almost strangling

1 An interview with his friend Anas, op.cit.

2 Special interview with his father, op.cit.

his friend. The latter agreed, and he took him to Syria, and there Anas stayed around 10 days with a group, and he was not comfortable because they were not fully committed to Islam, and during that period his communication with his family was continual, as were the attempts to persuade him, until he agreed to return to Amman.

He returned to Amman, after traversing a long distance on foot between the Turkish and Syrian borders, until he reached Antakya, and there he undertook the first and last return voyage. He was not detained in Jordan for a long period, only several days after which he was released. However, during this period he remained attached to the idea of going there and was insistent. He worked in the bakery with his father for a period of time, and even though his parents concealed his passport and tried by all means to persuade him not to go, they ultimately failed, for he was very insistent, while seeking the opportunity to return. It appears that he was in communication with Abdullah, who had joined during that period Al-Nusra, and he promised to arrange matters, and facilitate the process of his joining Al-Nusra, and so Anas returned there after spending 10 months in Amman.

Notwithstanding the intensive attempts of his family to convince him of the senselessness of going and partaking in fighting, his maternal uncle of Salafi orientation, endowed with broad religious knowledge, continually debated with him and tried to convince him not to go, but it is clear that the stubborn character of Anas and his high emotions towards Syria, and his friends

who travelled there, after (Jihad Ghobn) followed them there- all of these factors became more powerful than the attempts of his family and uncle.<sup>1</sup>

Anas travelled for the second time to Syria, and it appears to be in the middle of 2013, and one of his friends says that it was otherwise, for he crossed the Jordanian-Syria border southward to Dera on foot, and then moved from there to the Ibdib countryside, and met his friend Abdullah, and merged with Al-Nusra, and began to partake intensively in the confrontations, and there his rank rose after the killing of his friends, Jihad and Abdullah, where he became more courageous, and was nicknamed the nightingale of Al-Nusra, because he urged others to fight, and has poems on YouTube, and he incited against Asad and his military leaderships and encouraged the elements of Al-Nusra, and was killed in the Battle of Sahl Al-Ghab on 27/7/2015, and was with the group of integrationists, in that battle. One of his friends says that he told him that he wants to go to heaven to meet the friends who preceded him.<sup>2</sup>

His family remarked the change of his ideas during the second trip based on the communications which took place between him and them, where he became a believer in the jihadist ideology, and had a negative stance towards the Muslim Brotherhood, which is a position that was evinced in his last testament, in which

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1 Interviews with his maternal uncle and father, which are sources previously cited.

2 See an enthusiastic poem for Al-Nusra fighters, on the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2T8rNPJznmw>; also see a poem that he recited, while placing behind him Al-Nusra flag prior being killed by months, under the title "We entered by the sword" meaning the city of Idlib, on the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2T8rNPJznmw>

he criticized the dereliction of the Ikhwan in performing jihad, and they also observed that he became in communication with the sheikhs of the current in Jordan, such as Abu Mohammad Al-Maqdisi, Iyad Al-Quneibi, Abu Qutadah Al-Filistini, and in Syria he was influenced by Dr. Abdullah Al-Mheisni of Al-Nusra Front.

He was killed in a battle with the forces of the Syrian regime in Idlib in July 2015.

### **3- Abdullah: His personality was immersed in the idea of jihad**

Born on 27 April 1991, he was a student seeking an engineering diploma at the Balqa Applied University, and was a resident of Nazzal Quarter, from a family belonging to the middle class, and his father is close to the line of the Muslim Brotherhood, and his mother (Madaniyyah Al-Ashqar), is the daughter of one of the notable religious scholars in the Arab World, Dr. Umar Al-Ashqar, who was one of the leading jurists of the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>1</sup>

His sister Fatima worked in the teaching profession,<sup>2</sup> and his mother is a trainer in the field of nutrition and weight loss, and he has another brother.<sup>3</sup> Abdullah since childhood was brought up within circles in the mosque, particular Al-Salihin Mosque, in which he was active, and he used to teach the Quran, and

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1 See the Facebook page of his mother: <https://www.facebook.com/ooom.abdallah>

2 <https://www.facebook.com/fatima.abuhalimeh>

3 [https://www.facebook.com/yahya.najeh.180?fref=pb&hc\\_location=friends\\_tab](https://www.facebook.com/yahya.najeh.180?fref=pb&hc_location=friends_tab)

partake in various activities, and he belonged at an early stage to the Muslim Brotherhood, for he is an Ikhwani product, almost, since childhood until the university stage.

One of his friends says "I was introduced to him in university, in 2010, when he was a student, and at the time he was an active member of the Islamic trend, at university, and a close friendship was forged between them, due to our mutual admiration of Al-Qaeda, and the personality of Usama Bin Laden, and in the concept of jihad, and what the Hamas movement is doing in Palestine in terms of fighting the Jews."<sup>1</sup>

His friend added that they were characterized by their friends in the Muslim Brotherhood, from among friends, to humor them, as the jihadist current in the Muslim Brotherhood, which is a characterization that reflects the intellectual orientation and interests of Abdullah.

His friends indicate that notwithstanding his participation with the Ikhwan in the activities of the student union and his abidance by what he is asked to do, his greater interest and his abiding activity is in mosque activity, that is activities inside the mosques known to the Ikhwan, in terms of teaching the Quran, and other activities, such as trips, spiritual education, ethics, and hence he is closer to those aspects than political and partisan activities, which were not within his interests and priorities, as stated by his close friends, excepting his interest in the Palestine issue and the theme of jihad, and the conditions of Arab and

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1 An interview with his friend who refused to be identified in the book, and his colleague in university, on 20/7/2017, in Amman.

Muslim societies in general.<sup>1</sup>

Abdullah was a friend of Anas and Jihad, and of a group of the youth of the Muslim Brotherhood in Nazzal Quarter, and like them he was greatly influenced by what was happening in the “Arab Spring”, particularly in Syria, and what the television screens showed in terms of massacres and killing, and the cleavages within the Syrian Army, which reinforced his jihadist sentiments, and produced in him a desire to fight in Syria, with mutual encouragement between him and his other friends, Jihad and Anas.

One of his friends mentions that he spoke early on of travelling to Syria, and he shared those ideas and feelings, in particular, with his friends from the Ikhwan in Nazzal Quarter, and with Anas, until he and Anas decided to travel individually there, which is what actually materialized in the latter months of the year 2012, after he announced in his social media page that he is going to perform the ‘Umra pilgrimage, and it would appear that he subsequently went to Syria.<sup>2</sup>

In the beginning, Abdullah joined the Iman battalions, in the Hama countryside, which are battalions close to the Ikhwan, and he remained with them for a few months, until reaching the belief that the dearth of resources and military experience limits the strength and impact of the battalions, and so after a short while he moved to Al-Nusra Front and joined it, as did Anas, Jihad and Ishaq, and other Jordanians, in the Idlib countryside.

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1 Ibid

2 Ibid

The important question is whether the relocation to Syria, and particularly enlisting with Al-Nusra, can be considered a watershed in the path of Abdullah and his movement from one intellectual tendency to another, or is there a continuous and gradual trajectory, starting with the Ikhwan and his jihadist inclination, and culminating with Al-Nusra, without there being a big jump from one intellectual orientation to another?

This is an important question in the case of Abdullah, in view of the fact that his friends say that despite his joining the Ikhwan since childhood, and his adherence to the peaceful line of the group in Jordan, and its political positions, he actually did not conceal his jihadist inclinations, whether in Palestine previously or in supporting the Syrian revolution subsequently, and even an admiration of leaders in Al-Qaeda, and this we may observe even on his Facebook page.

By returning to the Facebook page of Abdullah, from the year 2012 until 2014, we observe that there is a clear line in his writings, beginning with a clear commitment to the Ikhwan and its ideas and activities, until the middle of 2013, whereby he spoke of the Group as the seed planted by Al-Banna, the founder of the Ikhwan in Egypt, whose fruits Mohammad Mursi, the deposed Egyptian president, reaped.<sup>1</sup>

We also find him praising Usama Bin Laden and the Chechen commander, Samer Sweilem, nicknamed Khattab, to a point where the picture of Khattab is on the Facebook personal profile page, where it is clear that he admired his personality

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100000960188198> (subsequently we found that his Facebook page was deleted either due to content or oldness or death).

in particular, and his position in this regard may be observed since the year 2012, that is prior to his trip to Syria and joining initially the Iman battalions in the Hama countryside, which is close to the Ikhwan, and thence his movement to Al-Nusra Front, which reinforces the idea abovementioned that since becoming a member of the Muslim Brotherhood he was inclined to jihadist ideas and was affected by them, and then came the events of the Arab Spring, and Syria in particular, which unlocked these repressed feelings and nurtured them considerably, and this becomes clear from the extent of the interest in what is happening in Syria on his page, where we find him continuously speaking of the massacres and the news of the Syrian revolution, and the military aspects, beginning with the defections and culminating with the operations, and he alluded to the sermons of the Saudi sheikh, Mohammad Al-Oreifi, who was among the leading advocates of fighting in Syria.<sup>1</sup>

On his page early in the year 2012, he commended the detained Saudi preacher Khaled Al-Rashed, known for being close to the Salafi jihadist current, and one of the leaders of Al-Qaeda in Yemen, Fahed Al-Qasa`, who was killed in American bombardment, and spoke of the manliness of Usama Bin Laden, while placing a picture of Abu Qutadah Al-Filistini, whom Britain handed over (extradited) to Jordan, saying to him "we are proud of your presence among us", and Abu Qutadah is known as among the theoreticians of the Salafi Jihadism who is close to Al-Qaeda, and he placed a picture of a Kalashnikov and says that it is the "wish of his life". In parallel he participated in

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1 Ibid.

the activities of the Ikhwan in terms of marches in support of Al-Aqsa, and spoke with pride of Mohammad Mursi, the former president of Egypt, and placed the emblem of the Ikhwan on his page as an expression of pride in the Group.<sup>1</sup>

It is stated that his personality combined those inclinations, for he is organizationally of the Ikhwan, and is emotionally and intellectually influenced by the ideas of jihad, particularly in Palestine, and thence Syria, while being sympathetic to Al-Qaeda and Usama Bin Laden, and its other leaders, where it may be said that he had a foot with the Ikhwan and another with the jihadist currents in general, and Al-Qaeda in particular.

The post which represents a landmark on his Facebook page, rather than a transformative point- because as we said he did not harbor hostile ideas towards Al-Qaeda, but was sympathetic to it, but he had not decisively decided to join it- is when he declared that the Nusra Front is the Islamic solution in Syria, and it appears that he had decided to join Al-Nusra, and on 20 December 2013 he placed the flag of Al-Nusra on his page, and in his comments with his friends he defended it by saying "whatever the mistakes, they are better than those who sit at home and preach to the mujahidin that they did so and so.... And some even resist the path of God, and say that the matter is a cause of disorder and the organization does not exist; while they only need financial resources and arms, while being at a point where we hear some sheikhs giving lessons to persuade the youth not to partake in jihad in Syria."<sup>2</sup>

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1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

In the abovementioned comment of Abdullah is an implicit criticism of the Muslim Brotherhood, particularly in Nazzal Quarter, where they began to feel concern at Abdullah, Anas and Jihad incentivizing many of their Ikhwan friends to join them in Syria, and to enlist with Al-Nusra Front, where the leadership of the Ikhwan was alerted to the necessity of trying to prevent the seepage of other members, under the influence of those young men, as their friends from among the Ikhwan mentioned.<sup>1</sup>

The viewpoint of Abdullah, as one of his friends reports, is for them to partake in the Syrian revolution project, which would lead to the removal of Bashar Asad, and in parallel this would be military preparation for them, as a new generation, for the sake of the mission to which he aspired namely, the liberation of Palestine. These ideas perhaps remind us of what happened during the Afghani jihad in the stage of the eighties, when Dr. Abdullah Azzam, one of the Ikhwan leaders in Jordan, who then worked in Saudi Arabia, led the promotional campaigns encouraging the participation of Arab youth in the Afghan war, against the government allied with the Soviet Union at the time. At the time, Azzam argued that going to Afghanistan, rather than Palestine, is a stage of military preparation and training for Islamist youth, as a prelude to liberating Palestine, so long as the geographical borders are closed in the face of the awaited mission.

In explaining his presence in Al-Nusra Front, Abdullah used to tell his friends in Jordan Al-Nusra is the best of available options, given its possession of combat experience and capabilities

1 Interview with a friend of Abdullah, a previously cited source.

unavailable to other Islamic groups, such as Al-Iman battalion close to the Ikhwan, which he joined in the beginning, and that Al-Nusra despite its mistakes implements great tasks, and he was of the view that the rising numbers of moderates in the ranks of this movement will lead to a diminution of the intensity of the extremism, and will protect the Syrian revolution from descending to that level.

This position, which Abdullah and his friends Jihad and Anas adopted, to justify their joining Al-Nusra, did not lead to a change in the path of the movement, nor in an increase in the level of moderation in it, but it spurred a change in the ideas and positions of the Ikhwani group in it, and while Abdullah maintained the link to Al-Ikhwan, and did not reach the stage of overt criticism or to a transformed position towards the mother movement, the situation was different for Jihad and Anas, who began to evince the impact of the thought of Al-Nusra, in their private chats with their former friends from Al-Ikhwan in Jordan, who observed that they - i.e. Anas and Jihad-, contrary to Abdullah, became more influenced by the ideas of Al-Nusra and more clearly critical of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Abdullah became a military commander, and a trainer in Al-Nusra, and he nicknamed himself Abu Muhannad Al-Filistini, and he was killed in October 2014, days after the killing of his friend Jihad.<sup>1</sup>

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1 See: "The Killing of One of the Commanders and Trainers of Al-Nusra and Differences at Jabal Al-Zawiya." [Http://Breakingnews.sy](http://Breakingnews.sy), 26 Oct. 2014, [breakingnews.sy/ar/article/47901](http://Breakingnews.sy/ar/article/47901).

#### 4- Conclusions

Broadly speaking, the case of Saleh, based on the facts available to us, does not fall outside of the general features of the previous models. He is a university student from the Ikhwan, who was known for his satirical tendency, studied engineering, a resident of Nazzal Quarter, and was born in the year 1995.<sup>1</sup>

If we revert to the previous cases, we would find that there are numerous shared features between them which we previously referred to in the introduction and in the chapter, including that they belong to the Muslim Brotherhood. They were also known for their inclination to jihadist ideas, with which they were raised through support for the Hamas movement in Palestine, but which were practically actualized in the Syrian scene. Moreover, there is another shared feature, namely that they are mostly youth born in the first half of the decade of the nineties (1990-1995), that is that they are either before or in the beginnings of the twenties, in a stage in which emotions have primacy over rational calculation. When they travelled to perform jihad they were not married, are of lower socioeconomic status, are university students, and all their families are religious and conservative.

Based on the previous testimonies, we also observed that there are impactful and major factors which contributed to catapulting the young men to the folds of Al-Nusra, including what happened in Syria itself in terms of scenes of killing and destruction. They also shared an intense interaction with events there, which interacted with their jihadist impulse and the upbringing that is linked to the jihadist imagination.

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1 Interview with a friend of all of them (A.F.) dated 12/7/2017.

However, the other factor which we found significant in these cases, is concerned with the role of the Ikhwani education, particularly in some of the branches of the Ikhwan considered to belong to the current of the hawks in the Group, which is characterized by intense empathy with Hamas. Such branches would be based in the Nazzal Quarter, where there is a high threshold of jihadist enthusiastic ideas, and the songs that urge to jihad. Even if they focus on supporting the Izzeddine Al-Qassam battalions, the military wing of Hamas, they concurrently bear numerous religious meanings concerning the importance of jihad, martyrdom in Islam, and the virtues of such, which are ideas that substantially contributed to the upbringing of both Anas and Abdullah, as we observed. Perhaps the same ideas and values impacted other numbers of Ikhwan youths who, even if they shared those opinions, perhaps were reticent due to psychological, social or intellectual reasons particular to them, but they as some mentioned were very reluctant to join their friends, despite calls for them to go to Syria and partake in fighting there.<sup>1</sup>

Their friends mention that the position of the Muslim Brotherhood was in the beginning fluid and unclear, and in fact the travel of those youths initially was welcomed by Ikhwani circles, given that they are going to fight in defense of the Syrian people. However, in a subsequent stage the general position began to alter, when those travelling were trying to influence the others, particularly their friends in Nazzal Quarter, to join them in Syria, which caused the Group to feel concerned, and attempted to

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1 Ibid.

enlist the help of persons that oppose the idea of travelling to lecture the Ikhwan youths.

From another angle, it became clear to the Ikhwan in Amman that the young men who were travelling shifted to Al-Nusra Front, stirred apprehension and concern about their intellectual and ideological transformation, due to differences at this level between Al-Nusra Front and the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>1</sup>

There was no real opposition from the Ikhwan towards the youths that went, but it endeavored to prevent others from joining them, for fear of shifting to Al-Nusra Front, but the youth who went before did not find a substantial intellectual or psychological barrier in shifting to Al-Nusra Front. Indeed, one of their friends from the Ikhwan is of the view that “the Brothers faced a real problem in arguing with those that call for participation there, given that the hawks of the Ikhwan were arguing in favor of the necessity of jihad in confronting the unjust rulers, and the Ikhwan supported the Syrian revolution, and there is a war between the opposition and the Syrian regime, which previously persecuted the Ikhwan, and in such case jihad is obligatory for those who can perform it, according to those religious and political opinions in circulation within the Ikhwan; then what could prevent the youth of the Ikhwan from moving to participate in the armed revolution against the Syrian regime?”<sup>2</sup>

Synoptically speaking, despite the limited number of those that left the Muslim Brotherhood and joined the fight in Syria alongside Al-Nusra Front, this opens a door for future questions,

1 Ibid, and also an interview with M.G. previously cited.

2 One of their friends, who knew Jihad, Anas and Abdullah, interviewed on 20/8/2017.

concerning young adherents to the Muslim Brotherhood and their immunity from being culturally, intellectually and psychologically coaxed into joining extremist religious groups and ideologies, compared to what is affirmed by the Brotherhood.

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### **From “Qutubism” to “Jihadism”**

Riyadh Hadeeb was killed in Syria at the outset of 2013, and was one of the legitimate prominent religious leaders of Al-Nusra, that is among those specialized in religious sciences, after spending one year there, and before that he fought in Iraq in 2005, and then returned to Jordan. His brother Adel (a veterinary doctor) was killed in the wake of the American invasion in 2003, while fighting on the side of the Iraqi resistance in the notorious airport battle between the resistance and the American forces at the time of the invasion.<sup>1</sup>

The model of Riyadh Hadeeb is more complex than the other models, for originally he is from the Ikhwan, since being a student in the university, with his acquaintances and friends from the Ikhwan state, and he was influenced, to a great extent, by the ideas of Sayyed Qutb. He studied for a bachelor’s degree at the Faculty of Islamic Law in the University of Jordan, completed a master’s degree and departed for Syria, at the start of 2012

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1 See some of the press and media reports on Riyadh Hadeeb: “Al-Tahawi Declares the Martyrdom of the Religious Jurist of Al-Nusra Front.” [Http://www.ammonnews.net](http://www.ammonnews.net), Ammon News, 15 Jan. 2013, [www.ammonnews.net/article/142238](http://www.ammonnews.net/article/142238) And also, Raed Rumman, the martyrdom of a Jordanian mosque imam as a result of air strikes in Syria, Assabeel Newspaper, 15/1/2013; and Also see: the family of Dr. Hadeeb confirms his martyrdom in Syria and receives condolers today - “A Speech by Doctor Salah for the Martyr Riad Hadeeb.” [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AemumQMqjq8&t=3s), 18 Jan. 2013, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=AemumQMqjq8&t=3s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AemumQMqjq8&t=3s)

to join Al-Nusra Front. He was in his last semester of doctoral studies, with a specialization in Prophetic Hadith.<sup>1</sup>

He is married and has six children, with his wife working as a teacher in a private Islamic school, and is also a graduate student. He was born in 1975 to a middle class, and is a resident of Al-Muhajirin Quarter near in Jebel Amman. He was also a teacher in private schools of an Islamic character.<sup>2</sup>

There are not many details about the childhood of Riyadh Hadeeb, but what is known is that he was religious from a young age, and studied at the University of Jordan (between the years 1993-1997), doing a bachelor's of Islamic Law, and worked as an imam and teacher in a mosque in Al-Jubeiha area, and he completed his master's studies, and was during this period connected to the Ikhwan, and an active participant in its activities, and was affiliated to its intellectual school to a great extent, as one of his acquaintances who is an Islamic Action Front member of parliament says.

His relationship to the Ikhwan ended officially in 2003, as some of his friends from the Ikhwan say probably happened, prior to departing for Iraq and fighting alongside the resistance there. However, after returning in the year 2005, he maintained good relations and continual communication with his Ikhwani friends.. despite the intellectual differences that started to emerge between them, as one of his colleagues mentions.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Interview with one of his friends and colleagues, who preferred not to be identified, on 9 September 2017.

2 Ibid.

3 Dialogue with a friend of his, who preferred to remain anonymous, ibid.

## Transformative Point and its Causes

A friend of his, who is an Islamic Action Front member of the Jordanian parliament, is of the view that Riyadh belongs to the ideological school of the Muslim Brotherhood, to a great extent. The killing of his younger brother in Iraq in the Airport Battle, however, greatly affected him. They were close to each other, and his brother was also originally close to the Ikhwan.<sup>1</sup>

However, another friend of Riyadh's - also an Ikhwan member, refers to other factors, including the character of Riyadh itself, for he is intrinsically emotional and has a great passion for religion, and was closer to the Sayyed Qutb school. This ideological school of thought is less flexible than the pragmatic school within the Ikhwan, and as a consequence he felt that the Ikhwan make concessions to the state to an unnecessary extent, which attenuates commitment to the principles which they espouse.<sup>2</sup>

It is known that the Ikhwan traditionally distanced themselves from the ideological school of Sayyed Qutb, and started with the passage of time, since the start of the nineties to draw nigh to the pragmatic schools, and to integrate more in the political process, and declared acceptance of democracy and pluralism in the year 2003, and perhaps if we consider those developments in the Ikhwani discourse, they are inconsistent- to a large extent- with what is espoused by the Sayyed Qutb school which Riyadh is closer to as his colleagues state.

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1 Interview with the deputy Ahmad Al-Raqab, member of the House of Deputies for the Islamic Action Front, on 10/9/2017.

2 Dialogue with a friend of his, who preferred anonymity, *ibid.*

Hence, the distance between what he believes in and the pragmatic conduct of the Ikhwan contributed significantly to shaking the relationship of Riyadh with the Ikhwan, and we could add to this the killing of his brother in Iraq, and the sentiments of animosity towards the Americans, which in combination contributed to his gradual shifting from the Ikhwan to the Salafi Jihadism.

Since 2007 Riyadh expressed to his colleagues his desire to return to Iraq, to join the Islamic resistance there of American forces, but his friends convinced him not to go there for multiple reasons, including the state of anarchy and internecine fighting and the differences between the jihadist groups themselves. However, one of them subsequently observed that Riyadh did not speak to them candidly about his wishes, as was heretofore the case, to a point where he did not inform them of the intention to go to Syria prior to there being aware subsequently, notwithstanding continued communication between them by dint of friendship and being work colleagues.<sup>1</sup>

Among the stories which his colleagues mention affected him was the confrontation between Hamas and the Salafi Jihadist current in Gaza, in August 2009, at Ibn Taymiyyah Mosque, where the physician Abdul Latif Mousa (nicknamed Abu Al-Nur), had declared the establishment of an Islamic emirate in Gaza, where the armed clash led to his killing.<sup>2</sup>

The friends of Riyadh Hadeeb recall that he argued angrily with them about the position of Hamas and what they did,

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1 Ibid.

2 See: "Abdel Latif Musa, the Founder of the First Islamic Emirate in Gaza." [Http://Www.islamist-movements.com](http://www.islamist-movements.com), 13 Aug. 2015, [www.islamist-movements.com/30832](http://www.islamist-movements.com/30832)

expressing his dissatisfaction with that, and they felt during those years that the relations of Hadeeb with the Salafi Jihadist current, only at the level of leaderships, such as Abu Mohammad Al-Maqdisi, became stronger and deeper. And it would appear that the evolution of that relationship was concurrent with the enlistment of a new generation into Salafi Jihadism, a proportion of whom are academics and in possession of high academic degrees, with doctoral and master's degree and otherwise. Nevertheless the relationship of Riyadh with Al-Maqdisi and the pivots of the Salafi Jihadism was not known to most of the sons of the current itself, and it appears to have been private and limited. However, after Hadeeb was killed, and his family held what is known as the "martyr's wedding", large numbers of jihadists came to the location, and it was the Salafi Jihadist current itself which announced the killing of Hadeeb, rather than the Muslim Brotherhood, which he had previously left, and it would appear that the "Jihadists" came to view him as closer to them.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless the personality of Riyadh was a mixture between 'Ikhwani' and "Salafi Jihadism" for his friends and school colleagues are close to the Muslim Brotherhood, and he is closer to Sayyed Qutb and his school, but his passion for fighting, under the heading of jihad, as his friend mentioned, and the "Ikhwan" moving away from the school of Sayyed Qutb, and the story of the killing of his brother by the Americans in the airport battle—all those events in his life made him draw nigh to the "Salafiyyah Jihadism", and ending up killed as the leader of Al-Nusra.

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1 Interview with a friend of his, who preferred anonymity, op.cit.

These paradoxes or surrounding facts in the model of Riyadh perhaps reveal that the one who gave a speech at the celebration, held by his relatives to mark his “martyrdom” is one of the former leaders of the Ikhwan, Dr. Salah Khalidi, who is among the foremost subscribers to the ideological school of Sayyed Qutb, and he had written a doctoral dissertation on the latter.<sup>1</sup>

The model of Riyadh Hadeeb synopsis, from another angle, a dialectic to which we previously alluded upon speaking the “Nazzal Qurater” group (of an Ikhwan background), namely the divergences, and in some cases the contradictions, between the Ikhwan upbringing and political reality, or even the political behavior of the Muslim Brotherhood. Thus Riyadh- like those young men- argued that what they learned and studied and what they teach is that jihad is an obligation for Muslims, in case of occupation or the resistance of oppression. And the situation in Syria, as was the case in Iraqi, since the year 2003, according to this vision, necessitates the duty of performing jihad; why then abandon this duty, and attempt to make excuses for being derelict in performing it?<sup>2</sup>

According to his friends, this was the basis of the argumentation between him and them. And perhaps if we return to around three and a half decades previously, we would find that the person who established Arab participation in the Afghani jiahd, was one of the former leaders of the Ikhwan in Jordan, Dr. Abdullah Azzam; a jihad which paved the way subsequently for the establishment

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1 See a video clip for the speech of Al-Khalidi in the “wedding of the martyr”, on the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AemumQMqj8&t=3s>

2 Interview with a friend of his, who preferred anonymity, op.cit.

of Al-Qaeda by Usama Bin Laden in alliance with the Egyptian jihad movement, under the leadership of Ayman Al-Dhawahiri. And if we return to the origins of the Jihad Jama`a, we would find that the ideas of Sayyed Qutb on Divine Sovereignty, negation of idols (i.e. removing legitimacy from un-Islamic governments), and rejection of (middle of the road) solutions, by insisting on establishing an Islamic state, are actually the founding ideas of the Egyptian jihad, and the radical Islamic movement in general, to which Riyadh Hadeeb intellectually belongs, prior to practically subscribe to them in the latter years of his life, through drawing near to Salafi jihadism, and thereafter becoming the leader of Al-Nusra, which emanated from AL-Qaeda.

In conclusion, explaining the model of Riyadh falls within the ideological circle starting from the ideas of Sayyed Qutb, passing by the model of Abdullah Azzam, and the concept of jihad for the Palestinians, in general. This played a substantial role in the contemporary jihadi movement, from Dr. Saleh Sariyyah, in the case of the Technical Military College in Egypt, in the mid-seventies, to Salem Al-Rahhal, to Abdullah Azzam, and Abu Mohammad Al-Maqdisi and Abu Qutadah Al-Filistini, and finally Abu Anas Al-Shami, the spiritual guide of Abu Mus`ab Al-Zarqawi.<sup>1</sup>

In this regard, one of the friends of Riyadh stated that he also was influenced by the model of Abu Anas Al-Shami, whose name is Umar Yousef, the mosque imam in the Sweileh area, and closer to Al-Salafi school, under the influence of Dr. Safr Al-Hawali in Saudi Arabia, where he lived and studied, but he- i.e. Abu

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1 Ibid

Anas moved in the later years, in the wake of the occupation of Iraq and the events of 11 September from the Salafi movement to Salafi Jihadism, whereby he became close to Al-Maqdisi, and a critic of Al-Hawali, who was critical of Al-Qaeda for the 11 September attacks, while Abu Anas was supportive, and then he suddenly moved to Iraq, and joined Al-Zarqawi and became his religious adviser, prior to being killed in Iraq in 2004.

Riyadh Hadeeb, even though he was a Muslim Brother rather than a Salafist like Abu Anas Al-Shami, he passed through similar stages, by becoming critical of the Ikhwan movement frame of reference, and moving to the Salafi jihadist doctrinal and jurisprudential frame of reference, in recent years, and perhaps accordingly we find that he was influenced by the personality of Abu Anas Al-Shami who fought in Iraq and was killed there, as did Riyadh who fought in Iraq and was killed in Syria, around ten years after the killing of Al-Shami in Iraq.

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### **Abdel Rahman: Gradual Movement from Al-Tabligh to ISIS**

In the evening of Saturday 30 June 2016 a number of leaders of the Free Army were killed, in one of the houses in Ankhal town (in the western Reef of Dera), and among the dead was Qassem Mohammad Al-Samir, the commander of the military council in Ankhal. Others killed in the operation were commander of the brigade of the Mujahids of Houran, and a woman and small child, who were in the house at the moment of the explosion.<sup>1</sup>

Elements belonging to the army of Khaled Bin Al-Waleed<sup>2</sup> claimed responsibility for the operation, and declared that the perpetrator is “Abu Hamzeh Al-Muhajer” the Jordan, but without a clarification or disclosure of his real name, except that the perpetrator is a Jordanian whom it described as “one of the lions of Tafileh”.

The Arab and Jordanian media reported the news without searching for the name of the committer of the operation, and there was no announcement (as sometimes happens) by his relatives in the social media about opening a “house for the wedding of the martyr”, but the picture posted in the ISIS pages of the operation perpetrator led us to identify him through the social media, through one of the main profiles, where it became

1 “Two Suicide Bombers from the Army of Khaled Ibn Al-Walid Kill Six from the Commanders of the Southern Front in Dera.” <https://Eldorar.com/>, 3 July 2016, [eldorar.com/node/100082](https://Eldorar.com/node/100082)

2 One of the groups loyal to ISIS in the Dera Governorate, and formed of various groups, most prominently the Martyrs of Yarmouk, and controlled a set of villages in the Yarmouk basin in the western Dera countryside after pledging allegiance to ISIS.

evident that it is for his eldest brother, and then to his webpage, which by browsing we were able to reach a number of his close friends.

### **First Stage: Removed from Religiousness**

The perpetrator of the operation is Abdel Rahman, born on 11-7-1990, in the city of Al-Ihsaa in the Tafileh Governorate. His father worked at the Phosphate Company, and had a secondary school education and was with Jama`at Al-Da`wa W`al Tabligh, with whom he travelled to India and Pakistan. Abdel Rahman's mother did not receive an education, although his brother Nael states that they were cultured.<sup>1</sup>

Abdel Rahman has six male brothers and one sister, being the second youngest. He lived in Al-Ihsa area with his family, near to the work location of his father, and he studied in the private Al-Aqsa School, which has an Islamic character, and then he completed his education in Ihsa Secondary School for Boys. His elder brother Nael speaks about the childhood of Abdurrahman, linking it to the nature of the environment in Al-Hasa area, where there is housing for the employees of the Phosphate Company from different regions, akin to Zarqa; and hence the adolescents strive to prove their manhood and strength, and thus Nael behaved and was imitated by his small brother (Abdel Rahman) who were forced to get into brawls with others.<sup>2</sup>

Nael adds "Abdel Rahman was young and calm, and then became a troublemaker, and he had inclinations of deviation like

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1 Special interview with his brother on 15/7/2017.

2 Ibid.

other youths, and when I entered university I became more cautious for my brothers and feared their loss, and I became committed to go to nearby areas with Jama`at Al-Tabligh. However, my political inclinations were closer to the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Islamic coalition in the university, even though I was not officially a member of the group.”<sup>1</sup>

After Abdel Rahman completed his secondary school education in Al-Hasa in 2008, he moved to Zarqa city, to study in the Islamic Rufaydah College, as a medical laboratories technician, where in the first year he was not religiously committed, as his roommate Layth mentioned, who was a fellow student in the same faculty, and with him they shared lodging with a number of students.<sup>2</sup>

### **From Jama`at Al-Tabligh to Al-Ikhwan**

His colleague says “we in the beginning were in the stage of aimless youthfulness, getting to know girls and would spend prolonged periods of time on smart phones. This state of affairs continued until the end of the first year of college, and there was a holiday for about a month and a half, during which Abdel Rahman returned to his hamlet Al-Hasa in Al-Tafileh, and then he returned a changed person, completely transformed from how we knew him in a previous stage.”

His colleague describes these transformations by saying “he was fully committed to performing prayer at the faculty prayer hall, and wore the Arab garment and held a Miswak, while always wearing a cap, and fully religiously committed, and was even

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1 Ibid.

2 Interview with Layth by telephone on 8/7/2017.

reticent in joking around with us, but even so he maintained his relations with us.”<sup>1</sup>

His brother Nael explained the transformation of Abdel Rahman as expected and normal, as occurred with him when he entered university, and the reason, according to his brother’s analysis could be the religious and missionary background of their father, which influenced the members of the family, even if in an indirect manner.<sup>2</sup>

The religiosity of Abdel Rahman was not political, initially, but was rather closer to Jama`at Al-Tabligh whose ideas his father believed in, and which is based on being total distant from the political domain, and focusing on spiritual, religious and ethical issues, and calling on people to perform religious rituals, and Nael, who was immersed in his work during that period, finds it plausible that Abdel Rahman toured some areas with Jama`at Al-Tabligh to preach.

What is important is that a “transformative moment” occurred in the summer of 2009, during his presence in Al-Ihsaa, which impacted the direction of Abdel Rahman and which transformed him from a person who is not religiously committed to the complete opposite, and from a person interested in girls, smart phones and making fun to a person who performs prayer, wears Islamic attire (according to his belief) and performs prayers at the faculty, while founding his relations with others in accordance with his new personality.

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1 Ibid.

2 Interview with his brother; op.cit.

The attire of Abdel Rahman created problems between him and the faculty dean, who asked him to wear ordinary clothes in the faculty, but he refused to do so, which brought about a situation where warnings were addressed to him, and his friend Layth said “when I used to tell him to avoid clashing with the dean he would reply, obeying my Lord and my Religion is of paramount importance.”<sup>1</sup>

During his tenure of study Abd Al-Rahman was trying to secure rent for housing and daily expenses, so as not to burden his family financially.

Abdel Rahman graduated in August 2010, and then returned to work in Al-Tafileh, at Al-Eiss Health Center, and there his relations with some of the university students became bolstered, known to be in favor of the Ikhwan, through the influence of his roommate there, Abdullah. Actually, the process of integrating Abdul Rahman in the activities of the Ikhwan there began, and during that period he was introduced to Abdel Rahman, who was studying in the University of Tafileh, through their common friend Abdullah, and his friend Abdel Rahman was also an active member of the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, the ferment of the “Arab Spring” began, and his brother Nael was appointed in the Ministry of Education, as a sports instructor, while Abdel Rahman was working at a health center in Al-Tafileh, and both brother partook in the youth movement, which demanded political and democratic reform, and which raised slogans condemning political and economic

1 Interview with Layth, op.cit.

2 Interview with his friend Abdel Rahman on 12/7/2017.

corruption, and demanding to hold corrupt persons to account.

Nael recollects how he participated with Abdel Rahman in numerous activities, and despite the appearance of a movement in Al-Tafayleh quarter in Amman, which was of a greater intensity among the existing movements, in terms of slogans and demands, the two brothers (Nael and Abdel Rahman) were committed to the Islamic movement, closer to the Muslim Brotherhood, during that period, and participated in around 20 events, demonstrations and sit-ins, most of which took place in Amman, in Jebel Al-Hussein and Jebel Al-Qussour, and attended numerous lectures and seminars linked to the demands for change, for opposition figures with higher demands such as Layth Shbeilat and Riyadh Al-Nawayseh.<sup>1</sup>

Drawing nearer to the Muslim Brotherhood and partaking in the youth movement demanding reform, represents the following stage of the intellectual and spiritual transformations that occurred to Abdel Rahman, whereby he became- as described by his friend Abdel Rahman- a Muslim brother in ideas, conduct and activity, even though he did not reach the stage of full membership of the group, but he was involved with its membership in all its activities completely.<sup>2</sup>

Subsequently, when the popular movement began to wane and decline Abdel Rahman was affected by this, even though he continued to be associated with the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood, and contributed to the activities of Al-Eiss Center affiliated to the Conservation of The Holy Quran Society, and

1 Interview with his brother Nael, op.cit.

2 Interview with his friend Abdel Rahman op.cit.

he was active at the Center, where in the course of his study in Zarqa (in the second year of college) he received a certificate in Qur'anic studies from one of the known sheikhs there.

Even though Abdel Rahman remained committed to the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood, receding hope in the Jordanian popular movement had an impact on him, followed by the setbacks of the "Arab revolutions", alongside the spiraling violence in Syria, and then the military coup in Egypt, in July 2013; all of these events were etched deeply in the feelings, emotions and beliefs of Abdel Rahman.

The extent of the effect of the above-mentioned successive events (recession of the Jordanian movement, events in Syria, coup in Egypt) may be observed in his Facebook page, where we find that he posts pictures of the victims of the Syrian regime, particularly children, and then we find that he subsequently changes the personal profile and places the mark of Rabi`a (in reference to the sit in of Rabi`a which led to the death and wounding of hundreds of protesters in the Rabi`a Al-Adawiyah square in Egypt), while writing in support of the ousted Muslim Brother president Mohammad Mursi, while satirizing the accusation of the relations of Mursi with Hamas, and publishing pictures of Jordanian demonstrations opposed to the Egyptian military coup, which essentially indicate being still influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood on the one hand, but at the same time being influenced by the dramatic events in the region and the disillusionment with the democratic ferment associated with the Arab popular rebellions.<sup>1</sup>

1 See his Facebook page which includes in the main profile the word "aliens", in reference to

## From Al-Nusra to ISIS

During that period Abdel Rahman became acquainted with a group of people linked to the Salafi Jihadist current, from among students studying in Al-Tafileh University, and who came from the city of Ruseifeh in which it is known that the Salafi Jihadist current is more widespread than in other governorates.

Sheikh Said, an engineering student from Ruseifeh, influenced Abdel Rahman, in the view of his brother Nael and his friend Abdel Rahman, despite the lack of additional information about Said, other than that his brother departed for Syria a few months before Abdel Rahman, and that he is a believer in "Jihadist ideas".<sup>1</sup>

At the start Abdel Rahman used to stress to his brother Nael that he differed with the Salafi Jihadist group, and tried to persuade them to change their ideas. However Nael- at the same time- feared for his brother to fall under their influence, and this is precisely what happened, but Abdel Rahman did not want to concern his brother nor to place himself under pressure.

It is the view of Nael that the essential cause of the conversion of Abdel Rahman to "Jihadist Salafiyah: lies in the recession of the Jordanian popular movement and the setbacks of the "Arab Spring" , and the change of the demands of the youth from democracy to the application of Islamic Shari`ah, and this also applies to Tafileh.

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committed Muslims: <https://web.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100003641825305>

1 Interviews with his brother and friend, previously mentioned.

In the year 2012 Nael got married, and was forced to intensify his efforts to earn a living, and hence he drew a bit away from political activism. At the same time Abdel Rahman was on his path toward ‘Salafi Jihadism’, which is what actually materialized when he departed in the first months of the year 2014, most probably, to Syria, through Nasib area, and to directly join Al-Nusra Front.

Who was behind the conversion of Abdel Rahman? Who exercised influence over him? Nael does not say for certain, but he thinks that a group of students who studied in Tafileh, most of whom are from Ruseifeh, played a considerable role in this regard, at the forefront of whom is the so-called Sheikh Said, who studied engineering in Tafileh, whereupon his brother went in mid-2012 to Syria, and it appears that he influenced Abdel Rahman who travelled there in the company of a friend from University of Tafileh.<sup>1</sup>

Abdel Rahman contacted his mother immediately upon crossing the border, and informed her that he is in Syria, and subsequently Nael contacted him and tried to persuade him to return, but abortively, and the repeated attempts of the family to persuade Abdel Rahman to return to Jordan were of no avail.

Abdel Rahman arrived in Syria, Dera Governorate, and joined Al-Nusra Front. Abdel Rahman was positioned in the religious section in the Front, and became active, until intense differences and divisions appeared in the circles of the jihadists themselves, between the supporters of ISIS on the one hand, and Al-Nusra

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1 Interview with his brother Nael, op.cit.

Front (supported by Al-Qaeda) on the other. Thus numerous groups splintered from Al-Nusra and joined ISIS, and there was considerable confusion in the circles of Jordanians in Al-Nusra, where a proportion of them seceded and pledged allegiance to ISIS.

Nael followed news on the division, and feared for his brother, who found a way for continual communication through the WhatsApp application, and when differences intensified between ISIS and Al-Nusra, and reached the stage of armed conflict, Nael said to Abdel Rahman “thank God ISIS does not have a presence in Dera” whereupon his brother replied “in fact we are the nucleus of ISIS”, and he argued with his brother and tried to convince him of the error of ISIS, but the latter accused him of “weak faith”.

Al-Nusra Front sensed the presence of defenses and inclinations on the part of Abdel Rahman and others in the direction of ISIS, and so they sent him to Al-Ghouta in Damascus, but this did not lead to a change in the beliefs of Abdel Rahman, who returned three months later to Dera.

During communication by telephone Abdel Rahman would tell Nael his comments on Al-Nusra and his reasons for being angry at it, including that Al-Nusra was more pronouncedly focusing on actual considerations and organizational interests at the expense of religious texts and ideological theoretical concepts, “and it gave due regard to the strong at the expense of the weak,

and applied rules mostly to the weak”, according to what Nael recalls of the comments of his brother on Al-Nusra during their discussions.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of 2014 a group of members of the religious board of Al-Nusra (around 10 persons) along with Abdel Rahman which coordinated with other members of the religious board who splintered from Al-Nusra and moved to Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade, and there Abdel Rahman was close to Al-Khal Ali Al-Baridi (leader Al-Yarmouk Martyrs), whose assassination Al-Nusra Front had declared on 11-2-2015, and gave Al-Fath Army (Yarmouk Martyrs) 24 hours to surrender and hand over their weapons.

Nael discussed this with his brother, and tried to persuade him to hand himself in, but Abdel Rahman informed him that he chose martyrdom, and characterized Al-Nusra Front as the “front of villains and ignobility”, whereupon it became clear to Nael that his brother cut the road of return to Al-Nusra, and he excommunicated them.<sup>2</sup>

Abdel Rahman married at the outset of the year 2015, to the daughter of a family in Dera countryside with allegiance to ISIS, and he presently has a son who is around 6 months old, and Nael believes that that family played a role in the decision of Abdel Rahman to carry out suicide mission against the Free Army subsequently.

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1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

Abdel Rahman was in touch with his family by WhatsApp and telephone, and it was palpable to Nael that the ideas of his brother began to change considerably compared to the past, and one week after Abdel Rahman carried out the suicide mission Nael received a recorded voice message for Abdel Rahman in which he speak of the operation that he implemented against the Free Army, whom Abdel Rahman accused of treason and being agents of Jordan.

There is a will which Abdel Rahman wrote prior to departing from Jordan, and which he left to his family in which he urges them to be patient and not to cry when he dies a martyr, and not to hold bereavement for him, and he urged his brothers to adhere to the Shari`ah, and to eschew smoking and narjileh.<sup>1</sup>

### **Roadmap to ISIS: Interactions, Influencers, the Environment**

By tracing the stages which Abdel Rahman passed through we find that there was a sequence of lack of religious commitment (stage of adolescence and youth), and thence to being committed and to perform missionary activity, removed from politics (since the second year in college, 2009, that is when he was 19 years of age), that is Jama`at Al-Da`wa W`al Tabligh, and after graduation he was influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood, and partook in its activities, and he participated in popular activism 2011-2013, (21-23 years), and subsequently he moved to Syria and integrated in Al-Nusra (2014), that is from the Muslim Brotherhood to Al-Salafiyah Jihadism, and then in 2015 until mid-2016, he seceded

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1 Ibid.

from Al-Nusra and pledged allegiance to ISIS, and he married the daughter of a family that is loyal to the Group, and finally he carried out a suicide mission at the end of June 2015, targeting a Free Army commander, which led to his death and the death of a woman and child who were present in the house during the operation.

In reading this continually rising curve, we find that there are major personalities which played a role in each of the previous stages, starting with the religious upbringing and the personality of his father who belonged to Jama`at Al-Da`wa, in the incipient stage of religiosity in the second year of university, and in the stage of conversion towards the Muslim Brotherhood, persons such as his roommate and Ikhwan students in University of Tafileh contributed to his recruitment, in addition to his elder brother Nael falling under the influence of the Group, and in the stage of converting to Salafiyya Jihadism, we find a personality such as Sheikh Said, and subsequently in his conversion from Al-Nusra to ISIS, we found Jordanian personalities in the religious section of Al-Nusra, who seceded and moved to ISIS who all influenced him, and among the personalities, as his brother believes, is the family of his Syrian wife, which is a family close to ISIS.

The question that is linked to the palpable influence of persons in the career of Abdel Rahman, leads us to try to explain his ready amenability to be attracted and to be influenced by other persons?

It would appear that the reason is attributable to more than one factor, for Abdel Rahman, as his brother Nael mentions, lived in Al-Hisa area, which is a social environment that pushes towards evincing the elements of courage to confront fear of others. Actually, his roots in Tafileh contributed to facilitating his movement towards more extremist discourses and spaces, where it is recognized that the popular movement demanding reform was most maximal in demands in Tafileh, and their chants were the most acerbic and challenging of the regime, and even targeted the king himself, while other numerous speeches, slogans and demonstrations sufficed with lower "ceilings" (of protest), including the Muslim Brotherhood.

It is true that in the beginning he entered the gate of spiritual and missionary activity, that is being unpoliticized, while in the second year of college, in the environment of Jama`at Al-Tabligh, and perhaps this is by dint of the influence of his father's missionary background, but soon enough he integrated in the activities of the Ikhwan which he found to be more suitable for his personality and the environment influencing his upbringing, and then came the popular activism intermeshing the religious factors (new political religiosity- with the Ikhwan), with the social factors (feeling of frustration on the part of the youth generation in Tafileh for economic and social reasons, and embodying such frustration or congestions through the concept of "corruption").

This interlocking of religious and social factors coupled with the psychological factor, which due to the upbringing environment

drives to demonstrating courage and strength, in a manner naturally incongruous with the Jama`at Al-Da`wa W`al Tabligh, while the Ikhwan are of a lesser psychological level required as a change, in terms of evincing courage, concomitant with a weak intellectual and cultural formation enabling him solely to move from one direction to other, according to a process of questing for what is more strict and powerful within the Islamic circles- and thus he needed persons playing the role of conduits to move from one stage to another, which explains the ease with which he was influenced by particular persons, because they unintentionally recognized how to access his inclinations and impulses and to drive him to the stage for which he internally longed.

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### **Amer Dmour..A Journey in the Terrain of Salafis**

Abu Al-Yaman Al-Urduni garnered in the film "Processions of Light 2" produced by ISIS during the battle of Mosul, a palpable space, for the main part of the film was devoted to him. He appeared while talking with his three young children, about the Islamic state project as the state of promise, which should be preserved, and then about the suicide missions, and the presumed fate of the perpetrators, namely, paradise, which drove his small son (whom he gave Abu Dujanah as an epithet) to weep and to be sad, while he – i.e. Abu Al-Yaman- urged him to stand firm and to be strong.

The more dramatic scene (even though realistic) in the film shows the final moments preceding the implementation of the suicide operation carried out by Abu Al-Yaman Al-Urduni, where his small children come to bid him farewell while he is about to get into the vehicle with explosives, which was prepared for him, given that he was chair-ridden, for he was wounded in one of the battles with ISIS, in the spinal cord, which led to an incapacity to move, around one year since the operation was implemented in April 2017, as the film mentions.

There are peculiar and remarkable features which combined in the story of Abu Al-Yaman Al-Urduni, where he was identified as a Wali (governor) in Damascus and then as one of the emirs of ISIS, in Al-Birkah wilayah, that is the city of Raqqah, and then was a soldier in Salah Eddin Governorate, Mosul, in Iraq, so why did his position descend from emir to a soldier? And is there a

connection between his injury which made him chair-ridden and so was not more able to shoulder the responsibilities of emir, or is it as argued by others that it is due to the reality of the Organization in Syria and Iraq, where in Iraq the emirs are mostly Iraqis, or is it due to his situation inside ISIS, which was not disclosed?

The second remarkable matter is for a chair-ridden person to carry out the operation, using a Car bomb, and the third matter is that Abu Al-Yaman himself was an emir in Al-Nusra Front in Syria, prior to defecting from it and joining ISIS, after which his family joined him in Syria, and then his elder son 17 years was killed, one year before him, in the course of confrontations also between ISIS and other quarters, where this movement from positions of leadership in Al-Nusra to leadership positions in ISIS to a Jordanian Jihadist, was during his presence in Jordan, closer to the wing which became subsequently a foe of the supporters of ISIS, such as Abu Mohammad Al-Maqqdisi and Abu Qutadah Al-Filistini; all of these changes and transformations prompt a more deepened view of the personality of Abu Al-Yaman and the journey of his life which ended around the age of forty.

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Abu Al-Yaman is Amer Hamed Dmour, and was born in the year 1978, and lived his childhood and youth and finished school in the city of Zarqa, even though his tribe was from the city of Karak. His father Hamed Dmour worked in the Armed Forces, and partook in the war of 1967, the Battle of Karamah, and his

work location in the following decades was in the Zarqa military camps, and he and his family resided in the housing allocated for families in Zarqa camp, until retiring from the army in the year 1989, with the rank of Sergeant.

They moved to Al-Zawahreh quarter in Zarqa itself, and there Amer studied in governmental schools, and he is the eldest son (he has three brothers and a sister), and he continually prayed in Al-Falah Mosque, abutting their house, and during that early stage of his life he fell under the influence of Jama`at Al-Da`wa W`al Tabligh, where the imam of the mosque himself belonged to that group. Amer in particular stages of his life would go out in missionary activity with members of the group to various areas of Jordan, visiting mosques and staying in them seclusion (I`tikaf), while calling people to comply with the teachings of Islam.<sup>1</sup> It is recognized that Jama`at Al-Tabligh is a group that is general peaceful and clearly declares that it does not interfere in politics, and that it focuses on matters of worship and the adherence by people to Islamic norms of conduct.

Amer successfully completed high school in 1994, and received a good grade, which enabled his to study mechanical engineering in the Polytechnic College, which is in the middle of the road between Amman and Zarqa, and is affiliated to Balqa Applied University.<sup>2</sup>

His friend at the College remembers him vividly, for his friend was a member of the Ikhwan, while Amer began to convert to

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1 Interview with his father in Al-Zawahrah Quarter, on 15/8/2017.

2 Ibid.

the Salafist current in general, and was closer to the students of Sheikh Nasser Eddin Al-Albani, who used to reject discussing politics and were antagonistic to other Islamic movements, while opposing even the students association elections in universities, on grounds that they distract from the mission of studying religious sciences. Thus the relationship, as described by his friend, was confused; due to the fact that the youth of the Ikhwan and the traditional Salafists were not in accord in terms of their political positions and their vision of reality and the position towards the governments.<sup>1</sup>

His friend recalls how the youth of the Ikhwan did not feel friendly towards Amer, and he interrupted his studies at the College for a period of time, and returned after months, but he appeared a totally changed person in his opinions and positions, even though he remained generally a Salafist, but they became closer to what is known as activist Salafiyyah, that is the Salafist orientation that is not opposed to political action, and does not assume a rigid position towards the Ikhwan and other groups.<sup>2</sup>

It is, then, a major transformation in the personality of the student Amer Dmour, from traditional Salafism to activism, which produced an affinity between him and his Islamist friend, and in fact the Ikhwan students began to seriously think of attracting Amer to their group, and considered him a “candidate member” of the group, and thus there emerged a greater closeness between his friend and Amer, during that period. Actually, Amer informed him that he works as an imam of a mosque close to his home, and

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1 Special interview with his friend Mohammad on 7/9/2017.

2 Ibid.

he also invited him to attend his wedding, in that period, for Amer was studying civil engineering and working as an imam of that mosque concurrently.<sup>1</sup>

During that period Amer embarked upon reading the writings of the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) and the politicized Salafists, and he was reading the book of Sayyed Qutb “Ma`alim F`il Tareeq- Milestones”, and adopting another intellectual direction, while his discourse changed from focus on purely religious issues to issues of social and political dimensions, such as the topic of commanding good and forbidding evil, which connotes for the committed Muslim to call people to Islam and to strive to apply the principles of Islam in society.

Amer did not find himself studying engineering, and received at the end of the nineties a scholarship to study Shari`ah in the Islamic University in Medina, and it was here that he got to know another friend who studied Shari`ah before him at the Islamic University. His friend recalls that after Amer arrived there with his wife and family, the events of 11 September 2001 occurred, which created great controversy within Salaifst religious circles in Saudi Arabia in involving supporters and those opposed. His friend recalls that Amer was supportive of those operations, and was preoccupied with legitimizing it religiously, and these represented other steps in his path towards espousing the ideology and thought of Al-Qaeda.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Special interview with his friend (A.Y.) dated 7/9/2017.

2 Interview with his friend Mohammad, abovementioned source.

Those years in Saudi Arabia were akin to a crossroads, where the students were divided between supporters and opponents of Al-Qaeda. Actually, Amer was in the group supportive of the actions of Al-Qaeda, and in that stage he admired Usama Bin Laden, and fell under the influence of the Jordanian Sheikh Umar Yousef (Abu Anas Al-Shami), who visited Saudi Arabia at the time, where Amer met him. In fact Umar Yousef was still an imam of a mosque in Sweileh in Amman, and was closer to Salafist activism, prior to his ideas following a clearer trajectory through support of the Jihadist current, and joining Al-Zarqawi in the wake of the occupation of Iraq, whereby Abu Anas himself became the spiritual guide of Al-Zarqawi group, who was one year later killed in an abortive operation to free women from the prison of Abu Ghreib.

What is important here is that Amer during this period completed another stage in his transformations, and became a believer in the thought of Usama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda, and he was preparing himself, as related by a friend whom he met by coincidence in the Sacred Sanctuary in Mecca, to join Al-Zarqawi to fight in Iraq, on the side of Al-Qaeda there, after Al-Zarqawi himself pledged allegiance to Usama Bin Laden in the year 2004.<sup>1</sup>

What is it that happened and led to a big leap in the thought of Amer Dmour during the incipient years of his presence in Saudi Arabia?

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1 See Stéphane Lacroix, "Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia", Arab network for Research and Publishing, Beirut, 1st ed., 2012, translated by Abdel Haq Al-Zamouri, pp.200-350.

Most probably it was the events themselves which produced the responses, and quickened the process of slow transformation through which Amer was passing, during that period, from Tabligh to traditional Salafism, and then to activism, and ultimately jihadism, for the events of 11 September produced a polarization within the circles of the Salafist Saudi current, between supporters and opponents of Al-Qaeda, while the activist-reformist current represented by Sheikh Sifr Al-Hawali and Suleiman Al-Audeh receded and weakened, for it evinced softness in dealing with Saudi authorities and a retreat from the ideas which they presented which influenced a considerable segment of the Salafism in the mid-nineties, which led to a division within the Salafist activist current itself between supporters of Al-Qaeda, and supporters of the two sheikhs Al-Hawali and Al-Audeh.

Abu Anas Al-Shami, considered as the bearer of the banner of the activist Salafist school in Jordan, and an extension of the thought of Sifr Al-Hawali, himself moved to Salafist Jihadism and to supporting Al-Zarqawi, and rejecting the position of Al-Hawali and Al-Audeh condemning the September attacks, which is the same line of Amer Dmour; that is the position of Abu Anas Al-Shami, and so he joined this orientation. Then came the events of Iraq and the appearance of the star of Al-Zarqawi which reinforced those transformations, all of which occurred in the context of a Salafist environment in the Islamic University in Medina in Saudi Arabia, and also within the context of a case of intense polarization between a Salafist current named "Al-Jamiyyah" supportive of the Saudi government, and antagonistic

to Islamists in general, and Salafist Jihadism which was rising, as well as the activity of Al-Qaeda itself in Saudi Arabia which reached a zenith in the period 2003-2005, that is during the stay of Amer there for pursuing studies.<sup>1</sup>

Ultimately in the year 2004, which is the final year of the study of Amer in Saudi Arabia, the transformation towards the thought of Al-Qaeda became complete, while having a network of friends and companions affiliated to the same thought, which alerted the attention of Saudi security, during the latter period of his stay there, and we could not establish whether he was detained or was just investigated, while permitting him to sit for his exams, provided that he departed immediately from Saudi Arabia. It may be noted that there is an allusion to this incident in a series of articles about Salafist jihadism, in the blog of Jarir Al-Hasni, who is among the Salafist jihadists opposed to Amer Dmour, stating that Dmour caused the arrest of one of the sons of city of Ma`an, belonging to the Salafist Jhadist current for a period of years, due to information he offered to the Saudi authorities, which is an accusation difficult to verify, but it is clear that there was a problem between Amer and Saudi security in the latter period of his study.

Amer returned to Jordan but was arrested a short while after his return by Jordanian Intelligence, on grounds that he has a network of relations with members of Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, and he stayed in prison for long months, during

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1 See Thomas Hegghammer, "Thomas Hegghammer. Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism Since 1979.", Arab network for Research and Publishing, Beirut, pp.149-239, and also see: Mohammad Abu Rumman, Struggle for Salafiyyah: A Reading of the Ideologies and Differences and the Map of Dissemination, Arab Network for Studies and Publication??, 1st ed., 2016, Beirut, pp. 35-69.

which his younger brother Mohammad was killed, who was 18 years old, and did not pass the high school exams, and the family of Amer were surprised by his younger brother going to Iraq, and joining Al-Zarqawi group, and getting killed there, shortly afterwards. It was said that he was influenced by the ideas of his brother Amer, but his father is of the view that the younger brother was not successful in his studies, was immature in character and decisions, and was not originally religious prior to the decision to depart for Iraq and join Al-Zarqawi.<sup>1</sup>

Amer came out of prison, and tried to find work but the doors were shut in his face, and he is married with a number of children, and during that period his relations with Al-Salafiyyah Jihadism were consecrated in Zarqa, and in Jordan, and within a few years he became one of the prominent leaders of the current. Actually, his star shone within the circles of the Jordanian Jihadist current during the events of the "Arab Spring" 2011, when he participated with Dr. Sa`ad Huneiti and a group of Jihadists in organizing peaceful marches and demonstrations for the members of the Salafi Jihadist current in Jordan, demanding the application of the Islamic Shariah and releasing jailed members, including the sheikh of the current Abu Mohammad Al-Maqdisi, and Amer- usually- was one of the speakers in those sit-ins, and among those responsible for negotiating with Security to ensure that no clash occurs.<sup>2</sup>

1 Interview with his father, op.cit.

2 See YouTube video clips of the sermon of Amer Dmour, in the Zarqa procession, prior to the events, "The Sheikhs Dmour and Dahawi Calm the Group of People Listening to Them after They Are Provoked ." [www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QqXD5gF\\_eY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QqXD5gF_eY)."Negotiations of Saad Huneiti and Amer Dmour with Police Prior to the Start of the Clashes." [www.youtube.com/watch?v=t04aVgGIHrA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t04aVgGIHrA).

Then occurred the famous events of Zarqa, on 15 April 2011, when a collision take place between demonstrators from the sons of the Jihadist current and security personnel, which caused a large number of injuries to security men, and also to the sons of the current, and then a broad campaign of arrests targeting 200 jihadists took place who were referred to the case of the Zarqa events, but Amer was not among them, and was arrested and released on bail thereafter, and an understanding was reached between Security and wanted escapees.

Amer was one of the foremost architects of the peaceful sit-ins of the Salafi Jihadism, and he had a plan to organize the affairs of the current and to effectuate a qualitative transformation in its trajectory, and it would appear that he shared these ideas with Sa`ad Huneiti, Munif Samarah and some of the leaders and symbols of the current, and among those ideas was the establishment of schools or parallel religious schools for the children of those associated with the current, instead of governmental education, particularly since there is a large proportion of the supporters of this current who refuse to enroll their children in governmental or private schools, out of a keenness to bring them up based on the ideas of the current.<sup>1</sup>

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1 The notorious fatwa of Abu Mohammad Al-Maqdisi, the spiritual sheikh of the current is represented in not enrolling students in schools. He wrote a book to this effect entitled "T`dad Al-Fawares Bi Hajr Al-Madares- Preparing Knights by Eschewing Schools", but the new leaders of the Salafi Jihadism attempted to find an alternative to government schools, so that the children of the supporters of the current are not left without education or degrees, particularly since a large proportion of the members of the current are not compliant with this fatwa. Actually, Amer Dmour, as stated by his father (in the aforementioned interview) tried to develop this idea and to formulate for it a main plan.

The events of Zarqa had a negative influence on the new ideas advocated by Amer and some of the new youths of the current, and the wave of arrests targeting hundreds, and the accompanying allegations of the leaders of the current concerning torture of the detainees who were referred to the courts, and accused of inciting a riot and aggressing on security men; actually Amer was one of the foremost persons accused in those events and his name appeared especially in the indictment, due to his leading role in the march, while the indictment mentioned his name as Amer Hamed Al-Banwi nicknamed Al-Khatba, and was considered as a fugitive from justice.<sup>1</sup>

Subsequently, most of the accused were released on bail, and the status of the fugitives was settled in the same manner, after an understanding was reached between a committee specialized in the affairs of wanted persons and the courts of law regarding this, and among those is Amer, at the start of 2012, provided that they commit to attend the sessions of the State Security Court.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, Amer did not despair, with some of his friends, most prominently: Sa`ad Huneiti, Munif Samarah, Abu Sayyaf and others of thinking of formalizing the "Salafi Jihadist current" and arranging its affairs and modifying its path, whereby a

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- 1 See: the first session of the trial of the Salafi organization.: Names of the accused and the indictments, Saraya news website??, 8/8/2011, on the following link: <http://www.sarayanews.com/index.php?page=article&id=84186/title/%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%84%D9%89%20%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%AA%20%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A9%20%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%8A%D9%85%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%81%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%A1>
- 2 See Wael Al-Battiri, rescinding a decision to detain 11 jihadists, Assabeel Newspaper, 26/1/2012.

meeting was held in a farm in Dleil (24 February 2012) belonging to one of the leaders of the current there, at which a Shura (consultative) council was chosen, and the choosing of Amer Dmour as a representative elected by the attendees of the city of Zarqa, alongside 9 others from various areas of the Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

This idea was faced with considerable rejection from the other orientation in the Salafi Jihadism led by Umar Mahdi Zeidan, and named in the media as “the new Zarqawis” who rejected organizing peaceful marches at the start, and rejected the Dleil meeting, and leveled harsh accusations at Amer Dmour, Sa`ad Huneiti and at another group- that they are not authentic members of the Salafi Jihadist current, and that they came from various backgrounds, and the blogger Jarir Al-Hasni had mentioned that Amer was from Jama`at Al-Tabligh rather than the Salafi Jihadism.<sup>2</sup>

During that period Amer was active in the small meetings and encounters with those that shared with him the ideas of the organization and arranging the affairs of the Salafi Jihadist current, while at the same time attempting to secure a fixed income, and so he opened Al-Azayem restaurant in the new

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1 See Cleavages in the Salafi Jihadist Current, and accusations involving names of those who collaborated with Intelligence: “Splintering in the Salafi Movement and Accusations of Working with the GID.” <https://www.assawsana.com/>, 2 Apr: 2012, [www.assawsana.com/portal/pages.php?newsid=112659](http://www.assawsana.com/portal/pages.php?newsid=112659) and also see: Abu Sayyaf attacks the false and excommunicative newcomers to the Salafiyyah, Al Anbat Newspaper: <http://www.alanbatnews.net/articles/3293>

2 See: An exclusive interview reveals the secrets of the Salafi Jihadist movement in Jordan and their view of the Ikhwan, Assawsana news portal, an interview with Jarir Al-Hasni, on 3/6/2012, on the following link: <http://www.assawsana.com/portal/pages.php?newsid=116882>

Zarqa, and moved with his family there, but he returned after a period of time and closed the restaurant as it had failed as a project.

He departed for Syria, in a manner surprising to his father in September 2012, and there joined Al-Nusra Front, with the husband of his sister, Mohammad Jamal (nicknamed Abu Qaswarah in Syria), who was a friend of Amer since early stages.

Amer assumed a leading position in Al-Nusra, and partook in a number of operations, and the most prominent leaders of Al-Nusra in Dera and the Damascus countryside were from Jordan, and from Zarqa, from among those Amer knew personally, such as Anas al-Sahaba, namely Mustafa Abdel Latif Saleh, Abu Jleibeeb (Iyad Al-Tobasi) and others. Actually, one of the commanders of the Front was in that area, as his father recalls, until matters began to change, and the intensity of conflict increased between Al-Nusra and ISIS, which started to weave its threads in the southern areas and to strive to produce cleavages within Al-Nusra, and it succeeded in forming cells, which created a clandestine security war between the two sides, and profound doubts about the loyalty of members of Al-Nusra to the organization, particularly the Jordanians.

One of the victims of these suspicions was the Jordanian Mohammad Jamal (Abu Qaswara) the husband of the sister of Amer, after his son Qaswara escaped to Al-Qabon and declared allegiance to ISIS, which drove the security apparatus of Al-

Nusra to suspect his father, Mohammad Jamal, and to arrest and kill him, which stirred considerable gossip in the circles of jihadists domestically and abroad in August 2015.

It is not clear whether the secession of Umar from Al-Nusra and joining ISIS came after or prior to what happened with the husband of his sister, but one of his friends, from the sons of the Salafi Jihadist current stated that the secession of Amer from Al-Nusra Front and joining ISIS emerged in the wake of personal differences with Jordanians responsible for commanding the Front, where he was marginalized and pressured which drove him to leave the Front and to join ISIS, and to relocate to Al-Raqqa city, where his family joined him after two years from his sudden departure from Jordan, after its material circumstance worsened, where his wife and their five children came.

Amer became a commander (as ISIS stated in the Light processions 2 film) in Al-Raqqa Governorate (Al-Barakah province), and his eldest son (17 years) was killed during clashes of the organization with its foes, and Amer was hit by bullets in his Spinal Cord which made him chair-ridden, unable to move, and in the meantime he moved to Mosul, where he remained for around one year with his family, prior to carrying out the suicide operation in March 2017, and then a telephone call to his family in Zarqa informed them of the death of their son, and then the organization weeks later produces a film documenting the suicide operation.

Even though Amer implemented the suicide mission in the latter part of the period of the presence of ISIS in Mosul months ago, prior to losing control of it, it was wholly clear that it is a matter

of time, but his will to his wife and sons was to not return to Jordan, and to remain in the areas controlled by ISIS, despite the presence of strong indicators of the loss of control of most of the cities and areas. The fate of his family after his death is unclear, but his father says that they did not receive since his death, that is in the previous months, any news about the family, with the exception of news received by the family of his wife that they were killed with the children of Amer in America air raids, where the building in which they were residing collapsed, and all of them were killed.<sup>1</sup>

Since the year 2012 we noticed two transformations or main developments in the experience of Amer Dmour:

The first development is the decision to travel to Syria, and prior to that his priority was to organize the affairs of the current in Jordan, but months thereafter he suddenly decided to depart for Syria, instead of remaining in Jordan and undertaking the mission which he commenced. The explanation for this may be attributable to a main reason or reasons, including the presence of intense opposition and differences with the Jihadist current on the steps which Amer and Huneiti and others were attempting, and in fact this opposition became overt along with harsh accusations of Amer and casting doubt on him, which made the “ghost of lack of trust” as put by one of his friends, pursue him inexorably within the circles of the current, and particularly the articles of Jarir Al-Hassani (most probably Umar Mahdi Zeidan), which cast doubts on him and attacked him intensely, where the presence of a person on the battlefield was a certificate of

1 Interview with his father, *ibid.*

“good conduct” reflecting his credibility and loyalty to the thought which he carries, on the one hand; on the other hand, what occurred in Zarqa in 2011, and the disappointed hopes associated with the Arab Spring, the peaceful movement, the continual visits of Amer to the State Security Court and General Intelligence, the failure of his commercial project (restaurant), difficult economic condition, were all factors contributing to the decision to emigrate and to move to Syria, along with the travel of hundreds of Jordanians at the time, and viewing the Syrian theater as the coming horizon, which the “global jihadist current” project was dreaming of.

As to the second development or transformation in the path of Amer, was moving from Al-Nusra to ISIS, whose timing we do not know, but the ideas of Amer in Jordan in the latter period, and his leanings were closer to Al-Nusra than ISIS, and those close to him in Jordan were closer to Al-Nusra; even so, this observation is not confined to Amer but to many Jordanians, who went there, given that a large proportion left Al-Nusra and joined ISIS, for reasons related to differences inside Al-Nusra, and in the case of Amer there is what indicates personal differences with the leaders of Al-Nusra in Dera and Al-Ghouta.

The boundaries and ideological demarcation lines between ISIS and Al-Nusra, particularly the Jordanians there, are not solid but are rather fluid, in view of the presence of Jordanians hither and thither, and due to lack of conviction on the part of Jordanians of the presence of substantial differences between the two

projects (Al-Qaeda-Al-Nusra and ISIS), whereby the personal experiences and the surrounding inclinations and conditions play a considerable role in determining the directions or movement of the Jordanian individuals between the two organizations, which is the same case that we found in the friend of Amer, Dr. Sa`ad Huneiti, who went to Syria on a mission to effect reconciliation between the two groups, and then became a judge in Al-Nusra, prior to declaring allegiance to ISIS.

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### **Bassam.. From the World of Smuggling to the “Jihadists’**

Bassam is considered among the prominent and known faces in the “Salafi Jihadist current”, even though he does not have deep roots in it, where his commitment to the current dates back to around 2005, but his activity subsequently became prominent and noticeable between recruitment and attempts to join Al-Qaeda in Iraq, and prolonged periods of detention in Syria and Jordan, and hunger strikes, and he is also from the new generation of leaders, which began to appear since 2005 in the current, where he tried to improve its condition and organize its affairs. His house was in the town of Dleil, which was the famous location at which the first attempt took place to choose leaders or a Shura council for the organization.

His town, Dleil, lies in the north east of Zarqa at a distance of 15 km from the city, and is in the south of the governorate of Mafrak, which is a known for cattle and livestock raising and is close geographically to the Syrian border, and hence smuggling is rife there.

Actually, he is of Bedouin origins, where his tribe belongs to the wandering nomads who historically have journeyed between the deserts of Hejaz, Sham and Iraq, but his family settled in Jordan, in Dleil, decades ago, where his father was the agent of Sharif Nasser Bin Jamil, in that area.

## Joining the World of Smugglers

Born in the year 1971, he studied until the third preparatory class, and then enrolled in the Sherif Nasser College, which issued him a diploma, and then he enlisted in the Jordanian Armed Forces (4 years) between 1986-1990, and then engaged in commerce, and worked in the field of smuggling between Amman and Baghdad, and in that period he married his first Iraqi wife, in Iraq.

In the mid-nineties he was arrested and was sentenced to prison for a period of five years, due to smuggling, after a confrontation between them and the Jordanian Army on the Jordanian-Iraqi border. Prior to the stage of imprisonment he was distant from religion, uncommitted and did not perform prayer, and he had no religious culture or knowledge or even interest in political affairs.<sup>1</sup>

His imprisonment at the Swaqa Correctional and Rehabilitation Centre (SCRC) in the second half of the nineties (1995-1999) coincided with presence of members of Bay`at Al-Imam Group (whose first nucleus of the Salafist Jihadi current in Jordan was formed at the time, including Abu Mohammad Al-Maqdisi, Abu Mus`ab Al-Zarqawi, and others), but he was not at first influenced by this group, but by Mohammad Al-Jaghameen, who entered prison against the background of Al-Rabia events, and at the time he was sentenced to death.

He says, "I did not know anything about religious matters and was not concerned with political affairs, but in prison a friendship began to form between me and Mohammad Al-Jaghameen,

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1 A special dialogue with him, on 1/9/2017.

and I asked him for the reason for carrying out a massacre of a group of persons, Jordanians and Iraqis, while being apparently religious, and he replied that they are Free Masons, and he pursued them until he uncovered this, and they have a temple in their house, and for this reason he killed them. He directed me to read about Masons and advised me to read a book in this regard by Mohammad Ali Al-Zu`bi, and actually I began to read about them, and I began to become religious, initially influenced by the personality of Al-Jaghameen.”<sup>1</sup>

“During that period our relations in prison were initially tense with the Ba`yat Al-Imam group, for they assaulted a Saudi inmate, and I stood by the latter, prior to the problem being solved, and gradually relations with them began to improve, and in that period I got acquainted with Saud and Issa Al-Khalayleh, the relatives of Al-Zarqawi, and thence Abu Mus`ab Al-Zarqawi himself, Ahmad Fadil Al-Khalayleh.”<sup>2</sup>

Despite his religiosity in prison, he still had not become persuaded by the “Salafist Jihadi thought”, and it may be mentioned that when the late Jordanian king, Al-Hussein Bin Talal, died, he collapsed in grief and shed tears. After being released from prison he followed the path of greater religiosity, and came to read in the field of Islamic culture. He was closer to Jama`at Al-

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1 See regarding Al-Jaghameen, and details on what came to be known as the Rabieh crime, which occurred in 1998, the following report: Yasser Abu Hilaleh, from among the victims is Namir Ojeh and the notable lawyer Hanna Naddeh, “sectarian motives” are behind two crimes in Amman killing 12 persons a month ago, Al-Hayat London-based Newspaper, 18/10/1998.

2 A special interview with AL-Nu`aymi, *ibid*.

Tabligh, which is a group which is peaceful, does not interfere in politics and does not excommunicate rulers, as is the case with other Islamic currents.<sup>1</sup>

Another watershed in his path was when he started to reconsider the foundations upon which the ideas of Jama`at Al-Tabligh were built, and the start was when he read the Prophetic Hadith: ["I was sent with the sword - close to the Hour - so that Allah alone is worshiped."], which is a Hadith that the Jihadists usually muster in their attempt to recruit others, and it would appear that his reading the Hadith was in the context of his encounter with a Jihadist group, and he asked friends from Jama`at Al-Tabligh about the Hadith, and they said it was not sound, but he subsequently ascertained that the hadith is sound, and so he became critical of Jama`at Al-Tabligh and he left it, and began to move in the direction of the "Salafist Jihadi ideas".<sup>2</sup>

In the beginning he came to know a Salafist Jihadist group from the residents of Zarqa, including Raed Al-Nawaysheh (later killed in Iraq), and then he started to meet them on a regular basis.<sup>3</sup> Subsequently, with the occupation of Iraq, and an intensification of smuggling of Jihadists to fight there, through the Syrian border, Bassam moved to another stage, and so he went to Syria to join Al-Zarqawi group in Iraq, after the year 2005, and there he

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1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

3 100) Raed Al-Nawaysheh was killed in Iraq, after joining AL-Zarqawi group, and it appears that the relationship of the two was close, that is Bassam and Raed Al-Nawaysheh, and even after the killing of Al-Nawaysheh, the relationship of Bassam with the younger brother of Al-Nawaysheh, Hamzeh, remained, and he later joined ISIS in Syria. Regarding Raed Al-Nawaysheh see: "Five Jordanians Are Sentenced to Prison for Attempting to Joint Combatants in Iraq." [Http://www.alwasatnews.com/](http://www.alwasatnews.com/), Al Wasat News, 27 Sept. 2006, [www.alwasatnews.com/news/653170.html](http://www.alwasatnews.com/news/653170.html).

met a number of Jihadist Jordanians, including Mustafa Abdel Latif Saleh (who later became Abu Anas Al-Sahaba, one of the foremost leaders of Al-Nusra in Syria).<sup>1</sup>

The trips of Bassam between Syria and Iraq were recurrent, and he was detained for more than one month in Jordan, but they did not obtain a statement from him, and then in a subsequent stage he was arrested in Syria, and remained there in prisons for a period of more than one year, where he was introduced to a large number of Syrian jihadist leaders, who subsequently commanded the groups fighting the Asad regime after the year 2011.

He returned to Jordan, and at the border was arrested and then released, and during that period his relationship began to grow and take root in the "Salafist Jihadi current", and then with the new generation which joined this current, such as: Dr. Sa`ad Huneiti, Dr. Amer Dmour and others who became close to the spiritual guide of the current, Abu Mohammad AL-Maqdisi.

Bassam supported (as did the new class of jihadi leaders) the project of organizing the affairs of the Jihadist current in Jordan, and he was among the activists insofar as peaceful marches and sit-ins, which were unprecedentedly carried out by the members of the organization in several cities, to present their political demands and demands to release the detainees, until matters culminated with the well-known Zarqa events in mid April 2011.<sup>2</sup>

He was arrested, like other Jihadists, in the wake of the Zarqa events, and remained jailed until the end of 2011, and was

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1 Special interview with Bassam, op.cit.

2 Ibid.

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released on bail, as was the case with the remaining members of the organization. And then he called in his farm for a meeting of a large number of the leaders of this current in Jordan, exceeding one hundred persons, from various governorates in the month of February 2012, and ten leaders representing the foremost governorates in which the organization has a presence, with a view to deliberate and agree on the direction of the group in the following stage.<sup>1</sup>

However things developed in a manner not desired or anticipated by this group, where the events of Zarqa, and a group of persons infiltrated into Syria to encourage others to travel to Syria and to join Al-Nusra, where hundreds of the sons of the current went there, and the situation in Jordan became marginal, and the ideas of restructuring the current and correcting its path receded, on the part of those that stayed in Jordan; actually the Syrian scene predominated the priorities and interests of the Jordanian "Jihadists", who came to view it as a propitious theater for expressing their ideas, and an escape forward from the hegemony of the security institution in Jordan.

He was arrested anew in 2012, with Abu Mohammad Al-Tahawi, the known Jihadist leader, against the background of the same events of Zarqa (2011), and he remained in prison for three years without trial, who spurred him to declare a hunger strike, more than once, in the years 2013 and 2015, which continued for more than one month.. His health condition deteriorated and

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1 See: "Jordanian Authorities Decide to Release a Leader of Salafi Jihadism, Abu Mohammad Al-Tahawi, for Health Reasons." [Http://Www.raialyoum.com/](http://www.raialyoum.com/), Rai Alyoum , 21 Oct. 2015, [www.raialyoum.com/?p=333101](http://www.raialyoum.com/?p=333101).

he engaged in the battle of what he named “empty intestines: demanding his release, until he and Tahhawi were released in October 2015.<sup>1</sup>

Presently he lives with his wives and sons at his farm in Dleil, and constantly visits the Security bodies, and is subject to surveillance, but he prefers neutrality and to be somewhat distant from the state of division witnessed by the Salafist Jihadist current in Jordan, which became divided between the followers and supporters of ISIS on the one hand, and the supporters of Al-Nusra on the other.

It may be said that the personality trait, and some of the social characteristics, represent an important key to understanding the trek of Bassam to the world of the Jihadists, for at the psychological level he is a persona close to a passion for adventure, to leadership and prominence, and power, since he worked in the field of smuggling and then moving to the world of Jihadists, for self-pride and self-assurance are clearly manifest, and his proclivity to leadership is apparent in most of the previous stages.

In addition to the foregoing, his Bedouin roots intensify his self-pride, and his rebellion against the status quo, against the background of the nature of Dleil and its geographic location, where groups are active in smuggling across the border, accompanied by an absence of recognition of the power of the

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1 See Tariq Al-Fayed, the Salafi Jihadist Abu Bandar Al-Nu`aymi lodges a complaint against the Jordanian State Security Court: Detained since four years ago without a charge or case, Al Quds Al Arabi, 6/10/2015 Also: Jordanian authorities decide to release a leader of Salafi jihadism, Abu Mohammad Al-Tahawi, for health reasons: “The Salafi Prisoner Abu Bandar Al-Nu`Aymi: I Am the ‘Allan of Jordan.” [Http://amman1.Net/](http://amman1.Net/), 22 Sept. 2015, [amman1.net/jonews/jordan-news/98481.html](http://amman1.net/jonews/jordan-news/98481.html).

authorities. Moreover, there are other factors which matured the journey of Bassam to the worlds of smuggling and thence the "Jihadists".

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### **Umar.. Rapid Conversion and Sudden Recruitment<sup>1</sup>**

In the month of August in the year 2015, the civil engineer, Jamal, received a call from an anonymous person congratulating him on the martyrdom of his young brother, Umar, while saying to him: "His brother carried out an operation and he is presently inside the gizzard in paradise, while explaining that it was a suicide mission, through which he exploded himself, without the speaker revealing other details. The call was placed from a private telephone number.<sup>2</sup>

Jamal listened to the voice on the phone, while being in total shock, while solely thinking of how he would inform his parents about the death of his brother who surreptitiously departed for Syria four months ago (in April 2015). Actually his father, who was a civil engineer, and his elder brother Ahmad, who works in the private sector, tried to join him in Syria, two days after his escape to ISIS, but after arriving in Ataturk Airport in Istanbul, they received a letter from him informing them that he is presently in Syria, and that he would not talk to them before the passing of forty days. And this is what actually happened, given that he contacted them 45 days from that date, and talked

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1 The name was completely changed, and replaced by a pseudonym, and the same applies to all the names stated in this story, based on the request of the family.

2 Interview with the sister of Jamal on 11/8/2017.

to his brother Jamal, who is a few years older than him, and who was informed by him that he is in Raqqa, continually moves about, and fights with ISIS.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Shock... The Kidnaping of the Son**

The intensity of the shock to the family of Umar was great, not only because their son left university education while being in graduation year at the Hashemite University, with a major in civil engineering, but because of the inordinate speed in which he changed from an irreligious, reckless, stubborn person who loves adventure and gets into many brawls, and who smokes and does not pray, to a religious person, at the end of the year 2014, who receives religious instruction, watches the news, particularly what is happening in Syria, grows his beard, and then after around 4 months he secretly departs for Syria, despite all the abortive attempts of his family to persuade him, and to prevent him from travel, to a point of intense surveillance and the concealment of his passport.

What is the secret behind the sudden transformation in the personality of Umar, and the great rapidity of the process of recruitment, and then the migration to Syria, and fighting there, within a period of not more than 9 months?

There are two main reasons in the view of his brother, Jamal and Ahmad, who are both conservative and committed, but have to

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1 Ibid.

a great extent open minds, as is the case of the family, which the two brothers describe as being a conservative and well off family belonging to the middle class, while being flexible and open minded in its religious commitment; the first reason is the personality of Umar itself, and the second is the social environment of Salt, and the nature of the tribe to which Umar belongs, where the two factors interlocked in his life and were both of impact in the stages of his short life.

Umar was born in 1992, in the month of July, and he is the fourth among his brothers. Like all his brothers, he studied in a private school, and in the secondary school exams he got the high mark of 93%, even though he was negligent in his studies, as stated by his brothers; but due to his acute intelligence, he received a higher mark than his two brothers who were academically excellent.

Umar was not religious during the years of schooling, until the time of the year of university graduation. In fact, his character was different, to a large extent, from the calm and flexible nature of his two brothers, for ever since childhood he was stubborn, solid, independent from his family in ideas and orientation, with a private world, and as his brother Jamal says, "if he is persuaded of something he would adhere to it to the greatest extent possible to the point of extremism, and it would be very difficult to persuade him of a contrary view, and he liked to evince his personality of leadership and his traits, and to palpably prove himself."<sup>1</sup>

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1 Special interview with Jamal, an abovementioned source.

During the years of study Umar was not religious, but in the first stage of adolescence, he became suddenly religious for a short period of time, where he performed prayer in the mosque, and started to try to impose his religious views in an extremist manner in the house, and would turn the television off, and his family was unable to persuade him to be moderate in his religiosity. Thus his father registered him in an open-minded summer club, to influence him, which was a plan that led to opposite results completely, where he returned after the summer camp to not praying, secretly smoking, and talking with girls, which is a story which his brothers refer to as proving his pungent nature in dealing with matters.<sup>1</sup>

In a subsequent stage, during his secondary school education, he was introduced to the friend of his elder brother Ahmad, who is a young man who is older than him by several years and belongs to the same tribe, but is of another orientation in the tribe, and it is a group, that shows solidarity in the event of brawls and affirming strength, and feels great pride in the city of Salt, while its youth are not religiously committed, to the contrary, they like brawls and appearing strong, while a portion of them consume alcohol, and in case a problem occurs in Salt, or involving the sons of Salt, they would play a significant role, whereby this group became known at the level of the Kingdom, and was feared by others.<sup>2</sup>

Umar was influenced from the first encounter by the personality of Raed, even though his elder brother Ahmad, is completely different from that personality. Thus, Jamal and Ahmad are

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1 Ibid, and a special interview with his elder brother Ahmad on 11/8/2017.

2 Interview with Ahmad, ibid.

tranquil and religious and open to others, while inclining to moderation in all things, while Umar found what he was looking for in the character of Raed, who talks about heroism, brawls and adventures, which made Hamzeh become attached to him in record time, thereby becoming friends, and spending a lot of time together. Thus Hamzeh entered since the secondary school phase a new phase, which is to prove himself through fights and demonstrating his strength, while concurring with the sons of Salt in bias for the city, which is what characterizes the mentioned group, which was formed originally at the hands of a group from the tribe itself..

It would appear that the “Salt environment” powerfully intervened here in terms of the character of Umar, in this stage, as a tribal environment, particularly as far as a portion of the youth of his tribe, who take pride in the concept of strength and bias for the city, while not fearing to confront challenges, and proving themselves in adventures, which made Umar lose interest in the high school studies.

Notwithstanding all the foregoing, and as we previously mentioned, Umar received a high mark in the high school exams, which enabled him to enroll in university, and to major in civil engineering, like his father and brother Jamal. Actually, in the first years of university, he was immersed in proving himself through evincing power, brawls and bias for the city of Salt and its youth, and he added to that a passion for hunting and going with his friends to practice the new hobby, whereby weapons became a new dimension of his character.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Interview with his two brothers, two previous sources.

This led to a neglect by him of his studies, and his falling back in some courses, and in the third year of his studies he went to his father and elder brother, Ahmad, to the Police station to release him on bail, after he was detained as a result of a university brawl between the sons of the city of Salt and another tribe from another city, where Umar was strongly present in the brawl outside of the walls of the university.

This incident brought about very strict supervision of his father of him, where he was monitoring his studies, and he pressured him intensely to obtain the bachelor's degree, and his father- as his brothers said- has a solid and powerful personality, contrary to their mother who is very easy going. And the paradox- as the brother say- is that Umar was closer to their fathers at earlier stages, for their father is nervous and of pungent moods in case of anger, and he felt that Umar with his solid personality and strength was closer to him, but at the same time his father was strict in bringing up the children, and in his keenness to foster their studies and to prevent their taking erroneous directions.<sup>1</sup>

The transformation occurred suddenly in the personality of Umar in the winter of 2014, at the end of the year, and there was profuse snowfall in Salt, whereby a transformation occurred in the personality of their young brother, without the family understanding the cause, whereby he prayed continuously, and in record time he grew his beard, and came to follow the news, and to be very influenced by events in Syria, and then he began to talk of "jihad" and the defense of the honor Muslims in Syria.

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1 Ibid.

Subsequently, his two brothers came to know through their attempt to try to explain what occurred to their brother, who inexorably had his private world, and was averse to the family being informed of his private affairs, and that he was influenced by university friends in the city of Salt, and that he attended religious lessons, with supporters of ISIS in Salt, in homes, and that some of them succeeded within a very short period of time to influence their brother and to effect a complete transformation of his views.<sup>1</sup>

In a subsequent stage, and after Umar departed, his brother discovered in his room CDs containing enthusiastic songs and scenes of the battles of ISIS, and some books paving the road to joining that organization, even though they emphasized that their brother did not read those books, and has no passion for reading, and his religious knowledge is superficial, and his commitment was not complete, and he even tried to quit smoking after becoming religious but failed to do so.

The attempts of the family to prevent Umar from travelling to Syria and complete the new journey towards its conclusion were abortive, and a friend of his in university informed his family that Umar no longer attended lectures, and that he does not sit for examinations, and that these indicators are an advanced part of similar cases which departed for Syria, which drove the family to be extremely anxious and to vigilantly monitor his activities.

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1 Ibid.

In a subsequent stage, his friend informed them that Umar trimmed his beard, which became barely perceptible, and this meant that he was on the threshold of taking the decision to travel, like previous cases, which drove the family to conceal his passport, in an attempt to prevent him from departure, and his brothers were mulling informing Security to place his name at the border, in case he tries to travel, but their concern for his future and apprehension that he would be detained and with a record with Security made them suffice with concealing his passport and monitoring their son.<sup>1</sup>

Umar made the plan during weeks, and coordinated with friends from the sons of the current to make the journey, and he collected money, and succeeded with his intelligence and knowledge of fine details to discover the location of the passport. And in April 2015, he informed his mother that he wishes to study at the house of his friend, despite the attempt of his brother to persuade him to study at home, but he was insistent, and then Umar contacted his family at night to inform his mother that he would sleep at his friend's house to complete his studies.

In the morning of the following day his mother attempted to contact him, but his phone was switched off, and so she informed his brother Ahmad, who immediately went to the university, and he communicated with the phone company in which he works, asking to know the station that received the final message from the phone number of his brother, and he became aware subsequently that the station was that which is near the airport,

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1 Ibid.

whereupon he immediately informed his father, and they tried to follow their brother, but he had travelled at dawn to Turkey, and from there to the Syrian border, and then to ISIS.<sup>1</sup>

Umar departed with his friend and university colleague, an engineering student, Hazem, who comes from the same city, even though Hazem belonged to a family that is economically of a lower caste, with a character that is incongruent with that of Umar, for he is not stubborn, nor hesitant, and his personality does not indicate that he might follow the same direction, as Umar.

There was a great influence exercised by a group of the sons of the "Salafist Jihadist current" in Salt, particularly through the lessons held in houses. And it is known that there are tens in the city who previously joined Al-Qaeda, and in fact were among the founders of this current in Iraq, such as Raed Khreisat and others, while around fifty young men from Salt were killed in the previous years, whether during the phase of Abu Mus`ab Al-Zarqawi in Iraq, or ISIS subsequently, and there is another number of them who are jailed, and others who are still fighting, and there is a person who was executed on charges of terrorist activity, and other persons who were sentenced to jail due to a connection to this current.<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding the subsequent attempts of his brothers through telephone calls to return, using the pretext of benevolence to parents and family, coupled with the opaqueness of the goals of the group to which he belongs, they realized that he became

1 Special interview with Ahmad, above-mentioned source.

2 Special interview with his brother Jamal, Ibid.

a strict follower of the organization, and refuses to discuss the matter, and feels greater loyalty to the organization than to the family, and hence they would avoid arguing with him over the telephone, and would be sufficed with ascertaining that he is fine. He used to inform them about his battles and the state of the organization expressing great admiration for their actions, until news of his death arrived in August 2015.<sup>1</sup>

What happened then? Is his character so superficial and gullible whereby he would be easily influenced by the persons he encountered, whereupon he moved from one pole to the next, in record time? And how does this dovetail with the assertion of his brothers that he is of acute intelligence, with care for details, and with the fact that he received high marks in high school, despite his inattention to studies, including his civil engineering studies at university?

To return to the previous details, we will find ourselves before a reality, as his two brothers explained, represented in two overlapping factors: the first is the personality of Umar himself, his independence,, his proclivity for leadership, his desire to assert himself, which is partially a genetic predisposition, which was congruent in a particular stage with the inclination of a group that is known for its strength and is from his tribe, while having a tradition of priding themselves in their strength, the power of the tribe, and bias and pride in the city of Salt, which was at the outset manifested in the young man he met and who drove him

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1 Ibid.

to the world of brawls, machismo, and self-assertion by those means, particularly when brawls and fights are discussed in the circles of those youths, whereby such discussion is welcomed and commended by those present, as his brother says.

However, in a subsequent stage, and with greater religiosity, Umar clung to the same ideas and notions, that is, assertion of strength and proving oneself, but this time around in the direction of a feeling that there is a greater goal and aim to be achieved, whereby the religious factor became embedded in the person, whereby it would be possible to achieve self-fulfillment and assert power through the aim of “defending the honor of Muslims”, as he put it, through enlisting with ISIS, whose widespread videos in the virtual world emphasized the ideas of power, terror and punishment of the enemies.

Practically, Umar did not substantially change psychologically, nor even in terms of intellectual precepts and ideas, to the extent of moving from an atmosphere of pride and bias for Salt and hunting adventures and brawls to the world of ISIS, where strength is affirmed through real adventures, and being conscious of a cause more important than pride in his city, and at the same time is fulfilling of his capacities and favored inclinations, while releasing him from the pressures of study and the family particularly in the final months, after the brawl at the university, and his detention at a Police station.

The paradox is that Umar is not the first to fall at first under the influence of gangs or prejudiced groups in Salt to their nemesis, for others preceded him from among the sons of the same tribe,

and from the same group, years earlier, whereby they shifted from one extreme to the other, joining the Zarqawi group in Iraq, and Al-Zarqawi is the spiritual father, as is known, and the first founder of ISIS.

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### **Murad.. “Soft Commitment” to Salafist Jihadism**

Murad resided in Al-Nuzha area, in proximity to the royal palaces, coincidentally, nearby the house of the family Dr. Hammam Al-Balwi, nicknamed Abu Dujanah Al-Khurasani, who carried out a suicide operation in Khost in Afghanistan in the year 2009, which led to the killing of a number of Central Intelligence Agency officers, and a Jordanian Intelligence officer.<sup>1</sup>

His father used to work in Kuwait until the end of the eighties, in the twentieth century, and his age presently is towards the late eighties. His father and mother and brother were seated talking about the personality of Murad and the road he traversed until enlisting with Al-Nusra Front, ultimately his killing in the final days of Ramadan in the year 2017, in the village of Khan Al-Sheikh in the Hama countryside, as a result of aerial bombardment.<sup>2</sup>

His mother says that he was the youngest member of his family (and they are 6 brothers and one sister), and he was the closest to his parents. His brother stresses that he was obedient to all of

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1 See: “Triple Agent Hammam Al-Balawi: The Full Story.” <https://www.7iber.com/>, 7iber, 5 Feb. 2013, [www.7iber.com/2013/02/the-triple-agent-excerpts/](http://www.7iber.com/2013/02/the-triple-agent-excerpts/)

2 Interview conducted with members of his family, his father, mother and brother, at the family residence on 3/9/2017.

them, and soft and well-mannered, and was perpetually smiling and laughing. His mother emphasized that he was always the closest to her.

He was born in Kuwait in 1979, and he came to Jebel Al-Nuzha as a small child, accompanied by his family at the end of the eighties, and studied until high school, and then he interrupted his studies for three years, during which he worked in a cell phones shop nearby his house, and he then sat for the exam and passed and enrolled in the private Philadelphia University, where he studied accounting. He relied on himself in paying the university fees and pocket money, and then worked as an accountant in a pharmaceutical factory, earning a monthly income of around 600 JD, which the business owner later raised to 800 JD monthly.

He graduated from university at the age of 25 years (around the year 2005), and around two years hence he married, and resided in an apartment with his father and mother. He actually married the daughter of a man with whom he prayed at a nearby mosque (Ammar Bin Yasser), and he had two daughters, and his wife was pregnant with the third child when he departed for Syria and joined Al-Nusra.

His religiosity became clearer at university. Before that he prayed sometimes, but at university, and thereafter he became more religious, but without stirring any doubt or evincing any noticeable changes in his relationship with his family and brother, for he was originally from a religious and conservative family, and so things were normal.

Moreover, his wife is religious in an ordinary manner, wearing the scarf, but without wearing a veil on her face, like the other women in the Salafist Jihadist current. And neither his brothers nor his family noticed any change in his behavior or intellectual positions or even his political opinions, even though he departed for Yemen around the year 2010, and stayed there for five days with a view to join Al-Qaeda there, without the knowledge of his family, whom he told that he is travelling to complete the master's degree.

Upon his return he was summoned by General Intelligence, several times, but he was not detained, and his passport was seized to prevent him from travelling and attempting once again to join the Jihadist groups abroad. The owners of the pharmaceutical factory were pleased with him and raised his monthly salary, and his relationship with his family remained good during that period, but he decided to move out and rent a close apartment for himself, his wife and two daughters, several months prior to departing for Syria.

In Ramadan of the year 2013 he informed his family that he is going to Aqaba for a week for purposes of work with the factory, which appeared normal to the family, given his job commitments, and he told them that he is turning off his phone because he intends to reside in seclusion at a mosque, but two weeks later he contacted them from Dera and informed them of his location, and it appears that he was smuggled across the Syrian-Jordanian border.

The paradox is that his family was not aware of the transformations which he experienced, and did not notice change in his behavior, and his attributes remained constant, and indeed none of the family members expected what he did, for he fears the dog and cat if they pass near him, has no combat experience, and is not at all a violent character, as his mother and brother state; and so, his travel was a shock to the family, given that he devoted great care to his attire and to appearing elegant.

Despite joining Al-Nusra he continued being in touch with them. In Dera he was in a phase of training, and then he moved with the elements of the group to Edlib, and there he decided to work as an accountant, and initially he resided in a cave, but then he decided to move out and reside in Al-Sheikh village, in an apartment, and continued work as an accountant, and committed with Al-Nusra to the defense of the inhabitants of the village.

He was wounded in the market, prior to dying, during Russian bombardments, and was hit by a shell, and at the end of the month of Ramadan 2017, he informed his family that he wishes seclusion at a mosque, and that he is turning off his cell phone, and so his brother who was performing Umra in Saudi Arabia was surprised to hear the voice of a person telling him that his brother died, and that his will was for his body not to be buried until his family is aware of his death, but his family did not know until his brother arrived in the Eid Feast, and he did not wish to tell them on the phone.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Ibid.

There is a clear missing link in the story of Murad represented in the characters and ideas which influenced him in the university phase, which is a phase in which he was moved to Salafist Jihadism, and because he is the youngest of the family, obedient, and close to the parents, he had a greater capacity to camouflage his intellectual transformations and newfound commitments, and because the family does not have experience or knowledge of these religious and political tendencies it was not able to infer from the first time he travelled to Yemen that their son belongs to the Salafist Jihadist current, and that he is hiding this from them.

It is not clear whether those who influenced him were university colleagues or surrounding mosques, or the area in which he resided, but what is astonishing is how he was able to not show the change before his family, and to preserve the same pattern of life, with his wife and daughters, who was also surprised by the travel of her husband. She implored him to return to the house and family, but he would reply that he left his mother, father, wife and daughters to the care of God, and that they are the most valuable thing he has.

The financial situation of the family is closer to the middle class, and his job situation was acceptable, for he was the head of a section and earned a monthly salary of 800 JD, and his brothers were also from the middle class. He did not marry after he travelled to Syria, and remained loyal to his wife, as his mother says, which means that socio-economic conditions cannot help

in explaining his adoption of Salafi Jihadist thought, but rather there were persons who influenced and persuaded him of these ideas as a part of religion.

It would be possible to say that Murad converted in a soft and easy manner, without stirring attention and without noticeable changes in behavior, to Salafist Jihadist ideas, and he hadn't a deep knowledge of those ideas but it would appear that he was

influenced by persons espousing that thought, and thence he moved to Syria also in a calm manner, without clashing directly with his family or even his wife, and he remained in touch with them until his death.

The psychological observation is that he has a peaceful, unaggressive nature, and his mother mentioned that he could not bear for a chicken to be killed in front of him, but simultaneously- as his family mentioned- he was emotional, and was to the greatest extent affected by events in Syria, and was persuaded that his religious duty is to help the Syrians, for these facts represent- practically speaking a situation of inner struggle, which eventually led to travelling to Syria and enlisting with Al-Nusra, but as his family claims, in assignments that are not directly connected to combat.

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### **Mohammad...Formal or Substantive Transformations?**

His family did not know that he was in Syria except upon the broadcast of his confessions on Syrian television, with another person named Abdel Rahman. Mohammad was 27 years old, and spoke of how he departed for Syria, and immediately upon crossing the border, he was arrested with others by the Syrian forces, and naught is known about him till this moment.

Mohammad- in that interview- spoke about the stages he underwent, ending up captured by the Syrian Army, after he had planned to reach Al-Nusra and to Abu Anas Al-Sahaba, which are details that are fully consistent with what his brothers say about his life and the transformations of their brother, during the last years.<sup>1</sup>

The family resides in the popular Al-Mazare` neighborhood in north Marka, and reaching the building in which the brothers reside requires traversing various alleyways, to reach the house which they inhabit next to another building inhabited by their cousins, including a Diwan that comprises a family tree whose roots go back to Sarafand, south of Haifa, that is Palestine of 1948.<sup>2</sup>

All of his brothers, who are uneducated, work in the field of painting vehicles, and own garages in Bayader Wadi Al-Seer,

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1 See: a filmed and recorded interview with him aired on official Syrian TV, on the following link "Confessions of Jordanian Terrorists in Syria." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1lhJutd6Jo>, 6 Aug. 2012, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1lhJutd6Jo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1lhJutd6Jo).

2 We conducted an interview with three of his brothers at their residence on Monday 4 September 2017.

and Marka area. His father used to work in the field of greasing trucks, and Mohammad like his brother is uneducated and reached the fifth elementary school class only, and then started to work in the same profession as his older brothers, and he is before the youngest brother among six brothers and one sister.<sup>1</sup>

For a period of time he worked in the field of vehicle body repair and painting, but he did not continue like the rest of his brothers, and preferred another job, and so he worked as a bus conductor, food distributor, prior to reaching the age of twenty years and working as a taxi driver for a private office. And given that the law does not allow those below 22 years of age to possess a driver's license for a public vehicle, he forged his license, and this was discovered by Security, and he was imprisoned in the year 2005 (at the age of around 20 years) for a period of one year by virtue of a court ruling.

Prison was the main transformative point in the life of Mohammad, for before that he lived a degenerate life involving alcohol consumption to the point of inebriety, consuming drugs, seeking pleasure with women, and actually prior to his imprisonment he travelled to Iraq and sold his kidney there to obtain money to spend on prostitutes.<sup>2</sup>

His three brothers concur that he was different from the family, with a private life, and unconvinced by the way in which his brothers lead their lives, and wishes to make money quickly, and seek pleasure and women. He clashed by nature with others, and felt bitter at his condition of poverty, and felt persecuted by the

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1 Ibid.

2 Some of what was said by his three brothers in the interview, Ibid.

government- a feeling that was reinforced by his imprisonment and sentencing.<sup>1</sup>

At the Swaqa Correctional and Rehabilitation Centre (SCRC) there were those awaiting him, for in the view of his brother, he was very vulnerable to influence. Despite his rebellious conduct and stubborn nature he had a simplistic personality to the point of naiveté according to his elder brother. Mohammad entered prison whilst feeling frustrated and angry at society and the government, whereby the four jihadists who were in a cell close to him did not encounter any difficulty to influence him with record speed, and the Jihadist prisoners were jailed due to attempts to reach the West Bank and implement an operation against Israel. The four were residents of Shneller refugee camp in Ruseifeh, close to the residence location of Mohammad, and the four are known members of the Salafist Jihadist current.<sup>2</sup>

His brother noticed in their repeated visits the behavioral changes of their brother, for he gave up smoking, learned by heart a part of the Quran, preformed the five prescribed daily prayers, and grew his beard. One year after he came out of prison a totally changed person- in form- relative to the person his brothers knew, but in essence he remained also different from them, despite the fact that they are religious, keep prayer; but upon release he was wearing Afghani attire, grew his beard, excommunicated the government, and held a hostile view of society.

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1 Ibid.

2 See regarding the case of the four convicted persons: "Five accused persons are sentenced to 3 and 4 years on charges of possession of arms and attempting to smuggle them to Israel", the Jordanian Ad-dustour newspaper, 18 September 2014.

In general, he remained different from the family, and became angry at society and the governments, by virtue of belonging to the Salafist Jiihadist current, which provided him with the religious cover for such feelings.<sup>1</sup>

After his release, he asked his family to help him get married, even though he had no money, and had spent what he earned on women, even from selling his kidney. Actually, his brothers who are also of limited income, cooperated with their father (who died a few years later) on securing the expenses of the marriage of their brother, which is what actually happened. He got married and had successively three sons, during the following years.<sup>2</sup>

Despite marriage and religiosity he did not stably remain in a particular job, where he worked with the husband of his sister on a bulldozer, and in distributing food. Actually, his relations with members of the Salafi Jihadist current deepened in the following years, and the four whom he got to know in prison were released, and so he reconnected with them, and they introduced him to other persons from the Jihadist current, and one of them, as Mohammad mentioned in his confessions on Syria television, smuggled people to fight in Iraq, with Al-Qaeda, and actually Mohammad tried to convince him to smuggle him, but he refused to do so.<sup>3</sup>

Mohammad became for practical purposes within the circle of Salafi Jihadism, and he joined them in religious lessons given by a sheikh who is close to this current, whom the government

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1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

3 See his confession on Syrian television, Ibid.

subsequently barred from attending the religious courses, and during this period he was introduced to others from the supporters of the Salafi Jihadist current.

Subsequently, Mohammad worked as the driver of a vehicle owned by one of the known jihadists, for purposes of distributing tires supplies, but a Customs patrol stopped him, and discovered that in the vehicle are two Russian rifles, as he mentioned in his confessions on Syrian television, and he denied knowledge of their presence, but he was sentenced to four months of prison, and was released afterwards in 2012, after tens of Jordanians started to flow into Syria to fight with Al-Nusra, whose star began to rise, and its leaders from among Jordanians were located in Dera, such as Abu Anas Al-Sahabah, Abu Julaybib and others.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime, one of the known jihadist personalities from the same quarter was released from prison, who was one of those imprisoned in the millennium case (in the year 2000) and was sentenced to hard labor, for a prolonged period, but he was released as a result of a Royal amnesty at the end of 2011; and thus Mohammad got to know him and others in Al-Mazare` quarter itself.

After being arrested by Syrian forces, some of the members of the Salafist Jihadist current and his brothers helped in the maintenance costs of his family, where the latter claim that the members of the Jihadist current persuaded him that they will bear the expenses of his family and children during the period of his fighting alongside Al-Nusra.

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1 His interview on Syrian television, *ibid.*

His brother said, that in the year 2016, he was surprised to be summoned by the religious court, and found that members of the Jihadist current persuaded his wife to ask for divorce given that he disappeared for a long period of time, which is what actually materialized, and they married her to a member of the current, who has three former wives, and has sons also fighting in Syria, and owns a car repair shop.<sup>1</sup>

Ever since that famous encounter in the year 2012 with their brother in August 2012, the family has no information on him, regarding whether he is still detained by Syrian Security, or was liquidated, or otherwise, but they are paying an exorbitant

price for that bitter memory, and from the presence of question marks that they pondered because of their brother, for the name prevented the nephew from achieving his wish, after graduating from Muta University/Civil Branch, in aviation engineering to enlist in the Royal Air Force, due to the presence of the name of his uncle.

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1 Ibid.



## Concluding Comments

Based on the foregoing cases and others, there is a constellation of observations and conclusions which buttress the findings we treated in the previous chapter:

- 1- We observed the role of direct social interactions, including particular friendships at the university, mosque and neighborhood, which were a powerful and influential impact on the persons, whether through converting to the jihadist current, or joining those groups abroad.
- 2- Concerning youth involved in the Muslim Brotherhood, there was a noticeable influence insofar as the jihadi education within the organization is concerned, and focus on the idea of jihad, enthusiastic songs and the establishment of an Islamic state, on the sons of the members who joined those groups. While the Brotherhood explicitly declares its rejection of violence and armed action domestically, the Syrian case appeared totally different, in the presence of an internal war and violent killing, which produced justification given the difference between the Jordanian situation and the situation there, while weakening the argument of the leaders of the Brotherhood to prevent the members from joining those groups.
- 3- At the same time, we observed that affiliates to the Ikhwan tend to enlist with Al-Nusra rather than ISIS. The reason is that Al-Nusra in the beginning did not evince its Al-Qaeda identity, and because it was the main address for those coming from abroad, including the Muslim Brotherhood from

- Palestine, or the sons of the Palestinian refugee camps in Syria, who were close to the Palestinian Hamas movement.
- 4- Television, media images, enthusiastic songs and propaganda against the Syrian regime contributed to influencing a wide sector of youths in Jordanian society, and played a role in spurring a portion of youths to accepting the idea of travel to fight abroad, on grounds of defending the Syrians against the dictatorship.
  - 5- At a later stage, sectarian propaganda influenced the process of recruitment and mobilization; particularly after Hezbollah militarily intervened in Syria in 2012, which we may perceive in the Jordanian opinion polls and the radical transformation in the position towards Hezbollah.
  - 6- There is no one single psychological model, for there are cases characterized by an inclination to leadership and the desire to appear prominently and powerfully. Although, there is the model of the peaceful person, whereby we have wide and varied spaces in psychological terms, even if there is an emotional proclivity that predominates in many cases, from among those who were not previously members of the Salafi Jihadist current but became so after relocating in Syria and integrating in Al-Nusra. Hence, the factor which animated them in the beginning was their emotional personalities vis a vis what is happening in Syria and Iraq, prior to intellectually and ideologically transforming in a subsequent stage.

- 7- The process of moving from Al-Nusra to ISIS was not associated, in many instances, with intellectual or ideological convictions, but rather stemmed from personal differences between Jordanians themselves within Al-Nusra, as occurred with Sa`ad Huneiti and Amer Dmour, and before them Mohammad Jamal. This applies also applies to Abu Anas Al-Sahaba and others, even though there are numerous Jordanians in Al-Nusra who found themselves closer to the discourse of ISIS, after the cleavage between the two movements, whereupon they joined ISIS, and seceded from Al-Nusra, and we have numerous examples of the processes of defection which took place.
- 8- There were numerous cases of liquidation within Jordanian circles, whether in conflicts within Al-Nusraa or between it and ISIS, or between ISIS or Al-Nusra or the Free Army as evidenced in the case of Ahmad Al-Ubeidi, Mohammad Jamal, and Abdel Rahman, and many others who died as a result of internal disputes rather than in a struggle with the Syrian state's army.



## Conclusions and Recommendations

Some of the traditional leaders of the Salafi Jihadist current aver that the “current no longer exists in Jordan”, due to the volume of the adherent’s emigration to Syria and Iraq (and to a lesser degree Yemen, Libya and other areas). They also claim that due to the number of those killed (who are according to the most conservative estimates in the hundreds), as well as tightened national security since April 2011 to date (particularly after the events of 2016-Irbid and Karak). Actually, the authorities have implemented a wide campaign of arrests encompassing hundreds of members of the current and its sympathizers.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, this conclusion holding that the strength of the current has receded is doubtful, based on the figures, but if we take into consideration that it is stated by the leaders of the current opposed to ISIS within the Salafi Jihadist circles, it would appear plausible. This could be so because this orientation, which inclines increasingly in the recent years to eschew armed activity inside Jordan is in decline, compared to the rise of those influenced from the sons of the current themselves, and those recently recruited by ISIS.

There is a myriad of factors contributing to the activity of the current during recent years, and its reconstitution. Prominently, is the rise of the wing supporting ISIS in Jordan, in addition to numerous internal factors, for the regional conflict (particularly in the period after the Arab Spring and events in Syria and Iraq, and the sectarian war) played a major role in

1 These statements were made by more than leader of the traditional Salafi Jihadist current whom the authors of the present study met.

reinforcing the motives behind the migration of hundreds of Jordanian youths to the combat zones.

On the other hand, it is true that hundreds were killed and others are still abroad from adherents to the current, as well as internal struggle that led to the splintering of the jihadist current into groups and ideologies, in addition to hundreds of persons jailed in cases associated with the current. Even so, the possibility for the current to recover in strength and popularity is very possible during the coming period, particularly when we take into consideration that a large number of those sentenced as a result of an association with this current will subsequently be released from prison. Based on the studies, it is likely that the majority will not abandon this thought; in fact, the period of jail probably represents a major station for entrenching and developing the thought of the current's adherents.

Hence, as a preliminary conclusion, we cannot anticipate a stage of decline and recession in the emergence of the extremist jihadi current. On the contrary, a history of reading and the realistic indicators emphasize that there is continuity, and a new reconstitution after the demise of ISIS in the neighboring countries of Syria and Iraq.

As such, it is necessary to read anew the results of this study to infer the main conclusions, and then to build the indicators meriting reading and analysis, and finally present recommendations which could be of benefit to the decision makers and the institutions concerned with this matter.

## 1- Major Conclusions:

We find in the chapters of the study numerous findings and conclusions linked to the current. If we put aside the chapter on the historical trajectory, the foremost findings are represented in that the Governorate of Zarqa; particularly the city of Ruseifeh, represents today the most important center in terms of the influence and presence of the current. This stems from the fact that the known leaders of the current are from the governorate, coupled with the size of participation of adherents in Fath Al-Sham (formerly Al-Nusra Front) and ISIS, along with the proportion of those who reached leading positions in Syria- which is actually a remarkable matter.

The quantitative analysis indicates that 40% of the studied cases are from Zarqa, while around 17.4% are from Irbid Governorate, 13% from Balqa, and 12% from Amman. As mentioned, these results are based on the Snow Ball methodology to collect information and sources, and is not a strict criterion, but rather provides indicators, results and beneficial significations.

According to these statistics, and based on our research experience in studying the phenomenon, it is palpable that there is a rising presence of the current in Irbid, namely in Irbid refugee camp and the neighboring areas, which is something noticeable by number of fighters from there in Syria and Iraq, and the participants in the Irbid operation of 2016. After Zarqa comes the Balqa in the current's prevalence, followed by Amman, especially in east Amman, and then Ma`an and Karak.

At the level of social traits, the foremost finding and conclusions (and we will refer to this in the indicators) is the movement from the pattern of "Male stereotypes" in the current to the "family pattern", and this is manifested in the phenomenon of the jihadist brothers, the fathers and sons, the jihadist sisters, and the jihadist juveniles. With this, we notice that the current is not any more formed by male adults, influenced by this thought, as previously thought. Rather, the current is increasingly defined by the family - parents, wives, sons and daughters, which means attaining a greater degree of social and cultural entrenchment than was previously the case.

Another conclusion that is interlaced with the foregoing is that we have three generations of jihadists by age scale. As such, if we assume that the optimal age for involvement in this thought is the twenties, then we would find proportionality and correlation between the three jihadist generations in Jordan and the age variable: the first generation is that which partook in fighting or that was influenced by the Afghani scene and the charisma of Sheikh Abdullah Azzam in the decade of the eighties, and then returned at the beginning of the decade of the nineties; it is presumed that those that remained jihadist today are in the decade of the forties or fifties. There is also the second generation which appeared in a subsequent phase, with the events of September 2001 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003; among those that fought in Iraq with the group of Al-Zarqawi or in other locations. As for the third generation, it is those who committed to the current over the last six years, and particularly as relates to the events of Syria and Iraq at the end of 2011. Most of this

generation is primarily in their twenties and thirties, and among them is a sizeable proportion who were killed while fighting alongside those organizations, from among university students and others.

Statistically speaking, the data shows a majority of adherents being from the younger generation, even though there are, as previously mentioned, other ages, such as juveniles, and those above thirty, and some even reach the sixties and seventies, where the quantitative analysis indicates that 77% are below thirty.

As to education, it is clear that there is a noticeably high proportion of later currents composed of an educated class, which reached 21.6% of BA holders and university students, and 1.8% graduate studies (Master's, and those with doctoral degrees), in the sense that the ratio reaches a quarter of the overall number. This is a significantly high ratio, compared to the stereotypical image used to connect acceptance of this thought with a low level of education and culture.

The situation is no different concerning the profession, employment and social status, for there is a high ratio of employed persons compared to the stereotypical image connecting them to unemployment, where the unemployment rate reaches 27.6%, while others are employed. This does not necessarily mean a diminution of the significance of unemployment as one of the windows through which to read the phenomenon, for this ratio which is close to a third signifies that unemployment could be a factor of influence.

Based on a constellation of indicators and findings, it becomes evident that there are two social segments which are most susceptible to falling under the influence of this thought: the first is the unemployed and marginalized with low income, who constitute a large ratio of the current. The second is a segment of the middle class, who tend to be business owners, educated, and those of undergraduate university education and above.

At the level of professions and employment, it is clear that there is commonality between the public and private sectors insofar as the numbers of those belonging to this current, but the private sector accounts for the lion's share. Regarding professions, there is a clear prominence of particular professions such as the professions of free enterprise (freelancing), daily jobs (and it was in clear prominence based on research the presence of a proportion of those working in the field of vehicles; mechanics, maintenance, drivers), and teachers, university students and government employees.

Based on the research experience and the case studies, a set of significant results became evident, namely that there are varied intellectual tributaries or backgrounds for those who joined ISIS and Al-Nusra in fighting in Syria and Iraq. This is due to not all of them being members of the Jordanian Salafi Jihadist current, where a group have a background with the Muslim Brotherhood, or were at some stage active members of the organizations, and here emerges the role of the influence of Abdullah Azzam (one of the former leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, and the godfather of the Afghani jihad) as an inspiring model for the youth of the Brotherhood in terms of partaking in the Jihadist

groups. There are also those that belong to traditional Salafi backgrounds, who are less than those that belong to the current known as the Salafi movement in number, and here appears the influence of personalities in the Salafi current such as Umar Yousef (Abu Anas), who subsequently became the mufti of the Zarqawi group in Iraq in 2004, and was killed there, and so we find in him another inspiring model for the adherents to the current. Additionally, there are those who belonged to the peaceful Jama`at Al-Da`wa W`al Tabligh, which does not interfere in politics, those who did not previously belong to Islamic tendencies, and some who have criminal records who were recruited or were influenced by this thought inside the prison system.

Other findings from the case studies include a significant influence from the network of friends, whether in university, neighborhood, mosque or even club, and likewise the factor of kinship has a noticeable impact. The matter is not any more to control the activities and ideas of these currents in the mosque, but rather the neighborhood, the club, the houses, the university and the workplace are all locations where influence could materialize.

In general, based on all the foregoing, it is difficult to say that there is a profile or a particular stereotype of persons belonging to these currents, for there are different ages (with a predominance of youth) and varied social, economic, educational and cultural levels, which attenuate or circumscribe the stereotypical image which link the members of these groups to specific variables in a rigorous manner.

## 2- Significant Indicators:

The present study revealed indicators which call for attention and thought, with a subsequent view to the method of controlling and facing them, or at least to limit their accentuation, and foremost of these indicators are:

- a) A noticeable increase in the ratio of women enlisting with this current, with this participation evolving from merely being the wife of one of the members of this current, to participation through social media by expressing belonging to this current and advocating for it, through participating in the logistical preparation of operations. It is a very recent phenomenon of Jordanian women listed in cases of terrorism against the state.

Such a development will probably be enhanced and become a trend, akin to the Saudi case, where it began through relations of marriage and kinship between women and members of the current, and thence activities of women in support and sympathy with their jailed relatives. This was typically followed by participation in the media, and then migration, enlistment and implementation of suicide missions or combat operations with these groups.

- b) In parallel, but to a lesser degree in terms of density and quality emerges the topic of juveniles, as participants in this current, is the conversion from an individual capacity to a familial one will necessarily reflect on the children, as we find in the literature and media of ISIS a special interest in

children and juveniles, through what it calls the youth of the caliphate. Here, where we found in numerous operations and groups which were declared the presence of juveniles, which has led to the establishment of a home particular to terrorist juveniles.

- c) Rise in the effectiveness of the current in Irbid, and in northern areas compared to previous stages, particularly in Irbid refugee camp, where we noticed that it exports persons to enlist with Al-Nusra and ISIS in Syria. This is the case regarding the city of Karak which, while it accounts for a lower ratio than other governorates, appears on the map of the current, whether in the Karak operations or even some of the commanders present in Syria and Iraq, and other remarkable traits.
- d) Continuity in the trajectory of the current, for numerous persons that were detained and sentenced in State Security Court cases return to work and are active during subsequent periods, and some of them were sentenced in more than one successive case, and others participated in more than one external arena in combat alongside those groups and organizations.
- e) Growth of the phenomenon among the educated, whether in government or private schools, where there is a ratio reaching 8.2%. Moreover, we note that many of those killed in Syria and Iraq, or were detained and sentenced are teachers, which requires devoting care and attention to this important segment in the educational process and in influencing the coming generations.

- f) Rise in the numbers of the members of ISIS, at the expense of the traditional jihadist current, where there are indicators that show that they are the majority of this current, and that they are the wing that is more extreme and more inclined to violence and hostility towards the state, while the other wing under the leadership of Al-Maqdisi and Abu Qutadah Al-Filistini, is inclined to a more peaceful approach to the state and avoidance of a political confrontation or clash.

### **3- Recommendations:**

An elucidation of the phenomenon, its size and the inputs which form it, the transformations it underwent, and indicators of new developments, are all a significant exposition of the problem leading us to build polices, approaches and the required programs to confront it or to circumscribe the growth of the phenomenon and to tackle its impact. The following are the foremost recommendations of the study:

- a) Attach greater importance to change the current approaches of the policies of combatting extremism and terrorism from thinking solely of the male and adult individuals to include women and children, and this should necessarily be reflected in the methods, discourse and institutions all at once. Actually, a specialized center for care of juveniles has been established. While this is important it is not sufficient, however, for there are increasing numbers of women and children, and jihadist families, and it is necessary to expand the thinking to redesign the discourse, approach and priorities.

- b) Linked to this is the “challenge of returnee families” coming back from abroad, where it is necessary for thought to be given to women and children who were abroad, and integrated directly or indirectly in the community of those groups and ideas, which demands allocating an institutional, cultural and societal effort particular to this segment, in order to study it and to provide a vision for dealing with it, along with reintegrating it in society to the extent possible.
- c) Moreover, there is the challenge of the returnees from abroad, for the challenge of returnees from prisons is more important and urgent, because it is an established reality and may be observed closely. Actually, today there are hundreds of convicted persons relating to numerous cases, including promotion cases, attempting to enlist and otherwise. It is expected for them to complete serving their sentences at the centers of reform and rehabilitation during the coming two years between 2020 and 2022, where the average sentence ranges between five to seven years. During the previous years, the majority of those were placed in quarters allocated for the members of those groups, which means that mostly they developed and entrenched their affiliation and connection to this current, which manifests through past experiences with numerous graduates of the reform and correctional and rehabilitation centers, which places us before a substantial number of jihadists without the presence of a clear program or an approach to deal with them.

Dealing with this challenge must be a complete reassessment of the program of guidance and care inside the centers of reform and rehabilitation, institutionalizing the efforts in this domain, and involve various institutions from the state and civil society in this program particular to rehabilitation in the prison phase and adaptation after prison. For examples, programs can include conditional release, providing a different environment, monitoring of behavior by specialized civil society institutions, and other tools or approaches. However, what is of greater importance is to develop the discourse addressed to them in a studied and intelligent manner.

- d) Among the matters necessary to devote attention to is how to deal with the families. Clearly, the condition of familial sympathies, and perhaps tribal sympathy with the members of the group in the battlefields and prisons become in subsequent stages a source of influence. Thus, the family members should not be penalized due to their relatives being members of the organization, while the processes of visitation and positive and gentle dealing by those concerned should be observed, particularly by the security bodies in their dealing with the families. This could be greatly detrimental in limiting the propensity for sympathies, and would lead the members of the family to an opposite orientation, although the opposite is true, because the dealings by those bodies with the family members will shape the image of the state in their eyes, whereby if the treatment is comfortable then the propaganda of the current would fail insofar as demonizing the state, since the state is conducive to preserving family.

- e) It is clear from the quantitative and qualitative development that there is an abject failure in prevention programs against extremism and terrorism announced by the state, along with plans and strategies drawn to achieve this aim, as well as a lack of resources spent on conferences, lectures, research projects; thus leaving information and methodological gaps in tackling extremism from a “cultural approach”, which connotes the necessity of review and assessment by the specialists. It also requires a reconsideration of determining the concerned institutions (cultural, religious, media and academic) and their role and importance in the cultural approach.
- f) Reconsider the punishments and measures adopted against non-violent crimes associated with violence and extremism. This particularly refers to the accusation of promotion, and endeavor to devise a gradual alternative method to deal with this case, in view of the seriousness of the period of imprisonment in entrenching and reinforcing the thought, instead of reforming it.
- g) Conduct in-depth socioeconomic research on the areas that are less incubating of this current, and diagnose the various causes and factors which contribute to the propagation of this thought and its supporters.
- h) Adopt the developmental approach in tackling extremism and direct it to the areas that are less incubating of the extremist current based on scientific studies.

- i) Reinforce the inclination of the traditional wing of the jihadist current (under the leadership of Al-Maqidsi and Abu Qutadah) in the direction of declaring “peaceful calling of people”, which would help in encircling the organizations and cells linked to or are closer to ISIS ideologically, which were behind the operations in Irbid, Karak and Baqa.

One of the most important conclusions is the transition from "masculine individuality" in the Salafi movement to the "family style", which is illustrated by the inclusion of brothers, fathers, sons, sisters, and youth in the Jihadist phenomenon. Presently, the current is no longer composed of only adult male members who are influenced by this thought. Instead, the phenomenon is expanding to the larger family; parents, sons of wives, and daughters. This means that the phenomenon is reaching a greater degree of social and cultural rooting than previously witnessed.

The other conclusion is that we are now facing three generations of jihad-ists. If we assume that the ideal age for engaging in this ideology is the 20s, then we will find a fit between the three generations of jihadists in Jordan and the variation of age. The first generation is comprised of those who fought in Afghanistan or those who were influenced by the events in Afghanistan. More specifically, it includes those who were influenced by the charisma of Abdullah Azzam during the 1980s, then returned from Afghanistan in the beginning of 1990s. Those who remained jihadist upon their return are assumed to currently be in their forties and fifties. The second generation emerged at a later stage with the events of September 2001 and the occupation of Iraq in 2003. This generation includes those who fought in Iraq with the organization of Zarqawi or elsewhere.

As for the third generation, it is comprised of those who have committed to the Jihadist current in the last six years, especially with the events of Syria and Iraq at the end of 2011. The majority of this generation are currently in their twenties and thirties. A large percentage included in this category are university students and others who are fighting with these organizations abroad and those killed abroad.