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THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN EUROPE

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INTRODUCTION

Ending European support for non-violent Islamism is about defending our European way of life

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> **Allah is our objective, the Prophet is our leader, the Koran is our constitution, jihad is our way, dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope.**
>
> - Motto of the Muslim Brotherhood

No one sums up the Muslim Brotherhood's eerie vision for Europe better than the figurehead of non-violent Islamism, Yusuf al-Qaradawi. As he stated on Qatar TV in July 2007: "The peaceful conquest has foundations in this religion, and therefore, I expect that Islam will conquer Europe without resorting to the sword or fighting. It will do so by means of da'wa and ideology."

The common European values of democracy, freedom of speech, freedom of religion and legal equality are weakened at the margins for every European citizen won over to the cause of the Muslim Brotherhood. Our constitutions may appear to be carved in stone, but their meaning needs to be in the hearts of the people. If a large enough minority - and possibly majorities in some cities, neighbourhoods and constituencies- affirm a radically different social order, demands for Islamic special legislation risk going from unthinkable to a part of the political game. In the long run this risks affecting the policies of

governments in a EU Member State and further down the road our constitutions and values.

Too often this perspective is conspicuously absent from the European debate on Islamism. Fortunately, a growing number of policy specialists have come to realise that the Salafi-jihadist security threat must be met with determination, even if many participants in the policy debate often resorts to ambivalent terminology by, for example, using the rather bland term 'violent extremism'.

However, the threat of non-violent Islamism is still ignored by our political leaders. Or rather, the politicians are still trying to buy off the Islamists and this increases their power and fattens their organisations. At all levels. Municipalities and regions across Europe are funding Islamist study associations and cultural associations with links to the Muslim Brotherhood. Member States - like my own country Sweden - send multi-million dollar donations to Islamic Relief, whose Islamist agenda and anti-semitism has been exposed in recent years. Also the European Union has been funding Islamist organizations both inside and outside Europe.

The aim of this report is stimulate a debate on what new policies we need to institute to prevent the spread of Islamism in Europe. My ambition is to persuade the European Commission to change its policy and stop all contributions to Islamist organisations. Hopefully, such a policy change by the European Commission would be seen as an example for Member States, regions and municipalities to emulate so that taxes are not used to fund contributions to organisations that work against the values we Europeans hold dear.

I would like to thank both esteemed researchers, Dr. Paul Stott and Dr. Tommaso Virgili, for their very thorough research and analysis. Meticulous, well-documented and concrete policy proposals, such as this research, are very much needed to raise awareness among policy makers, citizens and security forces about the real threat Islamism, including the Muslim Brotherhood, poses to our societies.

Executive Summary

Understanding the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe is complex. Indeed it has been made deliberately so by the secrecy surrounding the organisation, and its tendency to operate more as an ideal than a formally structured political organisation. This has obscured understanding by policy makers in Europe. Given the number of former activists now emerging from this milieu, greater understanding of the Ikhwan's nature and long term aims is now available. The European Union needs to listen to these voices, and compare them to what has been said by some of the Muslim representative organisations in Europe.

Rooted in the ideals of the global Islamist movements of the twentieth century, the MB is not a supporter of liberal democracy or western values. Its means are pragmatic and include tactical alliances with progressive movements, but its ultimate goal is the acquisition of power (*tamkin*) to build an Islamic state based on sharia. Its attitude toward violence is also utilitarian, and *jihad* is embraced when conditions make it convenient.

The MB in Europe is not a single, centralised organisation, but rather a starfish of different branches formally independent from one another, but linked by ideological patterns, common umbrella organisations and individual ties. The report examines the most relevant MB-related NGOs in Europe, with a specific focus on Islamic Relief.

Security agencies and parliamentary inquiries from multiple EU Member States have made a similar assessment of the damage MB-related organisation have been causing to security and social cohesion. Yet, this has not prevented state institutions from interfacing with the MB as privileged interlocutors and representatives of the local Muslim communities – a trend that ought to stop.

The European Commission has fallen into the same trap, disbursing large amounts of money to finance MB organisations or empowering them and their members in different ways. This report provides relevant examples of misguided engagement between the EU and the Ikhwan, and it argues that this support should shift toward non-Islamist organisations.

With specific regard to Islamic Relief, EU institutions have funded it to the tune of over 40 million Euros. This has continued at a time when member states have increasingly begun to both question, and indeed to move away from this organisation following repeated example of extremist comments involving senior figures, and exposure of its connections to the Muslim Brotherhood. The report argues that the EU should call a moratorium on all funding to Islamic Relief Worldwide and its constituent organisations whilst an investigation into its problems with extremism, and the precise nature of its relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood, is conducted.

PREFACE

The Muslim Brotherhood: A Clear and Present Challenge to European Values

Europe's values pivot on the principle of freedom. The individual's freedom to speak, the freedom to organise politically, the freedom to follow, or not follow, any faith of their own choosing. The freedom to do any action providing it is within the recognised law of the land. These values are intrinsic to the west. But they are not the values of the Muslim Brotherhood. In giving a platform and funding to representative organisations and charities influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood, the European Union is embracing not a friend, but a political foe. It bestows status on those who are unworthy of it. Worse, to give taxpayers money to Muslim Brotherhood-related groups is to risk financing the undermining, and ultimately the destruction of our own values.

A function of Muslim Brotherhood-related groups in Europe is to portray themselves as community representatives, and to explain events and issues to society from what they declare to be the Muslim perspective. This has considerable appeal for sections of the media, local authorities, and even officials at the national and European level. It is unclear however what mandate organisations such as FIOE and its national branches, FEMYSO and the European Forum of Muslim Women have, if any.

In engaging with such organisations, national and EU institutions risk listening to the loudest voices, or those who have jockeyed most skilfully for position, and missing out on other viewpoints. They also ignore Middle Eastern civil society, which has its own criticisms of the Muslim Brotherhood. In embracing Muslim Brotherhood-related organisations as partners, western liberal democracies reduce the political space in which they themselves operate, particularly with regards to migrant communities. There is less of a dialogue with the citizen as an individual, diminishing a relationship properly rooted in the duties the state and individual owe to one another. Instead, a relationship emerges between the state and organisations that 'represent' Muslims to government and its institutions. And, as we have seen on issues such as the Mohammed cartoons or the hijab, those representative organisations will be working to their own agendas.

The Muslim Brotherhood milieu in Europe does not support Islamic State or Al-Qaeda. However, they are far from being pacifists – as will be discussed in this report, their support for Hamas and the jihad in Syria demonstrate a willingness to see violence as a suitable tool to achieve their aims. The Ikhwan's flirtation with Iran's theocracy is further indicative of its worldview. The European Union and its member states should be careful not to set the bar so low that people are embraced merely for opposing the terrorist outrages of Al-Qaeda or Islamic State. After all, nobody seems so willing to shake hands with non-violent neo-Nazis as a method

to counter the violent ones. The very idea is preposterous.

If European institutions and policy makers decide to hold their nose and to work with Muslim Brotherhood-related groups, they display a poverty of low expectations. Islamist organisations in Europe who do not profess violence may be cast as 'moderate' or 'good' and brought into the political mainstream, largely because they are assessed in relation to Salafi-jihadi groups that are openly violent. This is a significant mistake. It not only betrays Europe's values for temporary political expediency, but also ignores the long-term effect of privileging Islamist actors.

The label of 'moderate' or 'orthodox' hides the ways such groups gravely undermine freedom of religion, the rights of women, homosexuals, non-Islamist Muslims and other minorities, and the vital separation of mosque and state, and thus make the ground fertile for their more extreme brethren to plough.

The Muslim Brotherhood has made progress this century. In the Middle East it has known both power and repression, but is now a strong political actor in many countries. In Europe, it has built considerable institutions and income streams, and it has developed substantial relationships with political elites. But as can be seen in this report's sections on some of the defectors from and ex-members of the Ikhwan in Europe, these relationships are built on deceit. The Muslim Brotherhood is not honest about who or what it is.

The different reports of security agencies and institutions throughout Europe stress a common pattern: despite its warm words, the Muslim Brotherhood and those who draw on its ideology undermine our social cohesion. Through organs such as the European Council for Fatwa and Research the Ikhwan seek to impose themselves between European citizens, and between nation states and their legal systems. Their real colours may be seen when considering some of that organisation's rulings. The series of scandals which have dogged the charity Islamic Relief, discussed in detail below, now require a consistent and clear response from western governments.

Taxpayers are entitled to ask if this is the sort of organisations Europe's institutions should be funding, and, if so, what is their vision for the future of the continent.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Authors 10

Glossary 11

CHAPTER#1 **Introduction** 13

CHAPTER#2 **Definitions: What is the “Muslim Brotherhood” in Europe?** 17

CHAPTER#3 **Muslim Brotherhood - Theory and Strategy** 23

- The Muslim Brotherhood: A Very Brief History 23
- Pillars of Muslim Brotherhood strategy 25
- Influential MB ideologues in recent history and their narratives 26
  - Tariq Ramadan 26
  - Yusuf al-Qaradawi 29

CHAPTER#4 **The Muslim Brotherhood Presence in Europe** 33

- Financial Affairs 33
- The Iranian connection 34
- Main Muslim Brotherhood-related organisations in Europe 35
  - Council of European Muslims – formerly Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE) 35
  - European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR) 36
  - European Institute for Human Sciences (EIHS) 38
  - Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO) 40
  - European Forum of Muslim Women (EFOMW) 42
- Selected countries assessment 42
  - Austria 42
  - Belgium 43
  - France 45
  - Republic of Ireland 48
  - Sweden 48
  - United Kingdom 51

CHAPTER#5 **EU Institutions and the Muslim Brotherhood** 53

- EU funding to MB-related organisations 53
  - Islamic Relief 53
  - Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO) 53
  - The Islamic University of Gaza 55
  - The Lokahi Foundation 55
  - The Muslim Association of Ireland and the ‘sharia approach’ to radicalisation 56
  - The ‘Saffron Project’: whitewashing the MB? 56
  - The ‘Islamophobia Report’ Scandal 57
- Different types of engagement 58
  - Advertising Islamism at an EEAS seminar 58
  - Endorsing the MB as trustworthy partners 60

CHAPTER#6 **Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW): A Case Study** 63

- Islamic Relief’s Scandals 65

CHAPTER#7 **Conclusions and Policy Recommendations** 69

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Abbreviations

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi, translated as the Justice and Development Party (Turkey)
AMAL	Association des Musulmans d'Alsace, translated as the Alsace Muslim Association
ARSH	Association de la Réforme Sociale Hautepierre
EIHS	European Institute for Human Sciences, sometimes written as the European Institute of Human Sciences and also known by the French acronym IESH (Institut Européen de Sciences Humaines)
ECFR	European Council for Fatwa and Research
EFOMW	European Forum of Muslim Women
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FEMYSO	Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations
FIOE	Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe, an umbrella organisation for a series of Muslim Brotherhood-related groups from across the continent. Now renamed Council of European Muslims
IRW	Islamic Relief Worldwide
JI / JeI	Jamaat-e-Islami, the main clerical party in Pakistan. In Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi (also known as Maulana Maududi) it produced one of the most important Islamic writers and activists of the twentieth century
MB	The abbreviation MB is frequently used to refer to the Muslim Brotherhood
MCB	Muslim Council of Britain, the largest organisation claiming to represent British Muslims
QC	Qatar Charity
QCQ	Qatar Charity Qatar
QCUK	Qatar Charity United Kingdom
UOIF	Union of Islamic Organisations of France, now the Musulmans de France

Arabic Terms

Allahu akbar	God is greatest
Dar al-dawah	House or abode of proselytisation
Dar al-harb	House or abode of war
Dar al-Islam	House or abode of Islam
Dar al-kufr	House or abode of disbelief
Dar al-shahadah	House or abode of testimony
Dawah	Missionary work, proselytisation
Fiqh al-awlawiyyat	Understanding of priorities, a concept popularised by the Muslim Brotherhood's Yusuf al-Qaradawi
Hadith	The term applied to the sayings and actions of Muhammad
Hamas	Acronym of Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya (Islamic Resistance Movement). Hamas also means 'zeal' in Arabic. The organisation is proscribed by the EU in its entirety.
Hudud	Also written as hudood. Islamic penalties set by God.
Ikhwan	Arabic for 'brothers'. The Muslim Brotherhood is often referred to by this term, or sometimes as the 'brethren'.
Jahiliyyah	A concept widely used Qutb, referring to the ignorance of Islam and its rules
Jihad	Struggle, although this has increasingly come to mean the struggle to remake societies through force.
pbuh	Peace be upon him
Salafist	An Islamic puritanical movement which calls for a return to the original ways of Islam, which they argue can be reconciled with contemporary science and knowledge.
Shariah	Islamic law
swt	Subhanahu wa ta'ala, meaning glory to him the exalted
Takfir	The concept of pronouncing someone apostate, which often carries social and/or judicial consequences on the accused persons and can cost them their lives.
Tamkin	Empowerment – final goal of the Muslim Brotherhood consisting in the acquisition of power
Ummah	The concept of a global Muslim community
Usrah	Also written as usra. Arabic for family, the term is used to refer to private meetings held by Muslim Brotherhood members.
Wahhabism	The form of Islam dominant in Saudi Arabia, which frequently denounces innovations that have developed since the earliest Muslims.
Wasatiyyah	Derived from the Arabic word wasat, meaning middle, moderate or fair. It refers to the path the Muslim Brotherhood proclaim they are taking between secularism and extremism.

Photo: NBC News

CHAPTER#1

Introduction

This report examines the Muslim Brotherhood's (hereafter the MB, or Ikhwan) organisation and activities across the European Union. Described as the 'most successful Islamist group in the world'[1] the Muslim Brotherhood's operations in Europe may be characterised in three ways. These are:

- Groups and individuals who openly declare themselves to be MB
- Those meeting privately as sworn-in members of the MB
- Those active in organisations formed by Muslim Brothers or influenced by its ideology

Rooted in the ideals of the global Islamist movements of the twentieth century, the MB is not a supporter of liberal democracy or western values. It sits outside of the European political tradition. However, in the west it attempts to claim and occupy space at local, national and supranational levels. Proponents of its ideals will use concepts of religious freedom, alongside claims of community representation, multiculturalism, identity and calls for 'dialogue' between and across civilisations in order to do so. This strategy includes tactical alliances with progressive movements, but it does not change the final goal of a state based on sharia law. To mention Lorenzo Vidino's real-life anecdote, the same organisation that meets an LGBT group in the morning can host an imam who calls for gays' execution in the afternoon.[2]

This document unveils the Muslim Brotherhood's duplicity, in order to demonstrate that their discourse and agenda are in opposition to liberal democratic values. Islamist organisations such as the Ikhwan, and those influenced by its ideals, are best seen as rivals, possessing a vision for a future Europe that is not only different to that articulated by the main political parties on this continent, but is rooted in opposing values. Europe needs to be aware of an ideological opponent of its liberal democracies. "The common tendency to think of the MB, for example, as a version of the Christian Democrats where the men have beards, the women are veiled and they pray five times a day is misguided", not least because "Christian Democrats do not believe that legislation is pre-empted by the Deity."[3]

Islamic organisations in Europe possess considerable soft power, especially, but not solely, with political organisations on the left. In the social democratic parties, among many trade unions and on the revolutionary left, there is an instinctive sympathy for minorities, who are considered to be innocently making their way in an oppressive and structurally racist Europe.

(1) Rubin, B., *The Muslim Brotherhood: The organization and policies of a global Islamist movement*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010 (Ed.), New York.

(2) *Islamisti d'Occidente*, 12 May 2021, **https://www.facebook.com/oscar.strano.9/videos/1805958252915667/**.

(3) Jenkins, Sir J., *A State of Extremes*. Policy Exchange, 12 June 2017, available at: **https://policyexchange.org.uk/a-state-of-extremes/**

Ben Cobley, in *The Tribe: The Liberal Left and the System of Diversity*,[4] finds Muslims to be one of the favoured groups in a worldview which is increasingly suspicious of, or hostile to what they consider the dominant white majority. The American academic Meredith Tax has written of how support for Islamic organisations, rooted in the politics of my enemy's enemy, has spread "from the far left to feminists, the human rights movement and progressive donors".[5] Assessing the Muslim Brotherhood against this backdrop is increasingly difficult. Among opinion formers there may be scepticism or suspicion about material that focuses upon Islamic organisations or seeks to critique any of their practices, aims or associations. An assumption of racism or bias may be made, which would not occur if other politico-religious currents were being examined.

Soft power co-opts people rather than coercing, shaping their preferences and decisions. The American political scientist Joseph Nye defines it as "getting others to want the outcomes you want".[6] As will be demonstrated in this report, some European institutions do not need coercing by Muslim Brotherhood-related groups – they are instinctively sympathetic to their declared preferences and will take decisions that seek to maintain good working relationships with Islamic organisations, who are seen to represent a demographic they wish to support.

Furthermore, Muslim Brotherhood-related groups desire to serve as an interlocutor between authority and Europe's Muslims. This is something that also serves a purpose for the European Union and its component parts: being seen to engage with and consult the Muslim community can bring both credibility and a feeling of comfort to politicians – and, more prosaically, a voting constituency. Increasingly, the need to consult with representative organisations is reinforced by legislation, particularly in member states in western Europe. A mutually beneficial relationship therefore occurs, with little or no consideration of how representative particular organisations actually *are*, how liberal and democratic their internal practices and ideas may be, or the long-term impact of such engagement upon society. Breaking such relationships is especially difficult. Having been developed under the pretext of 'working with the community', any disturbance to the status quo therefore potentially risks community relations. There are however significant signs that in Europe the challenge posed by Islamism is increasingly being recognised. The recent position paper by the CDU/CSU group in the German parliament, "Die freiheitliche Gesellschaft bewahren, den gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt fördern, den Politischen Islamismus bekämpfen", recognises that Islamism endangers integration and social cohesion.[7] Positions within the CDU/CSU calling for an increased academic focus on the structures of Islamism in Germany, and a dedicated unit within the Interior Ministry, reflect a realisation that not only is society currently poorly served by the research conducted by social scientists, but that Islamism poses a radical challenge to society's existing values.

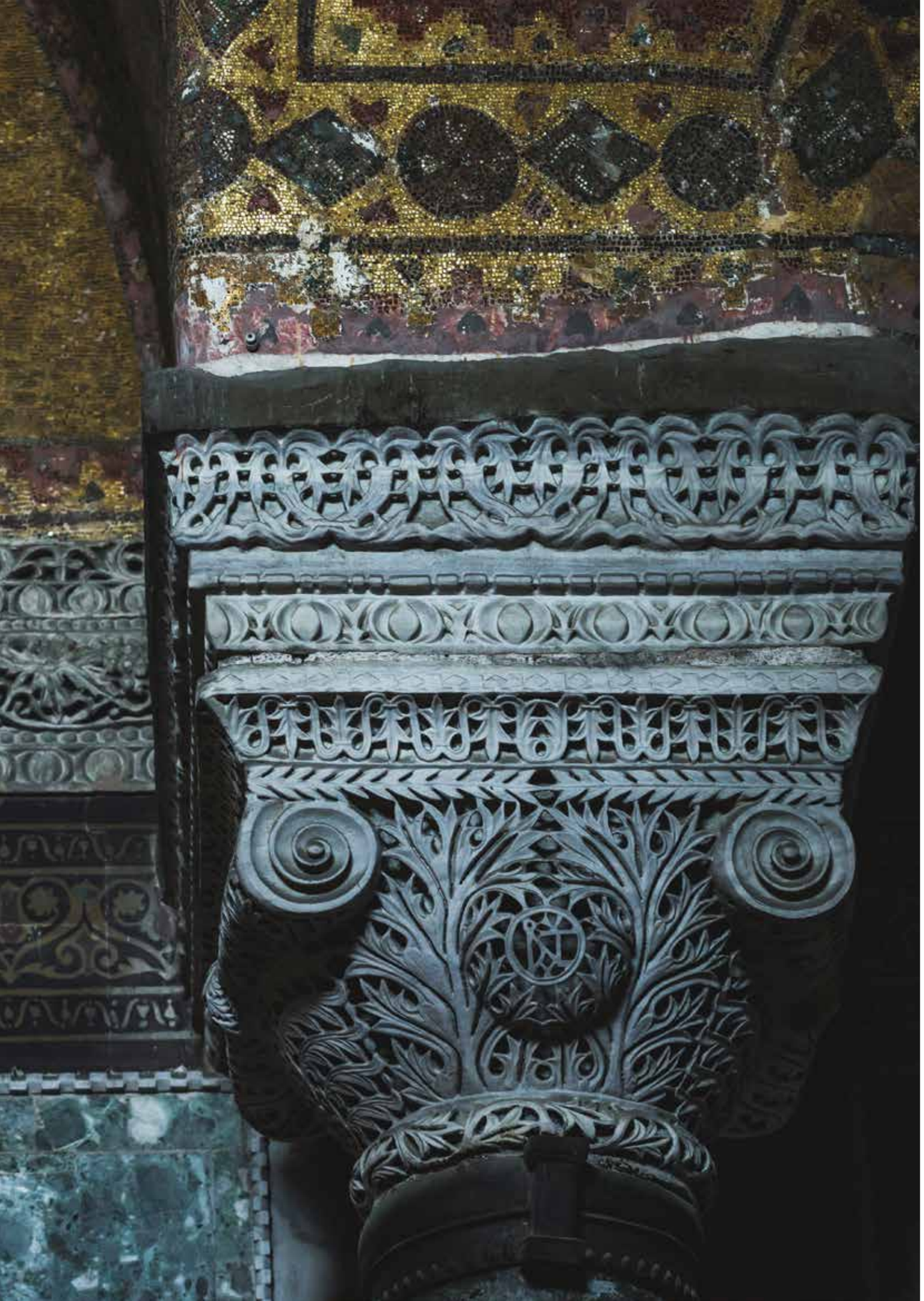
(4) Cobley, B., *The Tribe: The Liberal Left and the System of Diversity*, Societas, 2018, Exeter.

(5) Tax, M., *Double Bind: The Muslim Right, the Anglo-American Left, and Universal Human Rights*, p. 72.

(6) Nye, J., 'Public diplomacy and soft power', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616:1 (2008), p. 95.

(7) CDU/CSU-Fraktion im Deutschen Bundestag. Die freiheitliche Gesellschaft bewahren, den gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt fördern, den Politischen Islamismus bekämpfen, 20 April 2021, **https://www.cducsu.de/sites/default/files/2021-04/PP%20Politischer%20Islamismus.pdf**

This report has seven chapters. These seek to introduce the subject matter and to define the terms used herein, before giving a very brief overview of existing literature examining the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe. The organisation's beliefs and their application in the west are then discussed, which leads to an examination of Ikhwan-related groups in Europe. In chapter four we turn to the influence of the Brotherhood's ideals in particular European nations. In chapter five we make a specific assessment of the dangerous liaisons between the MB and the EU as an institution, followed by a case study considering the charity Islamic Relief, long associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, and recently involved in a series of scandals. These sections shape the inevitable discussion as to whether the characteristics outlined in this report indicate an organisation which poses a challenge to Europe's civilisational values. The report's conclusions are then followed by policy recommendations, at both the European and national levels.



CHAPTER#2

Definitions: What is the "Muslim Brotherhood" in Europe?

When we discuss the Muslim Brotherhood we are not talking about a single readily identifiable entity. This report identifies three currents to be aware of when we discuss the MB:

- A small number of open MB members operating in certain countries. These are usually prominent figures from organisations, such as the MB's Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt, in political exile from the Middle East. They tend to focus primarily on events in their homeland, utilising democratic freedoms in Europe that often do not exist in the Muslim majority world.

- Those organising and meeting privately as sworn-in members of the Muslim Brotherhood. These are the most difficult activists to identify, and much that is known comes only via the observations of past members who have become disillusioned and left the organisation.

- Those active in organisations founded by Muslim Brothers, or that are influenced by its ideology. Classic examples of this are Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) and its national branches, the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE) and national branches, and the Federation of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO). Typically, these groups will deny any relationship with the MB, with varying degrees of success. A process of media exposure, followed by denial, is now a familiar one in many European countries.

These three currents form what is in practice a network of networks, united by a commitment to Islamist principles and an understanding of the need to operate flexibly to best maintain these principles in different environments. The label 'Muslim Brotherhood', if routinely adopted, could reduce that flexibility, especially in western liberal democracies, where activists "have traditionally gone to great lengths to downplay or hide such ties."[8]

A term used throughout this text is that of 'Islamist.' Whilst some who have this adjective applied to them reject it, senior Muslim Brotherhood figures in Europe such as Youssef Nada have declared: 'It's true that I am an Islamist. I am proud of that.'[9] A sympathetic biography of the co-founder of the Tunisian Ennahda party

(8) Vidino, L., *The Closed Circle: Joining and Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2020, p. 6

(9) Nada, Y., *Inside the Muslim Brotherhood: The truth about the world's most powerful political movement*, Metro Publishing, 2012, London, p. 240.

Rachid Ghannouchi is sub-headed 'A democrat within Islamism.'[10]

An Islamist seeks to:

> enforce an ideological view of Islam in the political and social life of Muslim societies. It has also more broadly been applied to those who seek to establish norms of Muslim conduct in the affairs of society, without necessarily seeking to challenge those in authority or encouraging extremism, including the use of violent means.[11]

These objectives can be achieved in different ways and at different levels. Scholar of Islam Elham Manea distinguishes between two main types of Islamism, one societal and the other political. Societal Islamism "refers to those puritanical religious movements which concern themselves with changing social behaviours to conform to their rigid world view. They call for an Islamic mode of life, to separate its followers from wider society and often refrain from politics". Conversely, political Islamism "is a modern ideology that seeks political power as a means of transforming society. Its goal is revolutionary change compelled by a vision of a puritanical society governed by the law of God. In this state, identity and citizenship are defined by religious affiliation and observance".[12]

While societal Islamism mostly characterises the Salafi Islam historically associated with Saudi Arabia[13] or the Deobandi Islam of south Asia,[14] political Islamism is more varied when it comes to its advocates and the means they use:

> Movements, such as the Islamic State, Boko Haram and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, seek to create this vision of society through outright violence. Others – such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami – use an incremental approach. Violence is still socially acceptable, but the strategy is gradual Islamisation through the education system, the mosque and the media.[15]

In spite of these tactical differences, societal and political Islamism share the same goals:

> Both embrace the ultimate objective of an Islamist state that implements what they consider the laws of God. Both call for a state run by a chosen supreme group of Muslims. Both actively promote concepts of military and missionary Jihad against enemies of Islam – the West included. Both emphasise control over women in their preaching of an ideal Islamist world.[16]

(10) Tamimi, A., *Rachid Ghannouchi: A democrat within Islamism*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001. Ennahda is described as a political party inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. See for example Lewis, A **Profile: Tunisia's Ennahda Party - BBC News**, 25 October 2011, **https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-15442859**.

(11) Nanji, A., *Dictionary of Islam*, Penguin Books, London, 2008, p. 83.

(12) Manea, E., 'Tackling Militant Islamism Means Also Confronting Its Non-Violent Forms', Friends of Europe, 5 May 2015, **https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/tackling-militant-islamism-means-also-confronting-its-non-violent-forms/**.

(13) The authors note the changes currently underway in Saudi Arabia, although it is too soon to make a proper assessment of progress.

(14) Manea, E., 'Tackling Militant Islamism Means Also Confronting Its Non-Violent Forms'.

(15) Ibid.

(16) Ibid.

In time, this ideological view of Islam, and the desire to establish norms of Muslim conduct has become discernible in the west, as well as in Muslim majority societies. For the purpose of this report, Islamism is the political movement of Islamists.

Important insights as to the intentions of the Brotherhood are available from *Ikhwanweb*, their English language website.[17] Here they declare, "The Muslim Brotherhood is a group established to promote development, progress and advancement based on Islamic references." *Ikhwanweb* describes a process by which individuals influenced by the organisation form groups and then seek to act: "These groups practice [sic] their activities and make decisions in complete independence from the MB and in accordance to the community in which it exists."[18] Those looking for a visible Muslim Brotherhood organisation in each EU member state, complete with membership cards and weekly operating instructions from a central coordinating committee in Egypt are likely to be disappointed.

In the Middle East, the Muslim Brotherhood has known considerable repression for large parts of its history, including the imprisonment and execution of its leaders. It is, however, particularly suited to operating in sophisticated western political environments, where a rigid, hierarchical approach centrally directed from the Middle East would be unlikely to prosper. As one of the most prominent international analysts of the Ikhwan, Lorenzo Vidino, comments, "In each country the movement has taken different forms, adapting to the local political conditions."[19]

The former French MB member Mohamed Louizi describes this model as a 'starfish', as opposed to the classical 'spiderweb' model characterizing the initial structure of the organisation:

> Initially the ideology was spread according to an archaic model similar to a spiderweb, which ran the risk of weakening or actually disappearing in the case of a counterstrike; cutting off the head of the spider, the Brotherhood – in this case the Supreme Guide who is officially in Cairo – would decapitate the entire structure of the Muslim Brotherhood. Today this way of operating has been surpassed. The organizations in the Brotherhood look like a starfish, in that you can cut an arm off, but it does not die; rather, it grows a new arm. Better yet, when you cut off an arm a new, independent starfish is born, and so forth, in a sort of impressive and infinite multiplication.[20]

Brotherhood-related networks in Europe therefore differ from stereotypical images of heavily bearded, reclusive Islamists retreating behind

(17) The site can be viewed at Ikhwanweb: The Muslim Brotherhood Official English Website, **https://www.ikhwanweb.com/about.php**, last visited: 27 February 2021.

(18) 'The International Organization', Ikhwanweb: The Muslim Brotherhood's Official English Website, 7 September 2011, **http://ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=29330**.

(19) Vidino, L., 'The Muslim Brotherhood in the United Kingdom', GW Program on Extremism, December 2015, **https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/downloads/MB%20in%20the%20UK.pdf**, p. 3.

(20) Louizi, M., 'Muslim Brotherhood's Silent Conquest of Europe', *La Nuova Bussola Quotidiana*, 8 February 2016, **https://www.lanuovabq.it/it/muslim-brotherhoods-silent-conquest-of-europe**.

insular communities, engaged only in limited and reluctant interaction with broader society. Indeed, such thinking makes it harder to understand this phenomenon and the influence networks it has developed in many European countries. Here are individuals and groups who seek not to isolate themselves, but to engage with wider society. They are often well educated, and more likely to be found in the professions than working in manual occupations.(21) But in any assessment of the Muslim Brotherhood it must be recognised that no matter how many charities they are involved with, they are not philanthropists. They seek to engage with society primarily to change it in an Islamic manner, and where this process has been underway for several decades, to maintain the character of areas already under Islamic influence. As stated by Jamal Morad, self-declared cadre of the Muslim Brotherhood in Austria and leader of the Liga Kultur Verein, "we [Muslim Brothers] don't do the social unless behind it is a clear political direction".(22)

The lack of a rigid declared structure, and the huge number of Islamic organisations being formed across Europe, makes assessing the Ikhwan's influence and strength opaque. It is not, however, impossible – the same individuals and their family members frequently appear working for an ever-shifting rota of representative organisations and charities, establishing business ties, often operating from the same premises, meeting at the same venues, sometimes using the same bank, focusing on similar issues and making increasingly familiar arguments.

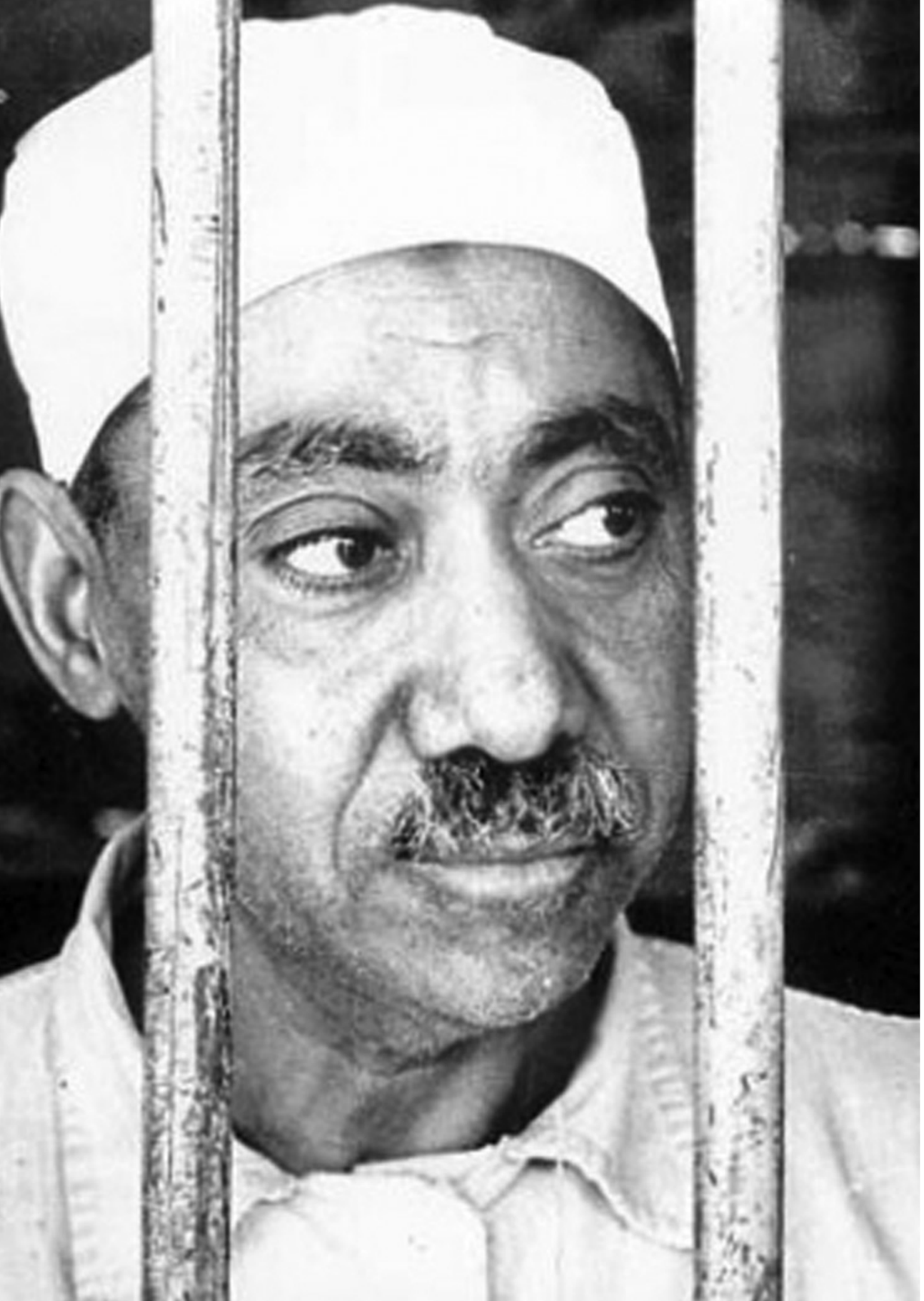
On occasion these actors are referenced more directly by the media in the Middle East than they are by either the press or Islamic organisations in the west. Sometimes, they slip up. In 2008 Libyan religious scholar Salem al-Shikhi, of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, had an article translated into English for *Ikhwanweb* that was remarkably open about the movement's progress. For example, al-Shikhi referred to the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE), in the following manner: "it represents the Muslim Brotherhood's moderate thought taking into consideration European speciality and working under European regimes and laws."(23) In a similar fashion, the abovementioned Jamal Morad has stated that, for the MB, there is no separation between religion and politics, and social activities always have the latter in mind.(24)

(21) In his memoir, a key Muslim Brotherhood exile in Europe, Youssef Nada, speculates the organisation may have become over educated, and increasingly part of the elite. See Youssef, N., *Inside the Muslim Brotherhood*, Metro Publishing, London, 2012, p. 120-121.

(22) Vidino, L., 'The Muslim Brotherhood in Austria', George Washington University Program on Extremism with University of Vienna, 2017, p. 23.

(23) Al Shikhi, S., 'The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe and a Course of Reviews, UK an Example', Ikhwanweb, 12 August 2008, **https://ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=17575**.

(24) Vidino, L., *The Muslim Brotherhood in Austria*, pp. 22-23.



CHAPTER#3

Muslim Brotherhood - Theory and Strategy

The Muslim Brotherhood: A Very Brief History

The lineage of the Muslim Brotherhood demonstrates why substantive questions exist as to its compatibility with the western democratic order. This is, after all, an organisation with two crossed swords as its logo, and whose oath of allegiance lists jihad as the fourth of ten attributes.[25] Its founder, Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949) famously declared, "Allah is our goal, the Qur'an is our constitution, the Prophet is our leader, struggle is our way, and death in the path of Allah is our highest inspiration"[26] – which has become the Ikhwan's motto. Those are not words to readily repeat in an era when the west has suffered grievously from terrorist attacks by those seeking to establish their interpretation of the laws of Islam, on the streets of Europe. Hasan al-Banna believed history could be understood by the struggle between east and west, and the decline of the east explained by the gradual reduction in a true understanding of Islam.[27] Al-Banna's vision was of a revivalist movement: "In his eyes the worst feature of colonisation was not the occupation itself, but the fact that the occupation went hand in hand with an acceptance of Christianity and above all with the liberalisation of moral standards."[28]

The movement's other great historical figure, Egyptian writer Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966) is more problematic still. Qutb's division of the world into two categories, Islam or *jahiliyyah* (roughly 'ignorance'), arguably presages conflict.[29] In his core work, *Milestones*, Qutb expands the concept of *jahilliya*, which classically denoted the pre-Islamic era, to present-day regimes as they are not ruled by Islamic law. He consequently redefines the classical dichotomy *dar-al-Islam* (the home of Islam), and *dar-al-harb* (the home of war) to extend the latter to every land where the Islamic state is not established and sharia law is not the authority.[30] Only two relationships may exist between these entities: a state of war, or truce via contractual agreement.[31] This is a clash of civilisations thesis, developed decades before the American writer Samuel Huntington, and coloured in far starker language. And since the *jahilliyya* has become, according to Qutb,

(25) Al-Banna, H. , *Imam Shahid Hasan Al-Banna: From Birth to Martyrdom*, Awakening Publications, Swansea, 2002, p. 47.

(26) Karsh, E., *Islamic Imperialism: A History*, Yale University Press, London, 2007, p. 214.

(27) Frampton, M., *The Muslim Brotherhood and the West: A History of Enmity and Engagement*, Belknap Harvard, London, 2018, pp. 18-19.

(28) Fourest, C., *Brother Tariq: The Doublespeak of Tariq Ramadan*, The Social Affairs Unit, London, 2008, p. 24.

(29) Stott, P., 'British Jihadism: The Detail and the Denial', University of East Anglia PhD thesis, University of East Anglia Digital Repository, July 2015, **https://ueaeprints.uea.ac.uk/53460/**, pp. 80-82.

(30) Qutb, S., *Milestones*, Islamic Book Services, New Delhi, 2006, p. 118.

(31) Ibid., p. 118.

a worldwide condition, a good Muslim has the duty to fight for Islam wherever he is.

While a common apologia depicts Qutb as a sort of deviant accident in the otherwise peaceful ideology of the Brotherhood, it was actually al-Banna himself, in his *Letter of Jihad*, who clearly theorised offensive jihad against unbelievers as the individual duty of every Muslim. This writing is an outright glorification of violence, which al-Banna reconnected to the inherent nature of Islam: "nowhere will you find a system, old or modern, religious or civil, more concerned with jihad, the army, the mobilisation of the Umma for defending the truth, than the religion and the teachings of Islam".[32] Al-Banna described jihad as "an imperative, resolute, unavoidable and inevitable duty for all Muslims," to be waged even against the "People of the Book" (namely Christians and Jews).[33] Whenever "Muslims are humiliated and ruled by unbelievers", jihad becomes an individual duty "for every Muslim". Al-Banna further dismissed as a forgery the widely cited hadith speaking of the struggle of the soul as the greatest form of jihad, and concluded saying that "one will only be vested with the honour of martyrdom and the recompense of the fighters only by killing and being killed in the path of Allah".[34]

It is crucial to bear in mind the bellicose nature of al-Banna's ideology, insofar as members of the Muslim Brotherhood and its spin-offs frequently refer to the legacy of Hasan al-Banna without disavowing any aspect of it.

Muslim Brotherhood settlement in Europe has deep roots – Egyptian Ikhwan exiles first went to the United Kingdom via Libya following a wave of repression in 1948–49,[35] and others arrived as students throughout Europe in subsequent decades. As Muslim migration became more common across the continent, larger communities emerged, and within them Muslim Brotherhood émigrés replicated the organisational structures and practices they had developed in the Middle East. These included selective recruitment of party members, an induction process to ideologically prepare recruits for the tasks they would be given, and membership fees paid to an elected organisation – all conducted privately without public acknowledgment.[36] However, the Ikhwan are not rigid in their tactical approach. In the modern era, thinkers such as the late Faysal Malawi from Lebanon and Yusuf al-Qaradawi, an Egyptian exile based in Qatar, noted the freedom given to Muslims to proselytise in the west, and moved towards a position of seeing western countries not as lands of hostility, but a place of opportunity for the faithful, to be characterised as *dar-al-dawa* – the land of preaching.[37] The thinking here is that "providing a new relevant framework for European Muslim life will give new energy and meaning to the movement."[38] Prominent Muslim intellectual Tariq Ramadan is perhaps on similar territory when he writes of *dar al-shahadah* the 'abode of testimony' - a term he seeks to apply globally as "it achieves reconciliation with Islam's universal dimension: the whole world has become a space, an abode, of testimony."[39] Despite these intellectual developments, the Muslim Brotherhood has never disavowed the views of al-Banna or Qutb.[40]

The view of the west as a place for testimony shapes the approach of Muslim Brotherhood influenced organisations. They accordingly seek to work closely with policy makers, and to develop the maximum possible influence over them.[41] In the long term however, the Muslim Brotherhood's supporters revel in the *hadith* that Rome will fall from within – when the Muslims are strong enough[42] – as demonstrated in the next section.

Pillars of Muslim Brotherhood strategy

The trademark of the MB is its capacity to adapt to the external environment, and to adopt different strategies according to the needs and reality on the ground, patiently pursuing the ultimate goal. But what is this ultimate goal?

The technical term used by MB pundits is *tamkin*. In the words of one of its main theorists, Muslim Brother Ali Sallabi,[43] *tamkin* refers to the "domination of Islam over any other religion, and its sovereignty over the entire humanity".[44] This objective is to be achieved gradually, in a series of steps that must involve, on the one hand, the spiritual preparation of society from the bottom, and on the other the constitution of an Islamist vanguard, thoroughly trained and deeply infiltrated in all societal domains.

As concerns the first pillar, al-Banna outlined the phases of Islamisation of the world in his *Letter to the Youth*, where he outlined a pyramid structure starting from the individual and culminating with the Islamisation of the world. According to this battle plan, the Brothers must first focus on the spiritual indoctrination of individuals; these pious Muslims will, in turn, bring the principles of Islam inside their families which, as the basic pillar of society, will prepare the ground for the Islamisation of society. Society will then seize control of the nation state. The next step is the unification of the Islamic nation – artificially divided by the West in different countries – followed by the reconquest of the Western lands once owned by Islam. The ulti-

(32) Quotes from French translation by Mohamed Louizi. Louizi, M., *Pourquoi j'ai quitté les Frères musulmans*, Michalon, Paris, 2016, pp. 215-231. Own translation from French.

(33) See also Colombo, V., 'L'antisemitismo "sacralizzato" nell'ideologia dei Fratelli musulmani', in *Il negazionismo: un fenomeno contemporaneo*, ed. Francesco Germinario, Carocci, 2016, p. 112.

(34) Quotes from French translation by Mohamed Louizi. Louizi, M., *Pourquoi j'ai quitté les Frères musulmans*, pp. 215-31. Own translation from French.

(35) Frampton, M. *The Muslim Brotherhood and the West*, p. 366.

(36) Vidino, L., *The Closed Circle: Joining and Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2020, p. 7.

(37) Ibid., p. 5.

(38) Rich, D., 'The Very Model of a British Muslim Brotherhood', in *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Organisation and Policies of a Global Islamist Movement*, Rubin, B., (Ed.), Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010, p. 127.

(39) Ramadan, T., *What I believe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, p. 52

(40) Prime Minister's Office. Muslim Brotherhood review: Main findings, 17 December 2015, **https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/muslim-brotherhood-review-main-findings**.

(41) Vidino, L., *The Closed Circle*, pp. 11-12.

(42) Ibid., pp. 77-78.

(43) Millard Burr, J., and Ehrenfeld, R., 'Libya – Ali al-Salabi and the Re-Emerging Muslim Brotherhood', American Center for Democracy, 13 October 2014, **https://acdemocracy.org/libya-ali-al-salabi-and-the-re-emerging-muslim-brotherhood/**; Louizi, M., *Pourquoi j'ai quitté les Frères musulmans*, p. 151.

(44) Louizi, M., *Pourquoi j'ai quitté les Frères musulmans*, p. 153.

mate stage will consist, eventually, in the conquest of the world: the *tamkin*.[45]

The spiritual indoctrination from the bottom up is only one precondition of power. Meanwhile, the Brotherhood must prepare the leadership, to be trained and infiltrated into all fields of human life: sciences, administration, politics, media, economy, etc. No different from the Islamisation of society, this endeavour also proceeds in phases, to be accomplished with gradualism and patience. Ali Sallabi thoroughly describes each phase following the teaching of al-Banna: 1) the *presentation* of Islam, with its propagation among the larger public; 2) the *selection* of those individuals who, on the basis of their spiritual, intellectual and physical characteristics, can realize specific actions (including, when needed, participation in jihad); 3) the *detection* of errors to correct and gaps to fill; 4) and finally, the *tamkin*.[46]

To be clear, *tamkin* means an Islamic state ruled by sharia. The Muslim Brotherhood, often called a 'moderate' organisation, is certainly moderate in its means, characterised by gradualism. Such an approach often makes violence inadvisable; but the Ikhwan's final goal does not differ from that of jihadist factions.

Influential MB ideologues in recent history and their narratives

Tariq Ramadan

Before his legal and reputational problems in France and Switzerland,[47] Tariq Ramadan was one of Europe's most prominent Islamic voices. He is the grandson of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hasan al-Banna,[48] and the son of Said Ramadan (1926–1995), one of the organisation's founders in Europe.[49] Tariq Ramadan "manages to play the role of academic, political activist, evangelist preacher and government advisor all at once."[50] Given his influence, what sort of future does Ramadan envisage for Europe?

In books such as '*What I believe*' and '*To be a European Muslim*' Ramadan sets out a programme for coexistence. Reading these works, it is noticeable how the language deployed increasingly resembles that employed by central governments in western Europe or even the human resources department of a major corporation. Discussing "multicultural citizenship" Ramadan declares:

> The challenge of diversity requires practical solutions and compels citizens, intellectuals and religious representatives to develop a balanced critical mind, always open to evolution, analysis, empathy and self-criticism. Voicing one's own needs while also listening to and hearing the other, accepting compromise without yielding on essentials.....[51]

In a major article during the Arab Spring protests of 2011, Tariq Ramadan stressed that the model for the Muslim Brotherhood, in Egypt and elsewhere, is Turkey. In this thinking there is an acceptance of democracy – the term and its variants appear some 15 times in Ramadan's article.[52] However, there is nothing to suggest an understanding or warmth for liberal democracy, with its principles of pluralism and the right of the individual to be, or not be, something. Tellingly, the words individual, liberal, liberalism or *liberal* democracy are each absent from his analysis.

When considering the beliefs and approach of Islamist networks in Europe, a problem soon emerges. Any analysis conducted may be seen as problematic, portrayed as an attack on all Muslims and assigned the accusatory term 'Islamophobia'. This is the case even from those earning their living as intellectuals and public figures. For example, Tariq Ramadan's instincts are to frame debates concerning Islamism in western liberal democracies as the targeting of Europe's Muslims. He writes:

> Every European country has its specific symbols or topics through which European Muslims are targeted. In France it is the headscarf or burka; in Germany, mosques; in Britain, violence; cartoons in Denmark; homosexuality in the Netherlands – and so on.[53]

Ramadan's framing is not a method by which issues may be confidently debated, discussed and any divisions ultimately resolved. If considering, for example, homosexuality in the Netherlands is to 'target' Muslims, what are the chances of an open public discussion about the rights of homosexuals? Can we have a debate about the circumstances to allow wearing, or not wearing, religious symbols in France, if holding that debate is understood as 'targeting' Muslims? May we discuss whether rules governing free speech find an exception in Islam and its symbols and, if so, why Islam would enjoy such a privilege?[54]

Yet, the need for a debate as to the role of Islam, especially in social policy and the individual's relationship with the state, is clear. Youssef Nada, an Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood exile with Italian citizenship, has stated that in his view non-Muslims living in Islamic countries have the right to follow family law according to their religion, so a corresponding approach needs to be taken in the west, where Muslims "will abide by the existing law, but things which are related to the family should be left to them."[55] This would require a major shift in the law, for example in the fields of inheritance and marriage, opening the possibility of multiple legal systems.

(45) Ibid., p. 157.

(46) Ibid., p. 152.

(47) 'Islamic scholar Tariq Ramadan admits to "consensual" sex with accusers', France24, 22 October 2018, **https://www.france24.com/en/20181022-islamic-scholar-tariq-ramadan-admits-consensual-sex-with-accusers-rape-france**, last visited: 30 September 2019.
Hamel, I., 'Le gouvernement genevois confirme les accusations portées contre Tariq Ramadan', Le Point, 26 November 2018, **https://www.lepoint.fr/societe/le-gouvernement-genevois-confirme-les-accusations-portees-contre-tariq-ramadan-26-11-2018-2274487_23.php#**

(48) Fourest, C., *Brother Tariq: The Doublespeak of Tariq Ramadan*, Social Affairs Unit, London, 2008, p. 19.

(49) Johnson, I., *A Mosque in Munich: Nazis, the CIA and the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, First Mariner, New York, 2010, p. 226.

(50) Rich, D., *The Very Model*, p. 132.

(51) Ramadan, T., *What I believe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, p. 13-14.

(52) Ramadan, T., 'Democratic Turkey is the template for Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood', *Huffington Post*, 25 May 2011, **https://www.huffpost.com/entry/post_1690_b_820366**.

(53) Ramadan, T., 'My compatriots' vote to ban minarets is fuelled by fear', *The Guardian*, 29 November 2009, **https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/nov/29/swiss-vote-ban-minarets-fear**.

(54) Virgili, T., 'Whose "Identity"? Multiculturalism vs. Integration in Europe', *European View* 19, no. 1, 2020, pp. 45-53.

(55) Nada, Y., *Inside the Muslim Brotherhood*, p. 129.

Ramadan has also expressed problematic views on jihad and Quranic penalties, which notoriously include flogging, amputation of limbs and lapidation. Beginning with the latter, Ramadan is well known for suggesting a "moratorium" on the implementation of the death penalty and corporal punishment in Islamic states, as long as a set of social and legal preconditions are not in place.[56] This idea is not exclusive to him: a temporary suspension of *hudud* penalties, waiting for society to be ready, is precisely what Yusuf al-Qaradawi advocated when the MB took power in Egypt,[57] and the tactic the Egyptian *Ikhwan* themselves embraced: in an official communiqué, issued during Morsi's presidency, they stressed their commitment to the progressive implementation of sharia in all domains.[58] As is evident, calling for a moratorium on Quranic penalties does not imply opposing them.

Regarding jihad, Ramadan has written that it represents an innate instinct of the human being, and that Muslims "persecuted for their religion" must, as a last resort, embrace weapons and resist oppression. Fellow Muslims have, in that case, the obligation to intervene in defence of their brothers.[59]

While the theory of "just war" is not alien to any culture and religion, these declarations are disquieting if combined with other elements. The first is the obfuscation of Hasan al-Banna's theory: far from disavowing his grandfather's conception of jihad, Ramadan inaccurately claims that he limited it to self-defence.[60] Another is the 'Islamophobia' narrative presented above: if Muslims are 'under attack' by the infidels, when shall their 'resistance' start to be armed? Are cartoons of Muhammad, headscarf bans and homosexuality enough, just to go back to the three abovementioned issues? The danger of misunderstandings by zealot believers becomes even higher when it comes to foreign issues: while Ramadan never went as far as encouraging foreign fighters explicitly as Yusuf al-Qaradawi does,[61] how should his words on the obligation of Muslims to embrace arms to defend oppressed brothers be interpreted? It must be recalled that Ramadan once infamously commented on the killing of an eight-year-old Israeli boy by saying: "This deed in and of itself is worthy of condemnation, but it is understandable under present circumstances... It is forbidden to attack civilians, but the U.S. government policy leaves the Palestinians no other choice".[62]

(56) Ramadan, T., 'An International Call for Moratorium on Corporal Punishment, Stoning and the Death Penalty in the Islamic World', 5 April 2005, **https://tariqramadan.com:443/an-international-call-for-moratorium-on-corporal-punishment-stoning-and-the-death-penalty-in-the-islamic-world/**.

(57) Virgili, T., 'Yusuf Al-Qaradawi: False Moderate and True Radical? The Star of Al-Jazeera Perhaps Is Not so Bright', *Al-Mesbar Studies & Research Center* (blog), 27 March 2018, **https://mesbar.org/yusuf-al-qaradawi-false-moderate-and-true-radical/**.

(58) The Muslim Brotherhood, 'Statement by the Muslim Brotherhood on Islamic Law and the Identity of the Nation [in Arabic]', 31 October 2012, **https://m.facebook.com/Ikhwan.Official/photos/a.395587263846660/402294846509235/?type=3&locale2=hi_IN**.

(59) Louizi, M., *Pourquoi j'ai quitté les Frères musulmans*, p. 235.

(60) Dankowitz, A., 'Tariq Ramadan – Reformist or Islamist?', MEMRI, 17 February 2006, **https://www.memri.org/reports/tariq-ramadan-%E2%80%93-reformist-or-islamist**.

(61) See below.

(62) Dankowitz, A., 'Tariq Ramadan – Reformist or Islamist?'

Yusuf al-Qaradawi

The Muslim Brotherhood's most important theologian, the elderly Egyptian cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi has primarily spent the years since 1961 in exile in Qatar. He is included in this report firstly because of his role in establishing and previously serving as President[63] of two key Brotherhood-related organisations – the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS), and the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR); and secondly because of al-Qaradawi's global importance to the organisation's members and supporters, and his attempts to influence and direct Islamic life in the west. As a representative of the *wasatiyyah*, the supposedly moderate 'middle way' between Islamic extremism and 'extremist secularism', Qaradawi has charmed a section of the European left, which attempts to portray him as a bridge between the West and the Muslim world.[64]

Al-Qaradawi encapsulates the contradictions that define the Muslim Brotherhood and its attitude towards violence. He coordinated international condemnation of 9/11 in the London-based *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* newspaper, but is a determined supporter of suicide missions in other areas – for example, against Israel, or against coalition forces in Iraq.[65] Lorenzo Vidino comments of his approach: "Qaradawi rejects violent confrontation not because it is wrong, immoral or contrary to his interpretation of Islamic texts but simply because at present it will not get the movement anywhere."[66]

He has also declared that Islam will conquer Europe, but peacefully, through *dawah* ('missionary work') and belief:

> It will do so by means of *da'wa* and ideology. Europe is miserable with materialism, with the philosophy of promiscuity, and with the immoral considerations that rule the world – considerations of self-interest and self-indulgence. It is high time Europe woke up and found a way out from this. Europe will find no life saver or life boat other than Islam. Islam will save Europe from the raging materialism from which it suffers.[67]

An instance of this approach is that, in 2015, al-Qaradawi called for donations to construct a mosque in Milan, on the principles that Europe needs to be saved.[68]

It must be noted that the concept of *dawah* does not replace jihad, but it is only a tactical expedient – following al-Banna's teachings – to be used whenever the *ummah* lacks the means to impose the rule of Islam by force. Three elements are necessary, according to al-Qaradawi, to bring about regime-change: control of the army, control of the

(63) Mayor of London, 'Why the Mayor of London will maintain dialogues with all of London's faiths and communities: A reply to the dossier against the Mayor's meeting with Dr Yusuf al-Qaradawi', Greater London Authority, London, 2005.

(64) Readings, G., 'Female Genital Mutilation Cannot Be Defended as Part of Islam', *the Guardian*, 15 October 2010, **https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2010/oct/15/female-genital-mutilation-yusuf-al-qaradawi**.

(65) Michael, W., '*The Advance of the Muslim Brotherhood in the UK*', Hudson Institute, 12 September 2005, **https://www.hudson.org/research/9845-the-advance-of-the-muslim-brotherhood-in-the-uk**.

(66) Vidino, L., *The Closed Circle*, p. 76.

(67) 'Sheik Yousuf Al-Qaradhawi: Islam's "Conquest of Rome" Will Save Europe from Its Subjugation to Materialism and Promiscuity', MEMRI TV, 28 July 2007, **https://www.memri.org/tv/sheik-yousuf-al-qaradhawi-islams-conquest-rome-will-save-europe-its-subjugation-materialism-and**.

(68) Chesnot and Malbrunot, *Qatar Papers: Comment l'émirat finance l'islam de France et d'Europe*, Michel Lafon, 2019, p. 207.

parliament and a "sweeping public force" – meant as wide revolutionary support. As long as one of these components is absent, Muslims must adopt a bottom-up approach, based on the gradual infiltration of social and political infrastructures.[69]

This strategy also explains al-Qaradawi's views on integration of Muslims in the West: Muslims must not detach from their environment, as certain Salafists predicate, but instead actively concur to establish the net of organisations, business and political activities that will eventually make the conquest possible.[70] At the same time, they must avoid the contamination of mores that mingling with Westerners risks ("salt melting into the water", as he describes Muslims who integrate[71]); hence, Muslims need to live in a parallel society where they establish "their own religious, educational and even entertainment institutions".[72]

The decadence of Western customs is such an obsession for al-Qaradawi that he has not hesitated to call for the imposition of death penalty on homosexuals[73] and apostates,[74] and to "personally support [female genital mutilation] under the current circumstances in the modern world".[75] Moral laxity, for al-Qaradawi, is an instance of the "irreligious extremism" that has spread even to the Muslim world, and that has provoked the reaction of religious extremism.[76] This explains his idea of "*wasatiyyah*": far from advancing a pro-democratic concept, he tactically puts on the same level the "excesses" of secularists and those of religious extremists, while firmly siding with the goals of the latter.[77]

What is, in fact, al-Qaradawi's ultimate objective? The same as al-Banna, Qutb, and every MB ideologue, namely the establishment of an Islamic state ruled by sharia. Every Muslim who does not share this goal is, *ipso facto*, an apostate. In his own words, "the call for secularism among Muslims is, in effect, atheism and a rejection of Islam, and its acceptance as a basis for rule in place of the law of Islam is out-and-out apostasy."[78] He is cautious and tactical in the attainment of the Islamic state, and, similarly to Tariq Ramadan, he has also spoken of a "moratorium" on *hudud* penalties.[79] This does not change the fact that he ultimately advocates a state where thieves have their hands cut off and fornicators are stoned to death.

The need for liberal democracies to recognise al-Qaradawi's ideology for what it is – a rival that seeks its destruction – is strikingly apparent from the quotes given above. These beliefs lead to action which undermines Europe's social cohesion. During the Jyllands Posten's Mohammed

(69) Virgili, T., 'Yusuf Al-Qaradawi'.

(70) Ibid.

(71) Mohamad Azmi Bin Haji Mohamad, *European Islam and Reform: A Comparative Study of the Theologies of Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Tariq Ramadan*, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, 2015, p. 66.

(72) Ibid., p. 67.

(73) 'Sheik Yousuf Al-Qaradhawi: Homosexuals Should Be Punished Like Fornicators But Their Harm Is Less When Not Done in Public', MEMRI, 5 June 2006, **https://www.memri.org/tv/sheik-yousuf-al-qaradhawi-homosexuals-should-be-punished-fornicators-their-harm-less-when-not**.

(74) Al-Qaradawi, Y., *Introduction to Islam*, Islamic Inc., Cairo, 1995, p. 156.

(75) Yusuf Al-Qaradawi: 'Islamic Ruling on Female Circumcision', *IslamOnline*, accessed 20 November 2017, **https://archive.islamonline.net/?p=6646**. Original content still available at **https://web.archive.org/web/20170118180124/ https://archive.islamonline.net/?p=6646**, accessed 30 June 2021. See also Readings, 'Female Genital Mutilation Cannot Be Defended as Part of Islam'.

(76) Al-Qaradawi, Y., *Islamic Awakening Between Rejection and Extremism*, International Institute of Islamic Thought, London, 2007, p. 94.

(77) Virgili, T., 'Yusuf Al-Qaradawi'.

(78) Al-Qaradawi, Y., *Islamic Awakening Between Rejection and Extremism*, p. 76.

(79) Virgili, T., 'Yusuf Al-Qaradawi'.

cartoons controversy, al-Qaradawi and the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS) called 3 February 2006 as a global day of anger against the cartoons, and, by implication, Denmark.[80]

The Muslim Brotherhood's approach to the question of violence is one that requires careful study. During the Syrian Civil War, European authorities have sought ways to deter young Muslims from travelling to and fighting in an increasingly bitter conflict across the region. In this period, al-Qaradawi's language has instead worked to heighten tensions. For example, he slammed the participation of the Shia Hezbollah in the Syrian conflict in sectarian terms, referring to it as "the party of Satan".[81] Substantially, in 2013, al-Qaradawi endorsed a call by a collective of Sunni clerics in support of jihad in Syria.[82] Any idea of the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Qaradawi as a robust shield against jihadism and extremism is, like the middle way concept of *wasatiyyah*, fatally flawed. While al-Qaradawi may oppose Al-Qaeda and could disseminate that message to young European Muslims, his support for Palestinian suicide bombings,[83] sectarian attitudes towards Shia Muslims[84] and support for the Syrian jihad demonstrate that the Muslim Brotherhood is an unsuitable partner for those seeking to counter radicalisation and terrorism.

The Muslim Brotherhood's positions on these issues are reinforced by the theological legitimacy that is claimed by al-Qaradawi and his associates. The late Lebanese Islamic scholar Faysal Mawlawi was an important voice in the Muslim Brotherhood's European Council for Fatwa and Research. In religious rulings disseminated on the prominent IslamOnline website, Mawlawi supported suicide bombings targeted at Israeli civilians and observed that, while the mutilation of the enemies' bodies in war was not generally permissible, in the specific case of Americans in Iraq, it was possible as a means of reprisal.[85]

In sum, each concept expressed by Al-Qaradawi epitomises the duplicity which is the trademark of the Muslim Brotherhood. He is pro-democracy, but only to the point where it is serves to impose anti-democratic sharia law. He rejects *takfirism*, but he accuses of apostasy every Muslim who does not espouse his idea of the sharia-based state. He recommends the integration of Muslims in the West and their peaceful preaching, but only as ultimate instruments of conquest. He predicates "moderation", and at the same time invokes the death penalty for homosexuals and apostates. He is against terrorism, unless it is used against the "enemies of Islam".

With his ambiguities, gradualism and tactical doublespeak, all projected toward the grail of the Islamic state, Yusuf al-Qaradawi perfectly embodies the organisation of which he is perhaps the most important living ideologue.

(80) Vidino, L., *The Closed Circle*, p. 70.

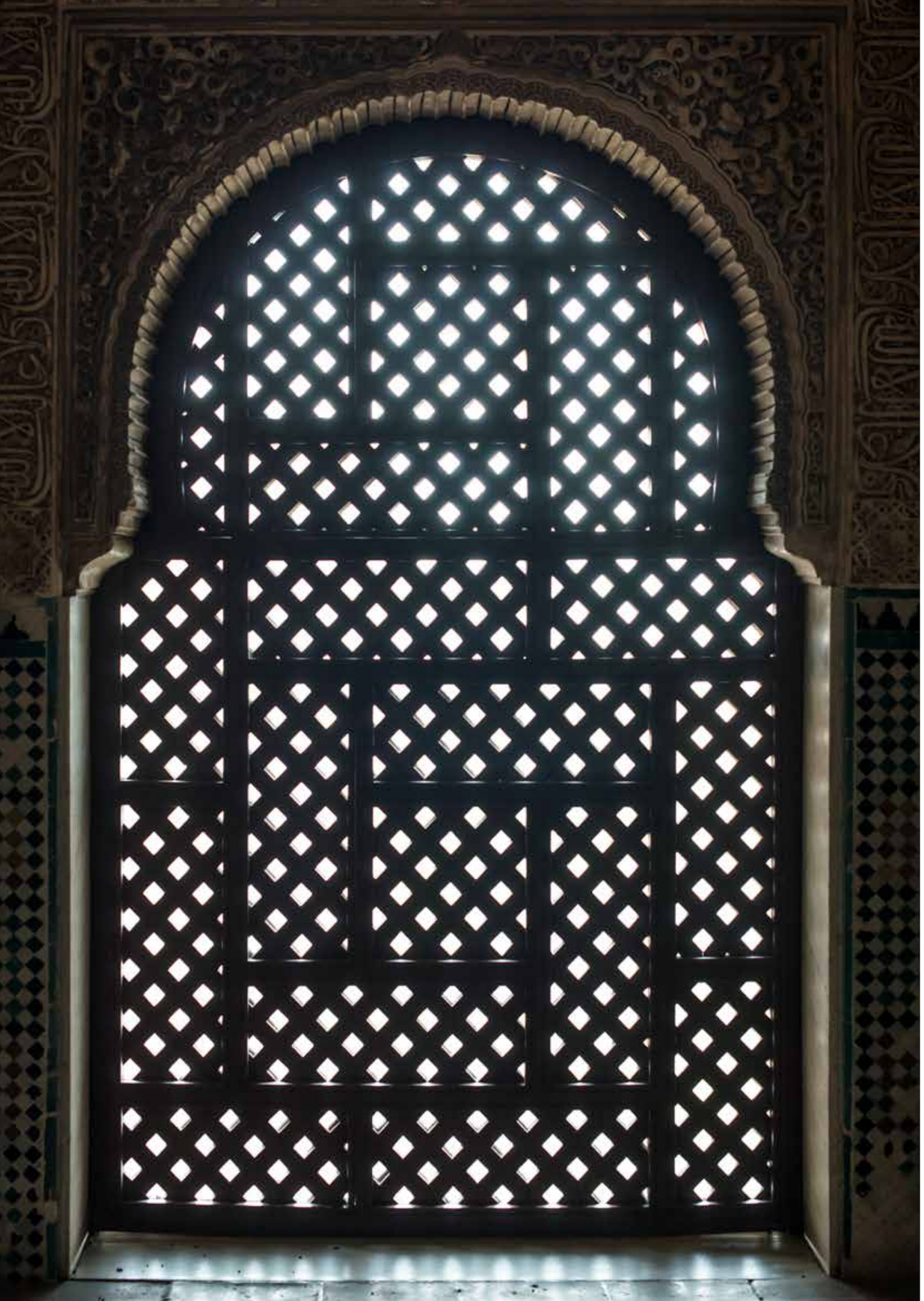
(81) 'Muslim Scholar: Hezbollah is the "Party of Satan"', *Jerusalem Post*, 10 June 2013, **https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Muslim-scholar-Hezbollah-is-the-party-of-Satan-316018**.

(82) 'Sunni clerics call for jihad against Syrian regime, allies. Radio Free Europe, 13 June 2013, **https://www.rferl.org/a/syria-sunni-clerics-jihad/25016455.html**.

(83) Barnett, A., 'Suicide bombs are a duty, says Islamic scholar', *The Guardian*, 28 August 2005, **https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2005/aug/28/uk.terrorism**.

(84) Black, I., 'Unholy row: Leading Muslim clerics are trading barbs in a dispute with ugly sectarian undertones', *The Guardian*, 26 September 2008, **https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/sep/26/middleeast**.

(85) Ungoed-Thomas, J. and Berry, J., 'Second firebrand Muslim cleric is let into Britain', *The Times*, 11 July 2004, **https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/second-firebrand-muslim-cleric-is-let-into-britain-m9d8xmtfsxg**.



CHAPTER#4

The Muslim Brotherhood Presence in Europe

In this chapter, we are going to address several general characteristics of the Ikhwan's activities in Europe, as well as to present the main MB-related organisations on the continent. The report will then proceed to offer an outline of the MB presence in selected countries.

Financial Affairs

Muslim Brotherhood-related groups in Europe possess access to significant financial resources. That is not surprising if we consider that, in 2012, Youssef Nada talked of the Ikhwan having over 100 million members worldwide.[86] In 1996, the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE) established the Europe Trust, to generate funds for its activities.[87] The Europe Trust has since established an impressive property portfolio. There are few safer property investments than the student buy-to-let market in a university city, and the Europe Trust is to be admired for its judgement – it holds 47 flats close to the University of Leeds, in the north of England which amounts to at least £8.5 million in assets. The Executive Director of the Europe Trust is Ahmed al-Rawi, a former President of the Muslim Association of Britain.[88] Ibrahim el-Zayat, a prominent Muslim Brotherhood supporter in Germany, served as a director of Europe Trust from 2005 to 2014,[89] whilst there is also a Europe Trust Netherlands, founded by Yahia Bouyafa, which manages property and mosque developments in that country.[90]

There is significant support from overseas for Islamic organisations wishing to develop their interests in the west. In June 2014 the Qatar Charity opened a London office to oversee its British and European projects.[91] Its Chairman Sheikh Hamad bin Nasser al-Thani declared Qatari charitable spending in Europe in the period 2010 to 2014 to be over 500 mil-

(86) Nada, Y., *Inside the Muslim Brotherhood: The Truth About the World's Most Powerful Political Movement*, Metro Publishing, London, 2012, p. 29.

(87) Vidino, L., '*Aims and Methods of Europe's Muslim Brotherhood*', Hudson Institute, 1 November 2006, **https://www.hudson.org/research/9776-aims-and-methods-of-europe-s-muslim-brotherhood**.

(88) Norfolk, A., 'Unwitting students fund Islamist projects with their rent payments', *The Times*, 10 July 2015, **https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/unwitting-students-fund-islamist-projects-with-their-rent-payments-rbmz02grrtm**.

(89) Companies House, n.d., available at **https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/officers/mfmtRQKYry5x24w7JJSNY-30J7r8/appointments**, last visited: 7 April 2021.

(90) Ronald Sandee, 'The influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Netherlands', *The Global Muslim Brotherhood Daily Watch*, 2007, **https://www.globalmbwatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/The-Influence-of-the-Muslim-Brotherhood-in-the-Netherlands.pdf**.

(91) 'Qatar Charity opens office to oversee projects in Europe', *Gulf Times*, 7 June 2014, **https://www.gulf-times.com/story/395207/Qatar-Charity-opens-office-to-oversee-projects-in-**.

lion Qatari riyals[92] (more than 115 million Euros at the current exchange rate). The Qatar Charity UK (QCUK), later known as the Nectar Trust, went on to distribute significant sums to Islamic organisations across Europe. For example the Nectar Trust financed new buildings for the European Institute for Human Sciences campus in central France.[93] The trend is further illustrated by the 2018 Nectar Trust trustees' report which describes support to the AMAL (Association of Muslims of Alsace) Centre in Mulhouse, France, and the ARSH (Association de la Réforme Sociale Hautepierre) centre in Strasbourg.[94]

In their 2019 book *Qatar Papers*, the French journalists Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot set out to establish that the Qatar Charity is a tool for Doha's religious soft power, and in their analysis they work from the premise that if one finances, one exerts influence.[95] A tool in facilitating this is the UK's Qatari-owned Al Rayan Bank – Chesnot and Malbrunot reproduce what appears to be the transfer slip for the 2017 payment QCUK made to AMAL totalling £996,000, or 1.2 million Euros.[96] AMAL is affiliated to the Musulmans de France (formerly the Union of Islamic Organisations of France - UOIF), a French representative group rooted in the Muslim Brotherhood.[97] Indeed, such is the relationship between AMAL and the QCUK/Nectar Trust that a loan of GBP 99,151 was "provided by AMAL to assist QCUK to commence its operational activities. Ayyoub Abouliaqin, the then Director of QCUK was a trustee of AMAL."[98] The money was repaid in the year ending 31 March 2015.

The Iranian connection

Whilst relations between Sunni and Shia Muslims in some parts of the world have been fractured, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hasan al-Banna, wished to reconcile the Sunni-Shia divide.[99] In the modern era, positive engagement between the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran goes back to the days of the Ayatollah Khomeini and his exile in France shortly before the Iranian revolution of 1979. When Khomeini returned to Tehran to take power in February 1979, members of the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamist organisations from across the Sunni world travelled there to show their support for the new Iran.[100]

The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood share a common foe in Saudi Arabia, and Muslim Brotherhood activists in Europe routinely decry what they see as the Saudi support for despots.[101] That Saudi Arabia previously supported the Ikhwan is discretely overlooked.[102] After the Muslim Brotherhood took power in Egypt, in December 2012 a meeting was held in Cairo between its representatives and Qassem Suleimani, then Commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Revolutionary Guards.[103] In 2019, investigative website *The Intercept* revealed leaked Iranian cables which showed representatives of Iran's Quds Force met further with Muslim Brotherhood leaders (now out of power) in Turkey in 2014, in an unsuccessful attempt to develop an alliance against Saudi Arabia. The Ikhwan's representatives at the latter meeting were Ibrahim Munir Mustafa, Mahmoud El-Abiary (both Egyptians based in the UK) and the Swiss-based Italian Youssef Nada.[104] In April 2019, the United States added the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, of which the Quds Force is part, to its list of designated terrorist organisations.[105] In January 2020, Suleimani was to be assassinated by the Americans.

Main Muslim Brotherhood-Related Organisations in Europe

Council of European Muslims – formerly Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE)

The FIOE was established by the British-based activist Ahmed al-Rawi in 1989 as an umbrella of MB-related organisations in Europe. It is considered by analysts such as Alison Pargeter to be "the Ikhwan's European network,"[106] a view echoed by Ikhwanwiki, an Arabic language website run by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.[107] The organisation has recently been renamed 'Council of European Muslims'.[108] Throughout this report, we will continue to use the more widely known 'FIOE' for clarity.

Originally based at the Islamic Foundation's Markfield Centre in Leicestershire, the FIOE moved to Brussels in 2007,[109] where it is much better placed to contribute to European political debates. As Martyn Frampton states, "The function of the FIOE was to unify the efforts of these national branches and to act as a pan-European

(92) 'Qatar Charity opens office to oversee projects in Europe', *Gulf Times*, 7 June 2014.

(93) Qatar Charity UK, 'Trustees' report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2015', p. 13, **shorturl.at/klJO4**.

(94) 'Nectar Trust, Trustees' report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2018', p. 17, **shorturl.at/kDOS6**.

(95) Chesnot and Malbrunot, *Qatar Papers: Comment l'émirat finance l'islam de France et d'Europe*.

(96) Chesnot and Malbrunot, *Qatar Papers: Comment l'émirat finance l'islam de France et d'Europe*, pp. 58-59.

(97) Schofield, H., France's Islamic heartland, *BBC News*, 18 April 2003. **http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2959389.stm**. The UOIF is now known as the Musulmans de France.

(98) 'Qatar Charity UK, Trustees' report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2015', p. 12.

(99) Bagher Ansari, M., The necessity of Unity in the Islamic Ummah", *Crescent International*, March 2009, pp. 28-30.

(100) Nada, Y., *Inside the Muslim Brotherhood*, p. 54.

(101) Nada, Y., 2012, *Inside the Muslim Brotherhood*, p. 175.

(102) On their past relationship, see for example Ruthven, M., *A Fury for God: The Islamist Attack on America*, Granta Books, London, 2002, p. 154.

(103) Hugh Tomlinson, 'Iranian spy chief's visit to Cairo was meant to "send a message to America"', *The Times*, 8 January 2013, **https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/iranian-spy-chiefs-visit-to-cairo-was-meant-to-send-a-message-to-america-qxrgkws09dw**.

(104) Risen, James, 'A Secret Summit: Iran's Quds Force and the Muslim Brotherhood Considered an Alliance Against Saudi Arabia', *The Intercept*, 18 November 2019, **https://theintercept.com/2019/11/18/iran-muslim-brotherhood-quds-force/**.

(105) 'Designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps: Factsheet', *US Department of State*, 8 April 2019, **https://2017-2021.state.gov/designation-of-the-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps/index.html**.

(106) Pargeter, A., *The Muslim Brotherhood: From Opposition to Power*, Saqi Books, London, 2013, pp. 175-176.

(107) Frampton, M., *The Muslim Brotherhood and the West*, p. 404.

(108) 'Council of European Muslims', accessed 30 March 2021, **http://eumuslims.org/**.

(109) 'FIOE Makes Unannounced Management Changes', *The Global Muslim Brotherhood Daily Watch*, 20 June 2007, **https://www.globalmbwatch.com/2007/06/20/fioe-makes-unannounced-management-changes/**.

lobby group on a range of 'Islamic issues' such as the debate over the hijab."[110] The FIOE helped to establish the ECFR and FEMYSO (below), maintains good links with the EU-blacklisted Hamas,[111] and holds leadership council meetings to set strategy at a pan-European level.[112]

European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR)

The ECFR was established in 1997 at the behest of the FIOE, under the leadership of Qatar resident Yusuf al-Qaradawi.[113] "Notable fellow members include Faisal Mawlawi (vice chair), the Bosnian Grand Mufti Mustafa Ceric, Ahmad al-Rawi, and Rashid al-Ghannouchi – men all very much associated with the ideology of the Ikhwan."[114] It is currently based in Dublin, although its website contains comparatively little information that is not in Arabic.[115]

As well as bringing together Islamic scholars in order to unify Islamic jurisprudence across Europe,[116] the ECFR serves as a clear indication of how the Muslim Brotherhood seeks to regulate the conduct of Muslims living in liberal democracies in the West. Whilst the organisation's approach here may be rooted in the theology of the seventh century, it should be noted that the ECFR uses the most modern of methods to distribute its ideas – part of the analysis that follows is from text in the ECFR app, available from any European app store.

In 2019 controversy flared about this app, which reportedly included comments from Yusuf al-Qaradawi where he declared Jews have a tendency to steal. Such attitudes do not seem to put potential buyers off – at one stage the app was in the top 100 of Apple's downloads in a third of European countries.[117]

The first of the ECFR's objectives is described as being to bring together scholars who live in Europe. However, the writer Alison Pargeter found that many of the ECFR's council members reside in the Middle East and have had limited contact with Europe.[118]

The second of four objectives is described thus: "Issuing collective fatwas which meet the needs of Muslims in Europe, solve their problems and regulate their interaction with the European communities, all within regulations

(110) Frampton, M., *The Muslim Brotherhood and the West*, p. 404.

(111) 'FIOE President Tours Hamas Gaza', *The Global Muslim Brotherhood Daily Watch*, 13 February 2012, **https://www.globalmbwatch.com/2012/02/13/fioe-president-tours-hamas-gaza/**. On the blacklisting of Hamas, see *Official Journal of the European Union*, Volume 64, 8 February 2021, **https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=OJ:L:2021:043:TOC**.

(112) 'FIOE Holds Leadership Meeting In Istanbul', The Global Muslim Brotherhood Daily Watch, 26 January 2011, **https://www.globalmbwatch.com/2011/01/26/fioe-holds-leadership-meeting-in-istanbul/**.

(113) A useful history of The European Council for Fatwa and Research can be found on the website of its subsidiary the Fatwa Committee UK: 'About Us: Introduction Of the Council', available at: **http://fatwacommitteeuk.com/about-us,** last visited:7 April 2021.

(114) Frampton, M., *The Muslim Brotherhood and the West*, p. 406.

(115) 'The European Council for Fatwa and Research: Renewed leadership, renewed hopes', The European Council for Fatwa and Research, 16 December 2018, **https://www.e-cfr.org/european-council-fatwa-research/**.

(116) Bennoune, K., *Your Fatwa Does Not Apply Here*: *Untold Stories from the Fight against Muslim Fundamentalism*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 2015, p. 119.

(117) Bridge, M., 'Apple offers Muslim Brotherhood "radicalisation app"', *The Times*, 25 June 2019, **https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/apple-sells-muslim-brotherhood-radicalisation-app-d2t9cl369**.

(118) Pargeter, A., *The Muslim Brotherhood*, pp. 170-171.

and objectives of sharia."[119] Why does interaction between European citizens, of any faith, require regulation? And who elects the European Council for Fatwa and Research, and its constituent bodies, to conduct this regulation?

A third objective of the ECFR is to publish research on issues arising in Europe "in a manner which realises the objectives of Sharia and the interests of the people."[120] It is unclear what should happen if the objectives of sharia may not be met, or if an individual or a government considers that the sharia does not meet the interests of the people or does not comply with the law.

Elsewhere, in a section of the app entitled 'Resolution (9/24) European Norms and their impact on Female Muslim issues', the ECFR appears to declare the supremacy of their interpretation of sharia. They state:

> The European norms and traditions are devoid of value when they contradict clear Islamic dictates, such as calling for full equality between man and woman in inheritance law under the guise of the change in time and place. This is because the rules of inheritance are determined by clear, unequivocal texts that are unaffected by changing time and place.[121]

Inheritance law is just one of the issues where the ECFR appears to wish to place women behind men. Whilst the lobbying work of Brussels-based organisations such as the European Forum of Muslim Women focuses on debates about the hijab in terms of discrimination against its wearers, maintaining that any restrictions upon it infringe on Muslim women's rights,[122] it is worth considering that the ECFR actually portrays the hijab not in terms of freedom, but as an *obligation*. A 2002 fatwa instructed women in Europe to wear the hijab: "Thus by her dress she presents herself as a serious and honest woman who is neither a seductress nor a temptress."[123] And also "We must convince the sister that covering her head is a religious obligation which is decreed by Allah (swt) and His Messenger Muhammad (pbuh) and agreed in consensus by the entire Ummah."[124] That the ECFR should speak in such terms should not come as a surprise, for "in Islam, many aspects of dress (as with other personal issues) are religiously proscribed and socially normative".[125] But seeing the hijab debate solely in terms of potential discrimination against its wearers is to risk ignoring the theological basis, which, for some, underpins this question. The obsession with women's hair, and a worrying conception of subalternity of women

(119) European Council for Fatwa and Research, n.d., Euro fatwa app, The Council's Objectives. Screenshot in the author's possession, taken 1 March 2021.

(120) European Council for Fatwa and Research, n.d., Euro fatwa app, The Council's Objectives, op. cit..

(121) European Council for Fatwa and Research, n.d., Euro fatwa app, Resolution (9/24) European norms and their impact on Female Muslim Issues, Screenshot in the author's possession, taken 1 March 2021.

(122) European Forum of Muslim Women. Position paper: The denial of Muslim women's right to wear religious clothing as a form of discrimination and injustice. Available from: **https://efomw.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/EFOMW_PAPER_RELIGIOUS_CLOTHING.pdf**, last visited: 1 April 2021.

(123) Quoted in Bennoune, *Your Fatwa Does Not Apply Here*, p. 119.

(124) European Council for Fatwa and Research, 'First Collection of Fatwas', accessed 1 April 2019, **https://islampeace1.wordpress.com/2012/12/13/european-council-for-fatwa-and-research-thier-fatwas-on-different-issue-and-topics/**. See also Alexandre Vasconcelos Caeiro, 'Fatwas for European Muslims: The Minority Fiqh Project and the Integration of Islam in Europe' (Dissertation, Utrecht University, 2011), **http://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/205119**

(125) Jenkins, Sir J 2017, 'A State of Extremes', *Policy Exchange*, 12 June 2017, **https://policyexchange.org.uk/a-state-of-extremes/**.

to men, appear also from a religious opinion stating the wife must require her husband's permission to cut her hair: "This form of alteration requires the agreement of the husband and wife so that their relationship is not affected by this radical change in the woman's appearance. Due to the fact that a Muslim woman does not show her hair in public nor in front of foreign men, it becomes true that the husband has the foremost right to enjoy his wife's hair".[126]

Other controversial fatwas concern the relation between Muslims and non-Muslims. An ECFR religious opinion states: "Our opinion is that a Muslim must never live amongst non-Muslims whilst compromising or even discarding his or her Islamic identity, unless that individual is one who is entirely overpowered and has no other option to choose".[127] This is in line with al-Qaradawi's views on (lack of) integration seen above.

But the most despicable is perhaps the ECFR fatwa sanctioning the death penalty for apostasy:

> Executing whoever reverts from Islam is the responsibility of the state and is to be decided by Islamic governments alone. Islamic organisations and establishments cannot make such rulings nor can they carry them out. In any case, a considerable number of our predecessors (Salaf) agreed that not all who revert from Islam are to be executed, but rather those who declare their action in public and may cause Fitna by bringing down the name of Allah (swt), His prophet (pbuh) or the Muslims. The punishment of execution in this case is to protect and preserve the entire nation from the evil that this individual will undoubtedly bring, and is not a case of confiscating his or her rights to expression and belief. Indeed, by committing such an act, the individual has transgressed upon the rights of others as well as the entire state and nation, which come before anyone's individual rights. Modern legislation uses the term "Grand Treason" for crimes similar to the act of one who reverts from Islam then announces this in public and wages a campaign against Islam and the entire nation.[128]

European Institute for Human Sciences (EIHS)

This educational facility was established by the FIOE in 1990 to train imams and develop Muslim elites,[129] and has been described as "the western Brotherhood's foremost center of higher learning".[130] The Muslim Brotherhood's leading theologian Yusuf al-Qaradawi sits on its scientific council.[131] At its base in Chateau-Chinon in France, the EIHS has three departments: one for the study of the Qur'an, another for theology and the last for Arabic, but it does not appear to be producing any significant papers.[132] The EIHS opened a site in the Paris region in 2001 and in Strasbourg in 2018.[133] Other branches were also created in in Germany (Frankfurt in 2013) and Finland (Helsinki in 2016).[134] Pierre Durrani, a Swede who subsequently joined, and later left, the Muslim Brotherhood, studied at the EIHS in 1994, with his fees paid by the Swedish taxpayer. He has commented that he gradually realised it was a Muslim Brotherhood institution, although it included broader figures from the 'Islamic movement':

> Its leadership and management were Brotherhood; most of its teachers belonged to or sympathized with the Brotherhood; and most of the students were Brotherhood members or promising activists handpicked by Brotherhood leaders in their countries of origin.[135]

There is considerable cross-fertilisation and overlap between the EIHS and other Muslim Brotherhood-related groups. For example, the only links on the Birmingham EIHS website in the UK are to its Paris branch and the two pan-European groups traditionally associated with the Ikhwan examined above – namely the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe and the European Council for Fatwa and Research.[136]

The French founding members of ECFR (namely Ahmad Jaballah, Al-Arabi Al-Bishri, Tahar Mahdi and Unis Qurqah) were all teaching at the EISH in Chateau-Chinon.[137] They are also listed as ECFR members in the English-translated first collection of ECFR fatwas.[138] In the introduction to the same work, the connection between EISH, ECFR and the FIOE is made explicit by Al-Qaradawi himself:

> In recent years, a number of determined brothers decided to complete the chain of facilities and establishments which the Islamic community simply could not do without. They therefore established the Federation of Islamic Organisation in Europe, which was instrumental in finding the European Institute for Humanitarian and Islamic Studies in France and which, in turn, saw its first wave of graduates last year and has since opened a new branch in Britain. In addition, the European Council for Fatwa and Research was also established consisting of a number of respectable scholars, who work to deliver Fatwas and guidance in some of the most prominent Islamic centres throughout Europe, along with a number of scholars who live in the Islamic World, but carry the worries and anxieties of their fellow Muslims in Europe, visit them on a frequent basis and appreciate their conditions and living situations.[139]

(126) European Council for Fatwa and Research, 'First Collection of Fatwas'.

(127) Ibid.

(128) Ibid.

(129) Johnson, *A Mosque in Munich*, p. 200.

(130) Vidino, L., *The Closed Circle*, p. 87

(131) O'Neill, S., 'The Colleges with links to Islamist Movements', *The Times*, 29 July 2004, **https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-colleges-with-links-to-islamist-movements-ckf3rgd5dvg** .

(132) Chesnot and Malbrunot, *Qatar Papers: Comment l'émirat finance l'Islam de France et d'Europe*, p. 118.

(133) Klein, T., 'IESH: l'Université des Frères Musulmans?', *Mediapart*, 15 January 2019, **https://blogs.mediapart.fr/tanya-klein/blog/150119/iesh-luniversite-des-freres-musulmans**.

(134) Klein, T., 'IESH: l'Université des Frères Musulmans?', *Mediapart*, 15 January 2019.

(135) Vidino, L., *The Closed Circle*, p. 89.

(136) European Institute of Human Sciences Birmingham, n.d., Contacts, available at: **https://www.eihsbirmingham.org.uk/wpen/?page_id=41** last visited: 8 April 2021.

(137) Caeiro, V., 'Fatwas for European Muslims', p. 187.

(138) Available in Vasconcelos Caeiro, 'Fatwas for European Muslims'.

(139) Ibid.

Additional noteworthy connections emerge from the fact that Jaballah was president of the UOIF, is part of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, and he is married to Noura Jaballah, first president of the European Forum of Muslim Women (see below).[140]

Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO)

In 1995 the Foreign Ministry of Sweden and the Sveriges Unga Muslimer organisation held a conference on the subject of Islam in Europe. The following year, FEMYSO was created with the support of two Islamist organisations: the pan-European FIOE and the Islamic Foundation (UK), in 1996.[141] The presence of a Brussels based organisation, which declares itself to be representative of young Muslims, creates an important platform for lobbying the range of international organisations based in Europe's capital. FEMYSO was also a coming together in Europe of Middle Eastern and South Asian Islamist traditions – the FIOE has long been associated with the Muslim Brotherhood's beliefs, whilst the Islamic Foundation was established in the UK in 1973 by Khurshid Ahmad and Khurram Murad, prominent activists in the main clerical party in Pakistan, Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI).[142] The Islamic Foundation has long taken the question of Europe seriously, establishing an 'Islam in Europe' centre at its UK headquarters. Tariq Ramadan's 1999 book '*To be a European Muslim*' was researched during a sabbatical at the centre.[143]

A characteristic of FEMYSO has been the high number of young Muslims from across the continent taking senior positions within the organisation, who are from prominent Muslim Brotherhood families. This goes on to illustrate a core element within Muslim Brotherhood-related groups in Europe – the multiple representative organisations, charities and platforms that are created and utilised by a small pool of activists.

FEMYSO's first president was Ibrahim el-Zayat, who has gone on to hold a dizzying number of posts within Muslim representative organisations in Germany. He also represents the link with the Turkish branch of the MB, through the German-based company that manages Millî Görüş' mosques throughout Europe (Europäische Moscheebau und Unterstützungs Gemeinschaft – EMUG).[144] His daughter Manal el-Zayat graduated from the EIHS in France, and married the son of the British-based Muslim Brotherhood exile Kamel el-Helbawy. In 2013 four members of FEMYSO's executive were either the sons or daughters of Muslim

(140) 'Ahmed Jaballah', *Global Influence Operations Report* (blog), accessed 8 April 2021, **https://www.global-influence-ops.com/wiki/ahmed-jaballah/**.

(141) FEMYSO, n.d. 'Our History', **https://femyso.org/history/** last visited 2 October 2019. Interestingly the FEMYSO website has now been updated and reference to the Islamic Foundation removed in the 'About Us' section. See **https://femyso.org/we-are-femyso/** last visited: 8 April 2021. A screenshot of the original reference to the Islamic Foundation is the authors possession and can also be seen via the wayback machine: **FEMYSO – Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations » History (archive.org)**, last visited: 30 June 2021.

(142) Bowen, I., *Medina in Birmingham, Najaf in Brent*, Hurst, London, 2014, p. 85.

(143) Ramadan, T., *To be a European Muslim*. Islamic Foundation, Leicester, 1999, p. ix.

(144) Vidino, L., 'The Muslim Brotherhood in Austria', p. 26. Confirmed by Michaël Privot, *Quand j'étais frère musulman : Parcours vers un islam des lumières*, La Boîte à Pandore, 2017, p. 126.

Brotherhood members,[145] most notably this included FEMYSO's then President Intissar Kherigi, daughter of the Muslim Brotherhood's leader in Tunisia, Rachid Ghannouchi. This is an interesting example of how student politics and organisations not only serve as a testing ground for the children of Ikhwan activists, but also provide them with paid employment within the Islamic movement. This can then help to provide the skills, experience and alliances that are advantageous to future careers in academia, lobbying or politics at the national or European level.

FEMYSO has, however, enjoyed greater success than being a mere employment vehicle for Ikhwan families. It holds participatory status with the Council of Europe and is a member of its Advisory Council on Youth.[146] There its current representative is Hande Taner, who contributes to the following mandates: Joint Council on Youth coordinator on anti-racism; substitute member of the Programming Committee on Youth. Portfolios: Management Committee with Ukraine; Management Committee with Russia; EU-CoE Youth Cooperation.

FEMYSO has also enjoyed support from the European Commission, as examined in more details in the next chapter.

In 2019, FEMYSO declared a focus on four main campaign areas: what it describes as active citizenship, human rights and fighting Islamophobia, interfaith/cultural action, and the 2019 European Elections Campaign. In practice, a large proportion of its output appears to be contributing to EU meetings and/or campaigning for greater resources in areas such as countering anti-Muslim prejudice. This allows for coordination with other Islamist groups. For example, a 2018 letter to the European Union asking for the "the European Commission Coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred to have a clear mandate and sufficient resources"[147] included FEMYSO, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) and CAGE, the latter of which is best known for its work across the globe supporting suspected jihadists arrested for terror offences and notorious for describing Islamic State executioner Mohammed Emwazi as having been a "beautiful young man".[148] It remains to be seen if Brexit will interrupt these UK-European working relationships.

(145) Vidino, L., *The Closed Circle*, p. 184.

(146) FEMYSO, Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe, available at: **https://femyso.org/representation/advisory-council/** last visited: 8 April 2021.

(147) FEMYSO, 'Open letter: A meaningful coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred to transform EU approach on Islamophobia', 9 July 2018, **https://femyso.org/open-letter-a-meaningful-coordinator-on-anti-muslim-hatred-to-transform-eu-approach-on-islamophobia/**.

(148) 'IS "Jihadi John" suspect a "beautiful young man" – Cage', *BBC News*, 26 February 2015, **https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-31650427/is-jihadi-john-suspect-a-beautiful-young-man-cage**.

European Forum of Muslim Women (EFOMW)

This Brussels-based organisation was created in 2005 under the auspices of the UOIF.[149] It focuses primarily on upholding Ikhwan positions on the hijab and campaigning against anti-Muslim prejudice at local, national and pan-European level.

Its first president was Noura Jaballah, member of FIOE, leader of the UOIF,[150] and wife of the abovementioned Ahmed Jaballah, involved in the UOIF, EISH, ECFR and IUMS.[151] Until 2019 its Chair was Iman Sandra Pertek, an academic at the University of Birmingham and a former employee of Islamic Relief.[152] Its current Chair is Dorsaf Ben Dhiab from France. In 2019 the EFOMW announced that it had been granted consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).[153]

Selected countries assessment

Austria

According to a 2017 report by Lorenzo Vidino on the MB in Austria, supported by Austria's domestic intelligence service (the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and Counterterrorism (BVT)), the MB in Austria has a particularly strong presence and comparatively larger political ties than in other European Union member states.[154] These encompass multiple fields, including politics, NGOs and business activities.

The most relevant organisation is the *Liga Kultur Verein* (LKV) which serves as the national branch at the FIOE.[155] As highlighted above, one of its historical leaders, Jamal Morad, explicitly stated his belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood and his support for the goals of the latter, namely the acquisition of political power through social activism. He also argued that no distinction exists between religion and politics.[156]

According to Vidino's report, the LKV has a stated partnership with organisations banned in Israel for being part of Hamas' fundraising network.[157] Furthermore, the Liga once hosted a lecture by Hesham Bargash, member of the International Union of Muslim Scholars and declared *persona non grata* in the Netherlands due to anti-Semitism, misogyny, homophobia and glorification of jihad.[158]

Linked to LKV is the Islamic Faith Community of Austria – *Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich* (IGGÖ), which is recognised by state authorities as the official representative of Austrian Muslims.[159] As such, it is funded with taxpayer's money.

Vidino identifies a connection between IGGÖ and the Ikhwan mostly through a web of family relations connected to the Islamische Religionspädagogische Akademie (IRPA) – the religious academy founded by the IGGÖ.[160] Its director, Amena El-Zayat, is the sister of abovementioned Manal El-Zayat (FEMYSO), Bilal El-Zayat (founding member of Muslimische Jugend Deutschland) and Ibrahim El-Zayat, who headed the Islamische Gemeinschaft Deutschland (IGD), defined "the quintessential 'Brotherhood spawn' in Germany".[161] Ibrahim El-Zayat also led FEMYSO from 1996 to 2002. The official MB website *Ikhwanweb* listed him as "one of the members of the Muslim Brotherhood".[162]

The troubling conclusion is that in Austria the government's interlocutor as official representative of local Muslims is a Muslim Brotherhood linked organisation.

Belgium

The most comprehensive recent analysis of Islamism in Belgium is the result of a Parliamentary Inquiry tasked with understanding the broad circumstances that led to the 2016 terrorist attacks in Brussels. The fourth report, published in 2017, is devoted to the assessment of radicalisation in the country, and it is the result of more than 60 hearings of academic experts, public officers, frontline practitioners and representatives of Muslim organisations.[163]

The overall picture that emerges from the report is the predominance in Belgium of highly conservative narratives of Islam. According to the report, someone interested in Islam in the country will struggle to find material which does not convey a fundamentalist interpretation of religion[164] – a phenomenon known to other countries, sometimes identified as a "salafisation of Islam".[165]

The terrain has been prepared, according to the study, by a joint venture between the Wah-

(149) Louizi, *Pourquoi j'ai quitté les Frères musulmans*, p. 185.

(150) Ibid.

(151) 'Ahmed Jaballah'.

(152) 'Iman Sandra Pertek', *LinkedIn*, available at: **https://uk.linkedin.com/in/sandraimanpertek**, last visited: 1 April 2021.

(153) Global Muslim Brotherhood Daily Watch, *European Muslim Brotherhood's Women's Group Granted UN Body Consultative Status*. 21 August 2019, **https://www.globalmbwatch.com/2019/08/21/european-muslim-brotherhood-womens-group-granted-un-body-consultative-status/**.

(154) Vidino, L., 'The Muslim Brotherhood in Austria', p. 42.

(155) Ibid., p. 20.

(156) Ibid., p. 22-23.

(157) Ibid., p. 21.

(158) Ibid.

(159) Ibid., p. 23.

(160) Ibid.

(161) Ibid., p. 24.

(162) Ibid., p. 25.

(163) Chambre des Représentants de Belgique, 'Enquête Parlementaire Chargée d'examiner Les Circonstances Qui Ont Conduit Aux Attentats Terroristes Du 22 Mars 2016 Dans l'aéroport de Bruxelles-National et Dans La Station de Métro Maelbeek à Bruxelles, y Compris l'évolution et La Gestion de La Lutte Contre Le Radicalisme et La Menace Terroriste - Quatrième Rapport Intermédiaire Sur Le Volet "Radicalisme"', 23 October 2017, Doc 54 1752/009.

(164) Ibid., p. 29. Own translation from French.

(165) Delattre, N. and Eustache-Brinio, J., 'Rapport Fait Au Nom de La Commission d'enquête Sur Les Réponses Apportées Par Les Autorités Publiques Au Développement de La Radicalisation Islamiste et Les Moyens de La Combattre' *Sénat de la Republique Française*, 7 July 2020, p. 30. Le Devin, W. and Blin, S., 'Hugo Micheron : «Le défi que pose le jihadisme à la société française est devant nous»', *Libération*, 14 January 2020, **https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2020/01/14/hugo-micheron-le-defi-que-pose-le-jihadisme-a-la-societe-francaise-est-devant-nous_1773028/**.

habism/Salafism trend within Islam and the Muslim Brotherhood,[166] which in Belgium is mainly represented by the FIOE-member *Ligue des musulmans de Belgique*.[167] The connection is both personal (Salafists are often invited to attend and speak at MB gatherings and vice versa) and ideological:

> in addition to a literal and devout interpretation, which is a vector of a very marked conservatism, beyond a shared project of Islamisation, both foster a rhetoric of victimhood and the polarization of the society that this inevitably brings about ('we [Muslims]' the victim, 'they' the accountable).[168]

This finding is relevant because it shows that there is no clear-cut separation between different strands of Islamism: they all share the conception that Islam must dominate every aspect of life, and all pursue the ultimate goal of a sharia-based state. Sometimes they compete and sometimes they are allied for this goal.

One relevant example of this joint-venture is Brussel's Grand Mosque: ceded to Saudi Arabia by the Belgian Government in 1969 – control the Saudis relinquished in 2018[169] –, the Mosque has been traditionally described as a hotbed of Salafi-Wahhabism, but its links with the Muslim Brotherhood have been overlooked. Conversely, the inquiry identifies "a significant influence of the Muslim Brotherhood's thought on the kind of Islam propagated by the Grand Mosque and the Islamic Cultural Centre". This was confirmed by the hearings of the mosque's Imam and of the director of the Islamic Cultural Centre, who both admitted to align their fatwas with those of the European Council for Fatwa and Research.[170]

With sponsorship from Gulf states,[171] since the 1980s Wahhabis and Muslim Brothers have fostered polarisation between Muslims and Westerners, using a victimhood rhetoric[172] and a Manichean discourse against the "unbelievers" and "crusaders".[173] They have also widely spread hatred and extremism, in mosques and in the streets. A Wahhabi publication freely distributed in the street in the 1980s and 1990s suggested to throw homosexuals from high roofs – something that Islamic State would later implement.[174]

While with time the rhetoric has become more subtle, at least on the part of the Ikhwan, this does not imply a change in the goals but mainly in the tactic, argues the inquiry. Hence, while the Muslim Brotherhood does not incite violence "at least in an outspoken and direct way," it also adopts a "double-speak" whereby

(166) Chambre des Représentants de Belgique, 'Enquête Parlementaire "Radicalisme"', p. 28.

(167) Ibid., p. 30.

(168) Ibid., 29.

(169) De Carbonnel, A. and Kalin, S. 'Giving up control of Brussels mosque, Saudi Arabia sends a signal', *Reuters,* 12 February 2018, **https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-attacks-belgium-saudi-insight-idUSKBN1FW0R3**.

(170) See Virgili, T., 'The Belgian Parliamentary Inquiry on Radicalization: A Sensible Analysis and a Path towards Change', *Al-Mesbar Studies & Research Center*, 6 February 2018, **https://mesbar.org/belgian-parliamentary-inquiry-radicalization-sensible-analysis-path-towards-change/**.

(171) Especially Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait, in different times. Chambre des Représentants de Belgique, 'Enquête Parlementaire "Radicalisme"', p. 35.

(172) Ibid., p. 29.

(173) Ibid., p. 32.

(174) Ibid., p. 33.

the façade of public declarations is merely a "front stage" and a "magnet for a back stage" where the "remarks are more incisive, tendentious, and, in any case, remarkably less consensual".[175] Furthermore, the report views the ideology of the MB as an omni-comprehensive one aiming to impose a strict religious control on all aspects of life – individual, social and political – as determined by a conservative and literalist reading of the scriptures. This attitude is seen as problematic and pervasive, in that it has a strong influence on many Muslims who, without necessarily even realising it, live their faith according to the Brotherhood's ethos.[176]

The Parliamentary Committee also accuses the Belgian authorities of laxity, and thus of having a responsibility in the spread of Islamist doctrines. Violence is not borne out of the blue, but it is the consequence of the diffusion of radical ideologies. For this reason, the study recommends a set of measures aimed at curtailing Islamist activities, calling on the state to immediately terminate support towards Islamist organisations, vet all recipients of public funding, monitor the vectors of extremist propagation in religious, cultural and recreational centres, control foreign funding and empower an enlightened version of Islam to counter the prevalent MB and Salafist currents.[177]

France

In France, the main representative of FIOE is *Musulmans de France* ('Muslims of France'), renamed as such in 2017 after being known as the *Union des organisations islamiques de France* (UOIF, Union of Islamic Organisations of France). Perhaps typically for this milieu, the UOIF has stated that it was not part of the Muslim Brotherhood, but ascribed to its thought.[178]

Musulmans de France is not alone. A recent report of the French Senate, drafted by a commission of inquiry tasked with assessing the phenomenon of Islamist radicalisation in France, speaks of the MB in the country as a deeply entrenched network, counting 50,000 people across 200 organisations, 147 places of worship and 18 schools.[179] The description of the activities and goals of these organisations follow the scheme outlined above: according to the analysts, whether they work on the halal market, the pilgrimage to Mecca or any other kind of apparently neutral occupations, the long term goal is the acquisition of capital to spend in the political scene.[180]

Concerning the ideological aspect, the report describes the MB as a network with "a Salafist project under a sugar coat of modernity".[181] One towering example: in 2000, the UOIF demanded the withdrawal of a clause on the freedom to

(175) Virgili, T., 'The Belgian Parliamentary Inquiry on Radicalization'.

(176) Chambre des Représentants de Belgique, 'Enquête Parlementaire "Radicalisme"', p. 31.

(177) Ibid., pp. 44-55.

(178) Vidino, L., *The Closed Circle*, p. 112.

(179) Delattre, N. and Eustache-Brinio, J., 'French Senate Report on Islamist Radicalisation', p. 38.

(180) Ibid., p. 53.

(181) Ibid., p. 34.

change faith from a document signed by the Ministry of Interior with the main representatives of Muslims in France.[182]

Overall, the report warns against political Islam in that it has a hegemonic plan, which it pursues by fostering an "Islamist separatism".[183] The policy recommendations are therefore in line with those of similar analyses conducted in other European countries but yet to be adopted at the pan-European level: avoid essentialising Muslims under an Islamist representation, strongly reassert secular principles vis-à-vis Islam as the only way of guaranteeing citizens equality, avoid religious interference in politics, and reject communitarianism, which creates divisions and unequal enjoyment of rights.[184]

A few weeks after the presentation of this report, the French Government announced a legal project "against separatism" and for a progressive Islam (*Islam des Lumières*) which incorporates the report's recommendations. The draft law, officially titled "Reinforcing the principles of the Republic,"[185] is currently under examination at the French Parliament. It has received strong impulse after the beheading of French school teacher Samuel Paty, guilty in the eyes of his killer, and the vast network who incited him, of offending Islam by showing pupils satirical cartoons of Muhammad in the course of his teaching.[186]

The bill describes the Islamist danger in the following manner:

> An insidious but powerful communalist entryism is slowly destroying the foundations of our society in certain areas. This entryism is for the most part Islamist in inspiration. It is the manifestation of a conscious, theorised, politico-religious project, the ambition of which is to make religious norms prevail over the general law that we have freely given ourselves. It sets in motion a separatist dynamic which aims at division.[187]

The draft law contains a series of measures aimed at fighting this phenomenon. Among these, we find provisions intended to ensure neutrality of providers of public services, guarantee that any recipient of public grants respect key liberal democratic principles, fight forced marriages and ban virginity certificates, reinforce control over private school curricula and limit home schooling for children. The bill also contains sections aimed at ensuring a more effective protection of threatened public officials and criminalising the online diffusion of private data that may put someone in danger. Religious and cultural associations and places of worship are also subjected to tighter scrutiny, significantly intended

(182) Ibid., p. 41.

(183) Ibid., p. 26.

(184) Ibid., pp. 54-58.

(185) Assemblée Nationale, 'Projet de loi n° 3649 confortant le respect des principes de la République', Assemblée nationale, accessed 31 March 2021, **https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/textes/l15b3649_projet-loi**.

(186) 'Ce que l'on sait de l'attaque terroriste contre le professeur décapité à Conflans-Sainte-Honorine', Franceinfo, 16 October 2020, **https://www.francetvinfo.fr/faits-divers/terrorisme/antiterrorisme/ce-que-l-on-sait-de-l-attaque-terroriste-contre-un-professeur-decapite-a-conflans-sainte-honorine_4144679.html**.

(187) *Exposé Des Motifs*. Own translation from French.

to avoid them being controlled by radical groups, as well as the phenomenon of religious organisations disguised as cultural ones to evade the 1905 Law on the separation between Church and State and thus receive public funding.[188]

The French government's effort against Islamism has been also pursued in dialogue with the French Council of Muslim Faith (*Conseil Français du Culte Musulman – CFCM*). This body, created in 2003 as the official interlocutor of the French Government for all matters related to Islamic religious activities, comprises several organisations, often in contrast with one another, which are linked to different countries and represent different ideologies – including Islamist ones.[189] In January 2021, the CFCM approved a "Charter of Principles for the Islam of France" that binds the signatories to respect the French Constitution and the principles of *libérté, égalité, fraternité* and secularism (*laïcité*), and never to invoke religious convictions to derogate to civil obligations. The Charter also includes a crucial commitment toward respecting the freedom of apostasy from Islam, it rejects the hideous practice of *takfir* (an excommunication that can be tantamount to a death threat), as well as any discrimination based on religion, sex or sexual orientation. Furthermore, the Charter repudiates "all forms of interference or instrumentalization of Islam for political ends", with the explicit mention of Salafism/Wahhabism, the *tabligh*, the Muslim Brotherhood and the nationalistic factions attached thereto. This clear rebuff of Islamism is also evident in the use of the expression "anti-Muslim hatred" (*haine antimusulmane*) in lieu of the politically charged "Islamophobia", and in the rejection of concepts at the core of Islamists' divisive ideology, such as *dar al-harb* and *dar al-islam*, *al-wala wa-l bara* (loving and hating for the sake of Allah), and *takfir wa-l hijra* (excommunication and exodus from the impious society).[190]

Within the Muslim Brotherhood camp, the Charter has been signed by the former UOIF and rejected by Millî Görüş, which felt particularly targeted by the reference to foreign influences.[191] It will be interesting to closely follow the next phases to see to what extent this rift reflects an ideological gulf, geopolitical rivalry or a staged divergence in tactics.

Finally, France has taken action against extremist material from Islamist organisations being distributed across Europe. A succession of Muslim Brotherhood-supporting satellite TV stations have launched in Turkey in recent years, seeking to broadcast internationally. The first to operate there, Rabea TV, was removed from the Eutelsat broadcasting system after the French authorities found it to be showing violent images. Across the existing channels, violence, anti-western themes and anti-Semitism occur frequently.[192]

(188) This phenomenon is thoroughly described in Louizi, *Pourquoi j'ai quitté les Frères musulmans*. For an accurate description of the law and the legislative train, see 'Projet de loi confortant le respect des principes de la République', Vie publique.fr, accessed 31 March 2021, **https://www.vie-publique.fr/loi/277621-loi-separatisme-respect-des-principes-de-la-republique**.

(189) Chambraud, C., 'Le Conseil français du culte musulman en voie de désintégration', *Le Monde*, 22 March 2021, **https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2021/03/22/le-conseil-francais-du-culte-musulman-en-voie-de-desintegration_6074040_3224.html**.

(190) 'Charte des principes pour l'islam de France', *Conseil Français du Culte Musulman* (blog), 18 January 2021, **https://www.cfcm-officiel.fr/presentation-de-la-charte-des-principes-pour-lislam-de-france-au-president-de-la-republique/**.

(191) Ibid., p. 24.

(192) Felder, Y., 'Turkey-Based Muslim Brotherhood TV Channels – An Emerging Hotbed of Extremism, Jihadi Ideology, And Antisemitism', *MEMRI*, 8 January 2019, **https://www.memri.org/reports/turkey-based-muslim-brotherhood-tv-channels-%E2%80%93-emerging-hotbed-extremism-jihadi-ideology-and#_edn2**.

Republic of Ireland

Ireland is not the first country one considers when contemplating either Islam or its political manifestations. A historically Roman Catholic country which has become increasingly secular in recent decades, it has experienced lower rates of Muslim migration than other western European states. However, Ireland is the nation where the Muslim Brotherhood has placed the core of its theological operations in Europe – the European Council for Fatwa and Research – discussed earlier in this report.

The ECFR is based at the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland in Clonskeagh, Dublin. Dublin-based Hussain Halawa is its current Secretary-General. The Irish researcher Mark Humphrys reports that in 2011 a Norwegian-Syrian woman, Sara Azmeh Rasmussen, picketed the centre in opposition to the ECFR's support for the death penalty for homosexuals. Following a meeting with Hussain Halawa, Norwegian media reported that she was told that she was sick, and that for those who 'push' homosexuality onto others, shariah proscribes only one punishment – the death penalty.[193] In 2018, the Islamic Cultural Centre's Dr Ali Selim argued on Irish television in defence of female circumcision, and complained about press coverage criticising the practice.[194]

Despite these attitudes, the Irish state has frequently invited the Centre's Imam Hussain Halawa to attend official events, for example in 2019 when he read from the Qur'an at Ireland's National Day of Commemoration, when the nation marks all Irish men and women killed in conflict.[195] In 2016 the Irish President Michael D Higgins visited the Clonskeagh centre, and, somewhat incongruously, praised it for 'fighting prejudice.'[196]

Sweden

Sweden is one of the EU countries with the highest presence of Muslims per capita, accounting for more of 8 per cent of its population.[197] This, combined with a tradition of multiculturalist policies, has created a fertile ground for the penetration of Islamist organisations into the country. The Muslim Brotherhood network has been active in Sweden since the late 1970s. One of the first MB campaigns was the dissemination of leaflets inviting Muslims to "submit" to the faith – described as an "all-encompassing" system of ideas, to avoid following secular rules and to exert a tight control on girls.[198]

Since then, the Muslim Brotherhood has developed a network of organisations heavily sustained by the state and local authorities, financially and organisationally.[199] The most relevant is the Islamic Association of Sweden (*Islamiska Förbundet i Sverige* – IFiS), founded in 1987 in Stockholm "as a way to provide a public organizational statute to the MB's various bodies in Sweden".[200] As per its statute, IFiS is "a founding member of FIOE and follows its general guidelines". Furthermore, one of the most prominent leaders of the Swedish Muslim Brotherhood network and head of the Muslim Association of Sweden, Mahmoud Aldebe,[201] explicitly stated:

> The Muslim Brotherhood is in Sweden established under the name Islamic Association in Sweden ... the large mosque in Stockholm is owned, controlled and governed today by the Islamic Association, which has its roots in the Muslim Brotherhood, Ikhwan al-Muslimun, which is a religious movement that has an inherent social and political direction ... the [Islamic] Association's representatives are active in large parts of organized Islam in Sweden. They control, among other things, the United Islamic Associations in Sweden (FIFS), the Ibn Rushd Study Association (IR), Sweden's Young Muslims (SUM), the Stockholm mosque and the Gothenburg mosque. Through their member organizations, they govern the Muslim Council of Sweden (SMR).[202]

This open letter by Aldebe also sheds light on the structure and ramification of the MB network in Sweden.

Both Aldebe and IFiS vividly embody the Ikhwan's beliefs concerning Muslims and their relationship with the rest of society. In the 1980s Aldebe, in collaboration with the former Swedish Immigration Board, authored a text on "Understanding Islam" in which he described it as an all-encompassing system of rules that mankind must obey in any aspect of life.[203] He reiterated these concepts in an open letter sent in 2016 to the Swedish Parliament, where he went as far as to demand a sharia-compliant separate set of laws for Muslims, including separation of boys and girls in swimming classes, home schooling in Arabic for Muslim children, and divorces sanctioned by an imam.[204]

In 2016 and 2017, the Swedish Civil Contingency Agency (an administrative body under the Ministry of Justice that is responsible for national security) commissioned two reports on the Muslim Brotherhood in Sweden. The reports convey a negative picture of the activities and

(193) Johnsen, N., Norsk aktivist måtte avbryte homoprotest, VG, 30 June 2011, **https://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/i/7bm6V/norsk-aktivist-maatte-avbryte-homoprotest**.

(194) Armstrong, K., 'Female circumcision "should be allowed by law" - member of Ireland's Islamic Cultural Centre.' *Irish Independent*, 9 February 2018, **https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/female-circumcision-should-be-allowed-by-law-member-of-irelands-islamic-cultural-centre-36585441.html**.

(195) Islam Ireland, Update: National Day of Commemoration July 14 2019, **https://islamireland.ie/news/update-national-day-of-commemoration-july-14th-2019/**, last visited: 8 April 2021.

(196) Humphrys, M., n.d., 'Michael D and the Clonskeagh Mosque', available at: **https://markhumphrys.com/michael.d.israel.html#clonskeagh**, last visited: 8 April 2021.

(197) Lee Tomson, D., 'The Rise of Sweden Democrats: Islam, Populism and the End of Swedish Exceptionalism', *Brookings* (blog), 25 March 2020, **https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-rise-of-sweden-democrats-and-the-end-of-swedish-exceptionalism/**.

(198) Norell, M., Carlbom, A., and Durrani, P., 'The Muslim Brotherhood in Sweden' (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, 2016), p. 8, **https://clarion-project.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Muslim-Brotherhood-Sweden-Magnus-Norrell.pdf**.

(199) Ibid., p. 9.

(200) Ibid., p. 10.

(201) Ibid., p. 20.

(202) Carlbom, A., 'Islamic Activism in a Multicultural Context – Ideological Continuity or Change?' (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency and Malmö University, 2018), p. 26, **https://www.msb.se/sv/publikationer/islamic-activism-in-a-multicultural-context--ideological-continuity-or-change/**.

(203) Ibid., p. 17.

(204) 'Muslim Council: No Support for "Special Laws"', *The Local Sweden* (blog), 29 April 2006, **https://www.thelocal.se/20060429/3688-2/**.

goals of Islamists in the country. They highlight the divisive role of Islamist organisations, which have created:

> a parallel societal structure that competes with the rest of society over Swedish citizens' value systems. In this way, the MB's activists constitute a long-term challenge in terms of the country's social cohesion.[205]

This is mainly due, according to the studies, to a divisive rhetoric that essentializes Muslims and opposes them to the rest of society, with the aim to prevent their integration within the latter.[206] The reports further stress the threat posed by Muslim Brotherhood organisations to liberal democratic values, criticising the role of the state in indirectly supporting this endeavour:

> A dilemma of giving MB-associated organizations the possibility of developing their activities is that it means that the state (or other funding providers) offers tax funding to a small group of actors who spread messages that undermine the dominant values in society. The values called into question by activists in MB-associated organizations concern the freedom of speech in religious matters, the value of equality between men and women, the view of homosexuality and sexual minorities, as well as anti-Semitic expressions.[207]

The authors argue that the support of the state and local authorities to the Ikhwan – a phenomenon that occurs everywhere in Europe – has reached in Sweden its "farthest point", and it is directly responsible for having prevented the establishment of other forms of Islam different from "the so-called moderate Islamists that the MB represent".[208]

An additional source of information about the Muslim Brotherhood in Sweden is Pierre Durrani, who has gone on the record about his time in the organisation.[209] After being prominent as a board member of the Swedish Young Muslims, Durrani joined the Ikhwan, having studied at the European Institute for Human Sciences. In Sweden, the Muslim Brotherhood "had a relatively sophisticated yet completely secret structure, which resembled that of the mother group in Egypt".[210] Its private meetings were held in Arabic, not Swedish, and Durrani attended meetings where racist language was used about both Swedes and African Muslims.[211] Another defector from the Ikhwan's Swedish circles, Pernilla Ouis, found the organisation anti-Swedish and misogynistic. As a woman she was never a member, "but a cog in the machine of the Swedish Brotherhood milieu."[212]

(205) Norell, M., Carlbom, A., and Durrani, P., 'The Muslim Brotherhood in Sweden', p. 26.

(206) Carlbom, A., 'Islamic Activism in a Multicultural Context – Ideological Continuity or Change?', p. 5.

(207) Ibid.

(208) Norell, Carlbom, and Durrani, 'The Muslim Brotherhood in Sweden', p. 19.

(209) See Chapter five of Vidino, L., *The Closed Circle*.

(210) Ibid., p. 91.

(211) Ibid., p. 96–97.

(212) Ibid., p.148.

Durrani declares that Sweden is an ideal location for the Muslim Brotherhood's process of Islamisation, with the Ikhwan granted the status to explain Islam to a nation state that has multiculturalism enshrined in its approach to minorities. Lorenzo Vidino concludes that "the Brothers are exploiting the concept of multiculturalism as the best vehicle to advance that agenda of creating a parallel society, run by them and funded by the Swedish state."[213]

United Kingdom

The difficulty in assessing the Muslim Brotherhood in European countries is exemplified by the record of the United Kingdom. Former British Prime Minister David Cameron writes in his memoir "The UK government's approach to the MB was deeply confused,"[214] with some government departments not wanting to work with it, others seeking engagement with the Ikhwan due to their progress in the Middle East and their increasing influence in parts of the UK.

In 2015 the British government partially published a report which Cameron had hoped would bring a unified approach: '*Muslim Brotherhood Review: Main Findings*.'[215] Written by a senior former diplomat, Sir John Jenkins, and Charles Farr, Director General of the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism in the Home Office, the report found that in the 1980s and early 1990s "the Muslim Brotherhood and its associates developed a new strategy of domestic engagement in western communities" and that "the stated purpose of engagement was not just to promote the Muslim Brotherhood overseas but also to preserve the autonomy of Muslim communities." Of the new organisations that were founded in the United Kingdom "[n]one were openly identified with the Muslim Brotherhood and membership of the Muslim Brotherhood remained (and still remains a secret)."[216]

That policy of secrecy in the United Kingdom is almost certain to have been replicated in continental Europe. The authors also considered that the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE) had been established by the Brotherhood, and that the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR) was "another pan European Muslim Brotherhood body, intended to provide religious and social guidance to Muslims living in Europe."[217]

The report stresses the ideological links between the Ikhwan and jihadism, as a consequence of Hasan al-Banna's teaching: "Hassan al Banna accepted the political utility of violence, and the Brotherhood conducted attacks, including political assassinations and attempted assassinations against Egyptian state targets and both British and Jewish interests during his lifetime". It also makes clear that Qutb's conception of jihad "was neither solely spiritual nor defensive", and that his views, while at times reinterpreted, "have never been

(213) Ibid., p. 103.

(214) Cameron, D., *For the record*, William Collins, London, 2020.

(215) Prime Minister's Office, 2015, op. cit..

(216) Ibid., points 22-23.

(217) Ibid., point 31.

institutionally disowned" by the Muslim Brotherhood, that they "continue to be explicitly endorsed by many senior Muslim Brotherhood figures" and that Qutb's ideals "remain central to the Muslim Brotherhood's formational curriculum."[218]

The authors conclude: "aspects of Muslim Brotherhood ideology and tactics, in this country and overseas, are contrary to our values and have been contrary to our national interests and our national security."[219]

(218) Ibid., point 16.

(219) Ibid., point 39.

CHAPTER#5

EU Institutions and the Muslim Brotherhood

EU funding to MB-related organisations

Despite the problems set out in previous chapters, and a recognition in several European countries of just how problematic the Muslim Brotherhood is, European institutions demonstrate a continued record of engagement with and support for Muslim Brotherhood-related organisations. The most visible examples occur in the form of direct funding.

Islamic Relief

According to the European Commission Financial Transparency System,[220] in 2019 Islamic Relief Germany received European funding of over half a million Euros. In 2018 the European Commission granted EUR 400,000 to Islamic Relief Worldwide and EUR 340,000 to Islamic Relief Germany. In the framework of the EU Trust Fund for Africa, it further provided support to Islamic Relief Kenya as part of a three-year initiative for youth education and training.[221]

In the next chapter we will provide a specific analysis of Islamic Relief, its ties with the Muslim Brotherhood and extremism, plus further details of EU involvement with the organisation.

Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO)

Questions have been asked in Brussels with regards to the funding of FEMYSO. In 2014, the then Conservative MEP for London Charles Tannock wrote to the European Commission noting monies paid to FEMYSO by the European Youth Foundation, a project funded by the Council of Europe,[222] and asking whether the European Commission was also supporting the group's work. FEMYSO has indeed received significant funding from the European Commission. The Commission's Financial Transparency System reveals the following:[223]

(220) 'Financial Transparency System (FTS) - European Commission', accessed 22 March 2021, **https://ec.europa.eu/budget/fts/index_en.htm**.

(221) 'Providing Opportunities and Inspiring Young People in Coastal and Northern Kenya.', Text, EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa - European Commission, 18 April 2018, **https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/all-news-and-stories/providing-opportunities-and-inspiring-young-people-coastal-and-northern-kenya_en**.

(222) 'Subject: The Forum of Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (Femyso)', Charles Tannock MEP, European Parliament, Parliamentary Questions, 11 November 2014, **http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2014-009044_EN.html?redirect%201/**.

(223) All information publicly accessible at: 'Financial Transparency System', European Commission, available at: **http://ec.europa.eu/budget/fts/index_en.htm**, last visited: 1 April 2021.

FIGURE 1

European Commission funding for FEMYSO.

YEAR	SUM (IN EUROS)	PROGRAMME
2007	35,000	Youth in Action
2008	5,652.50	Youth in Action
2010	35,000	Youth in Action
2012	78,925	Fundamental Rights and Justice
2014	49,881	Erasmus +
2015	35,000	Erasmus +
2017	35,000	Erasmus +
2019	14,398	Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers
TOTAL	**288,856.50**	

Concerns about these sums have persisted. In 2017 the European Commission replied:

> Religious organisations are valuable partners in the European institutions efforts to reach out to young people and tackle social exclusion, marginalisation, and combat all forms of discrimination. The Commission confirms that representatives of the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO) have been invited to Commission events and activities in the area of anti-racism, anti-discrimination, education and youth policies.[224]

While not denying FEMYSO's links to the Muslim Brotherhood, the European Commission also sought to head off criticism about those it is willing to both work with and fund:

> The list of persons, groups and entities subject to specific measures to combat terrorism is regularly reviewed and updated by Council Decision (CFSP) 2016/1136 of 12 July 2016. The Muslim Brotherhood and FEMYSO are not subject to EU restrictive measures.[225]

In 2012, the European Commission co-financed with EUR 70,187.25 a project on "Islamophobia Monitoring and Action Network" (IMAN), run by FEMYSO and the Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en France (CCIF).[226] It is worth noting that the CCIF has been dissolved by the French government in the aftermath of Paty's murder, due to its "pluriannual Islamist propaganda", its relations with "certain members of the jihadist galaxy" and with radical preachers who promote lapidation, its public promotion of homophobic and antisemitic discourses, its ambiguous relativisation of terrorist acts and its inaction vis-à-vis the comments on its social networks by followers rejoicing at the killing of Paty and Charlie Hebdo's journalists.[227]

(224) 'Parliamentary Questions: Answer given by Mr Moedas on behalf of the Commission', Question reference E-009234/2016(ASW), European Parliament, 12 April 2017, **http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2016-009234-ASW_EN.html?redirect**.

(225) 'Parliamentary Questions: Answer given by Mr Moedas on behalf of the Commission', Question reference E-009234/2016(ASW), European Parliament, **12 April 2017, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2016-009234-ASW_EN.html**.

(226) Franz Obermayr (NI), 'Parliamentary Question E-007227-15: Financial Support for the Islamophobia Monitoring and Action Network (IMAN)', European Parliament, 5 May 2015, **https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2015-007227_EN.html**.

(227) Gérald Darmanin, Twitter Post, 2 December 2020, **https://twitter.com/GDarmanin/status/1334108451614633986**.

The Islamic University of Gaza (IUG)

Another MB-associated beneficiary of EU taxpayer's money is the Islamic University of Gaza, which received EUR 88,338 in 2018 and EUR 490,612 in 2019 across four different projects. The IUG has also been admitted to the Erasmus+ Programme, in which capacity it has received funding as part of project consortia.[228] In 2019, the EU Delegation proudly paid a visit to the first European Erasmus+ student in exchange at the IUG.[229]

When considering the IUG, we are discussing an institution that Reuters has described as "a significant Hamas cultural symbol."[230] The ties of the IUG with the EU-blacklisted Hamas (Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood) have been extensively documented by a 2020 report of the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, which also denounced the continuous support the university has received from the European Union.[231]

It is interesting to note that the European Commission, when questioned by a MEP on the links between the IUG and Hamas, skilfully avoided addressing the merits of the question.[232] Yet, in 2008 the Israeli military attacked the IUG on the grounds that its science faculty had been used to develop weapons, which were also stored on the university premises. Previously, in intra-Palestinian fighting before Hamas took full control of the Gaza strip, Fatah had confiscated weapons stored at the university.[233]

The Lokahi Foundation

Another recent recipient of EU funding with links to the Muslim Brotherhood is the UK-based Lokahi Foundation. In 2008, a British MP questioned the UK government's support to the Lokahi Foundation due to its links with MB associated groups and individuals such as the Cordoba Foundation, IslamExpo and Tariq Ramadan.[234] These ties have not prevented the EU from granting the Lokahi Foundation more than EUR 779,000 in the biennium 2017–2018.[235]

In 2019, then-EU High Representative – Vice President Federica Mogherini launched a "Global Exchange on Religion in Society" in partnership with the Lokahi Foundation. The French pro-secular *Comité Laïcité Republique* has called the Global Exchange an "anti-secular time bomb".[236]

(228) 'Romor', Islamic University of Gaza, accessed 22 March 2021, **http://romor.iugaza.edu.ps/romor/**. 'Joint MSc in Software Engineering', Text, Erasmus+ - European Commission, accessed 22 March 2021, **https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplus-project-details_en**.

(229) 'EU Delegation Visits the First Erasmus+ Student Ever in a University in the Gaza Strip', EU Neighbours, accessed 22 March 2021, **https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/eu-delegation-visits-first-erasmus-student-ever-university-gaza-strip**.

(230) Reuters Staff, 'Israel Bombs Islamic University in Gaza: Hamas', *Reuters*, 28 December 2008, **https://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-israel-university-sb-idUSTRE4BR2F920081228**.

(231) The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 'The Islamic University of Gaza, A Hamas Stronghold, Has Been Supported by the EU for Years', 10 September 2020, **https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/app/uploads/2020/09/Ef_202_20.pdf**.

(232) European Commissioner Štefan Füle on behalf of the European Commission, 'Answer to Parliamentary Question No E-008381/12', European Parliament, 11 December 2012, **https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-7-2012-008381-ASW_EN.html**.

(233) The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Centre, op. cit.

(234) Westrop, S., 'The Real Islamophobia', *The Jerusalem Post*, 29 October 2012, **https://www.jpost.com/blogs/fighting-back/the-real-islamophobia-365217**.

(235) Data from the Transparency Register.

(236) Lee, M., 'America Must Avoid the EU's Embrace of Political Islam', *Middle East Forum*, 22 January 2020, **https://www.meforum.org/60335/america-must-avoid-eu-embrace-of-political-islam**.

The Muslim Association of Ireland and the "sharia approach" to radicalisation

Despite being less recent, this case is significant because it shows that, at times, the European Commission is fully aware of funding projects promoting Islamism - at least in the ideological sense of spreading sharia. Indeed, in 2012 DG Home granted EUR 449,816 to the Muslim Association of Ireland Friendly Society (MAI) for a project entitled "Shariah-Based Communicative Approach to Prevent and Fight Contemporary Forms of Radicalization Leading to Home-Grown Terrorism in the EU".[237]

MAI is a member of FIOE,[238] and it has ties with the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland,[239] the organisation that hosts the European Council for Fatwa and Research and hosted the International Union of Muslim Scholars. It is not immediately intelligible why the European Commission finances and endorses "sharia-based" projects implemented by MB-related organisations.

The 'Saffron Project': whitewashing the MB?

Sometimes support from the European Commission to Islamist organisations, their sympathisers and unintentional accomplices does not go unnoticed. In 2018, the European Commission became involved in a storm of controversy due to the anti-radicalisation project 'Saffron', co-founded by the EU Internal Security Fund. MEPs and press articles estimated that some videos of Saffron's counter-narrative YouTube campaign, called "#Heartofdarkness", could in fact be read as providing justifications to jihadism and whitewashing the Muslim Brotherhood.[240] The latter, in particular, was the protagonist of a video supposedly intended to explain the concept of jihad, but de facto a platform for the MB, advertised as a pacifist organisation.

In a rare acknowledgment, the Commission admitted to being "aware of the concerns arising from the video #spot7'Jihad", and overall from the #Heartofdarkness campaign. Consequently,

(237) Virgili, T., 'Facing the Same Hydra Monster', in *Mission Impossible? Repairing the Ties between Europe and Israel*, ed. Fiamma Nirenstein, 2018.

(238) 'The Muslim Association of Ireland- MAI', Council of European Muslims, accessed 6 April 2021, **http://eumuslims.org/en/members/members-and-partners/muslim-association-ireland-mai**.

(239) Merley, S., 'The Muslim Brotherhood in Ireland', Global Muslim Brotherhood Research Center, 2009, p. 1, **https://www.globalmbresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/MB-in-Ireland_final.pdf**.

(240) See below all the parliamentary questions on this, and related media coverage.
Lars Adaktusson (EPP), 'Parliamentary Question E-007497-17: Radicalisation Prevention in EU SAFFRON Programme', European Parliament, 5 December 2017, **https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2017-007497_EN.html**.
Lars Adaktusson (PPE), 'Parliamentary Question E-000754-18: The EU's SAFFRON Programme for Preventing Radicalisation', European Parliament, 7 February 2018, **https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2018-000754_EN.html**.
Patricia Lalonde (ALDE) , Ivo Vajgl (ALDE) , Hilde Vautmans (ALDE) , Ilhan Kyuchyuk (ALDE) , Jean-Marie Cavada (ALDE), Dominique Riquet (ALDE), Thierry Cornillet (ALDE) , María Teresa Giménez Barbat (ALDE), 'Parliamentary Question E-000108-18: Presentation of the Muslim Brotherhood Organisation in the Video "Jihad" #Spot7 of the SAFFRON Project's #HeartofDarkness Campaign', European Parliament, 10 January 2018, **https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2018-000108_EN.html**.
Louis Michel (ALDE), 'Parliamentary Question E-000275-18: Presentation of the Muslim Brotherhood Organisation in the Video "Jihad", #Spot7 of the Saffron Project's #HeartofDarkness Campaign', European Parliament, 18 January 2018, **https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2018-000275_EN.html**.
Crisp, J., 'EU-Funded Anti-Terror Videos Accused of Being "Isil Recruitment Tools"', *The Telegraph*, 22 January 2018, **https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/01/22/eu-funded-anti-terror-videos-accused-isil-recruitment-tools/**.
Cicchetti, E., 'Così i video anti-terrorismo finanziati dall'Ue rischiano di incoraggiare nuovi jihadisti', *Il Foglio*, 23 January 2018, **https://www.ilfoglio.it/esteri/2018/01/23/video/video-anti-terrorismo-finanziati-europa-rischiano-incoraggiare-jihadisti-174676/**.

it requested the implementing consortium to provide clarification, threatening to take "the necessary measures if, on examination of the final report and its deliverables, any contractual or other shortcoming is demonstrated".[241] This led to the removal of the videos from YouTube, where they have not been re-uploaded to this date.

The "Islamophobia Report" Scandal

Perhaps the biggest scandal in recent times was the European Commission's involvement in the 2018 Islamophobia Report published by the Turkish think-tank *SETA*.[242] The latter is known for being close to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan,[243] and its yearly Islamophobia Report could be more accurately described as an "Ikhwanophobia" one,[244] insofar as it censures criticism of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Turkish AK Party.[245]

Different editions of the Islamophobia Report have been presented at the European Parliament by MEPs from the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) and the European Greens.[246] The 2018 edition additionally received financial support of EUR 126,951.81 from the European Commission,[247] and it sports a logo with a joint Turkish-European Union flag and a caption saying "This project is funded by the European Union".

The publication of the report ignited a vivid reaction from the media, Muslim opponents of Islamism and EU politicians. In an open letter to Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, a group of German scholars and Muslim intellectuals denounced the EU's support to a report that lumps together, under the definition of "Islamophobia," both far-right extremists and reformist Muslims. They also criticized the report's poor methodology, and the conflation of discrimination of Muslims with criticism of religious tenets and of political Islam, under the common denominator of "Islamophobia".[248] Parliamentary questions

(241) Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos on behalf of the Commission, 'Answer to Parliamentary Questions No E-000108/18, E-000275/18', European Parliament, 6 April 2018, **https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2018-000108-ASW_EN.html**.

(242) *Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı*

(243) Topcu, E., 'Erdogan's AKP Basks in Glow of Think Tank Financed by Influential Family, DW Finds', *Deutsche Welle*, 14 November 2019, **https://www.dw.com/en/erdogans-akp-basks-in-glow-of-think-tank-financed-by-influential-family-dw-finds/a-51258757;** Bülent Mumay, 'Opinion: What's next for Journalism in the Erdogan Era?', *Deutsche Welle*, 11 July 2019, **https://www.dw.com/en/opinion-whats-next-for-journalism-in-the-erdogan-era/a-49554127-0**.

(244) Colombo, V., 'Ikhwanophobia : A Neologism Not to Be Underestimated', Ikhwan Info (blog), 31 August 2015, **https://ikhwaninfowhoswhoen.data.blog/2015/08/31/ikhwanophobia-a-neologism-not-to-be-underestimated/**.

(245) 'Offener Brief an von Der Leyen: Unterstützen Sie Den "Islamophobia Report" Nicht!', *Die Presse*, 11 December 2019, **https://www.diepresse.com/5736354/offener-brief-an-von-der-leyen-unterstutzen-sie-den-islamophobia-report-nicht**.

(246) 'Panel: Countering Anti-Muslim Racism in Europe', *SETA*, 19 February 2019, **https://www.setav.org/en/events/panel-countering-anti-muslim-racism-in-europe/**. 'Islamophobiebericht Im Europäischen Parlament Präsentiert', *KISMET Online - Das Muslimische Lifestylemagazin* (blog), 22 January 2020, **https://www.kismetonline.at/islamophobiebericht-im-europaeischen-parlament-praesentiert/**. 'Presentation of Islamophobia Report 2015', *European Islamophobia Report* (blog), accessed 22 March 2021, **https://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/events/presentation-of-islamophobia-report-2015/**.

(247) European Commissioner Johannes Hahn on behalf of the European Commission, 'Answer to Parliamentary Question P-003384/19', European Parliament, accessed 22 March 2021, **https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2019-003384-ASW_EN.html**.

(248) 'Offener Brief an von Der Leyen'.

challenging the Commission on the rationale for its support were issued by a wide spectrum of MEPs from the ECR,[249] EPP,[250] ID[251] and S&D[252] groups.

Different types of engagement

EU engagement with the Muslim Brotherhood has not come only in the form of funding. Individuals and organisations gravitating around the MB enjoy a regular presence at the European institutions and agencies, in different forms. We report below on a number of cases, which we consider to be important background information in gaining an idea of the type of liaisons that are occurring between EU officials and institutions, and the Ikhwan's network.

Advertising Islamism at an EEAS seminar

On 18 October 2017, the European External Action Service (EEAS), in collaboration with the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA), organised a seminar on "*Political Islam and Islam in Politics*" for EEAS and European Commission staff. [253] It is worth quoting from the promotional material for the event at length. The seminar was:

> designed to challenge often-encountered precepts of the role of both Political Islam and Islam in Politics. The first is the notion that democracy is somehow incompatible with Islam. This seminar will present evidence-based research suggesting that there is a clear pattern of support in the Muslim world for shari'a-friendly democracy [*sic*] and pious political candidates, but not for clerical control of politics.

A further objective was to illustrate how the EU engages with the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafist actors across different countries. Overall, the seminar had four main goals, namely explaining to the participants: "**1)** Sources and variants of 'Muslim democracy'; **2)** Ideas for re-thinking and re-engaging with Political Islam; **3)** How to view Salafi political participation; **4)** The impact upon the EU of interaction with the different political expressions of Islam".

(249) Nicola Procaccini (ECR), Raffaele Fitto (ECR), Carlo Fidanza (ECR), Pietro Fiocchi (ECR), 'Parliamentary Question E-003739/2019: Funding of the "European Islamophobia Report 2018" by the European Union', European Parliament, 8 November 2019, **https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2019-003739_EN.html**.

(250) Lukas Mandl (EPP), 'Parliamentary Question P-003384-19: European Islamophobia Report', European Parliament, 21 October 2019, **https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2019-003384_EN.html**. Lukas Mandl (EPP), 'Parliamentary Question P-004112/2019: Funding of the European Islamophobia Report', European Parliament, 28 November 2019, **https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2019-004112_EN.html**. Angelika Winzig (EPP), 'Parliamentary Question E-003946/2019: Information on Funding', European Parliament, 20 November 2019, **https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2019-003946_EN.html**.

(251) Angelo Ciocca (ID), 'Parliamentary Question E-003744/2019: EU Funds for Study Defending Islam', European Parliament, 8 November 2019, **https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2019-003744_EN.html**.

(252) Niels Fuglsang (S&D), Christel Schaldemose (S&D), 'Parliamentary Question E-003759/2019: Allocation of EU Pre-Accession Assistance to the Turkish Think-Tank SETA', European Parliament, 11 November 2019, **https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2019-003759_EN.html**.

(253) The programme and material of the seminar have been provided to the authors by a European Union official on condition of anonymity.

One of the trainers was Sondos Asem, previously communications advisor for the MB Egyptian Freedom and Justice Party and President Mohammed Morsi. She has also served as the editor of the Muslim Brotherhood's English language website *Ikhwanweb*.[254] In the biographical section of the programme, she was explicitly described as "an advocate of dialogue between the MB and the West".

Many of the recommended readings appear to be an endorsement for Islamists and their alleged commitment to democracy. Among them was Rached Ghannouchi's "*From Political Islam to Muslim Democracy.*" While we do not know how this was discussed by the trainers, what we notice is the absence, among the provided material, of any of the many Muslim voices who distrust Ennahdha's democratic credentials and supposed "post-Islamist" path in Tunisia. The other papers followed a similar line in praising the "Islamic way" to democracy. One analysed the twofold support of many Muslims for democracy and sharia law [which is exactly an MB position, as argued throughout this paper], and it concluded by arguing that

> [w]hile support for Muslim democratic politics does not necessarily entail support for gender equality or advanced liberal norms, the article also argues that it did not entail support for electoral authoritarianism either. [...] The surveys, explanations, and results presented here all highlight the important presence of a Muslim democratic middle in the region, one that rejects secular democracy and religious authoritarianism. It is a public, therefore, which by and large has rejected the return to Caliphate politics as proposed by the Islamic State, but which has also rejected the secular modern visions of Bourguiba and Atatürk. If democracy is the future of the region, as the Muslim public hopes it will be, mobilizing this Muslim democratic middle will be key to its construction.[255]

Similarly, the conclusion of another preparatory reading was that

> it is Muslim Democracy—and not the creaky and brittle authoritarianisms by which the Muslim world is so beset—that offers the whole world its best hope for an effective bulwark against radical and violent Islamism. Muslim Democracy provides a model for pragmatic change. That change will in turn be the harbinger, not the follower, of more liberal Islamic thought and practice.[256]

One of the panels, significantly titled "Promoting Salafi Political Participation: challenges and prospects", aimed at giving "suggestions for creating spaces for Salafist viewpoints in politics". The power point presentation identified the *Jyllands Posten* cartoons of Muhammad as an example of "demonisation" of Muslims, lamented the

(254) United Nationals Alliance of Civilisations Fellowship, n.d., Sondos Asem. Available at: **https://fellowship.unaoc.org/fellows/sondos-asem/**, last visited: 1 April 2021.

(255) Driessen, M. D., 'Sources of Muslim Democracy: The Supply and Demand of Religious Policies in the Muslim World', *Democratization* 25, no. 1 (2 January 2018): pp. 115-35, **https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2017.1334054**.

(256) Vali Reza Nasr, S., 'The Rise of "Muslim Democracy"', *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 2 (2005): pp. 13-27, **https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2005.0032**.

"under-representation of Salafi currents in the political arena" and encouraged the involvement of "participative Salafis" in politics and peace promotion projects. The paper connected to the presentation argued that

> in Western policy circles, there is nervousness about promoting Salafi political participation. In part this is linked to a hesitancy to support political viewpoints which seem to contradict Western values, for example regarding the status and rights of men and women. However, any actor that is serious about democracy promotion has to accept that a consistent and credible approach must include promoting the inclusion of actors with alternative views".[257]

One could argue that neo-Nazi groups also have "alternative views" about the rights of women and many other topics, but luckily we have not seen pressure from the European Union, member states and Western intellectuals to promote the political participation of neo-Nazi groups in order to be "serious about democracy".

To be clear, these studies certainly come from respected scholars and present legitimate opinions, but it is also legitimate to wonder why an EU institution uses taxpayers' money to organise training inviting a Muslim Brotherhood member and solely presenting theses to promote a positive image of Islamists and their role in a democratic society.

Endorsing the MB as trustworthy partners

Other types of engagement are also worth mentioning.

In 2017, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights published a report on the "Challenges facing civil society organisations working on human rights in the EU". In the methodology section, it is explained that the report was drafted thanks to, *inter alia*, consultations with experts from civil society: among them, grouped with human rights organisations and watchdogs, we find FEMYSO.[258]

In 2018 the European Parliament organised a "European Youth Event" bringing together young people from all member states with the aims to "present and discuss ideas on how to make a change in Europe with fellow participants and with European decision-makers"; to "encourage discussion and debate on hot topics and future European policies"; and "stage cultural performances and showcase cultural diversity in Europe."[259] One panel, entitled "Safe or free", and focused on the balance between security and freedom in the EU, was entrusted to FEMYSO and *Etudiants Musulmans de France*[260] – an organisation that different sources consider a satellite of the Muslim Brotherhood and close to the former UOIF.[261]

That same year, the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) published a study on "Equality and the Fight against Racism and Xenophobia". In the section dedicated to discrimination on grounds of religion and belief, among the sources showing a "rise in Islamophobia" (rather than "anti-Muslim hatred", as per the official EU terminology), the report cites the abovementioned Turkish think-tank SETA and the European Forum of Muslim Women.[262]

While it is impossible to determine *a priori* whether this manifold engagement of the European Union with the Muslim Brotherhood network is driven primarily by ignorance or by ideological affinity, it is important to raise awareness as to its existence and to push for a change in the choice of future Muslim partners. The European Union needs to develop a clear, values-driven approach in deciding who it works with.

(257) Bitter, J-N. and Frazer, O., 'Promoting Salafi Political Participation', *Policy Perspectives*, April 2016, **https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/PP4-5.pdf**.

(258) European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Challenges Facing Civil Society Organisations Working on Human Rights in the EU.' (Publications Office, 2017), p. 57, **https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-challenges-facing-civil-society_en.pdf**.

(259) European Parliament, 'European Youth Event', June 2018, **http://www.epgencms.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/upload/6f1c6e3e-d752-43bb-b0b8-7b054a088acd/A5_EYE_Programme_EN2018_V27.pdf**.

(260) Ibid., p. 132.

(261) Bordas, W., 'Ces syndicats étudiants qui pactisent avec les mouvements islamistes', *Le Figaro*, 11 February 2021, **https://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/ces-syndicats-etudiants-qui-pactisent-avec-les-mouvements-islamistes-20210211**.
Bordas, W., 'L'Unef dans la tourmente après une nouvelle polémique sur l'islam', *Le Figaro Etudiant*, 9 March 2021, **https://etudiant.lefigaro.fr/article/l-unef-dans-la-tourmente-apres-une-nouvelle-polemique-sur-l-islam_d8b3bf78-80cd-11eb-8f10-f2f0a839ef96/**.
Gabizon, C., 'Le Figaro : Les étudiants musulmans entrouvrent les portes du Cnous', UNI, December 2002, **https://www.uni.asso.fr/spip.php?article127**.

(262) Van Ballegooij, W. and Moxom, J., 'Equality and the Fight against Racism and Xenophobia' (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2018), p. 80, **https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/615660/EPRS_STU(2018)615660_EN.pdf**.

CHAPTER#6

Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW): A Case Study

The charity Islamic Relief was founded in the English city of Birmingham in 1984 by a group of Muslim students. It is structured in two ways. A global organisation which has its own board, and then component national bodies in what is referred to as its 'global family.'[(263)] There are branches in some 15 countries or regions, of which five are EU member states – Germany, Italy, Republic of Ireland, Spain and Sweden. European funding of IRW is long-running and has been highly significant. The European Commission's Financial Transparency System[(264)] reveals the following payments involving Islamic Relief, totalling over 40 million Euros:

FIGURE 2

European funding for Islamic Relief

YEAR	SUM (IN EUROS)	FUNDING PROVIDER	PROGRAMME
2019	550,000 to IR Deutschland	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations	Humanitarian Aid
2018	740,000 (400,000 to IRW, 350,000 to IR Deutschland)	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations	Humanitarian Aid
2017	1,800,000 to IRW	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations	Humanitarian Aid
2016	8,049,000 to IRW	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development; and Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations	Humanitarian Aid
2015	1,100,000 to IRW	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations	Humanitarian Aid
2014	1,225,433 to IRW	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development; and Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations	Humanitarian Aid
2013	560,010 to IRW	Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations	Humanitarian Aid
2012	2,221,621 for IRW	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development; and Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations	Development Cooperation Instrument, FED10 Tenth EDF, Humanitarian Aid
2011	3,040,011 for IRW	Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations	Humanitarian Aid
2010	3,490,289 2,991,618 for IRW and 498,671 to IR Yemen	Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations and Service for Foreign Policy Instruments	Humanitarian Aid; and Instrument for Stability.
2009	3,778,300 3,378,300 for IRW 400,000 for IRW Deutschland	European Commission for Humanitarian Operations	Humanitarian Aid

(263) See the front page of the Islamic Relief website available at: **https://www.islamic-relief.org/**, last visited: 24 February 2021.

(264) Available at **https://ec.europa.eu/budget/fts/index_en.htm**, last visited: 2 April 2021.

2008	8,476,369 8,139,049 IRW 329,550 IR Deutschland	Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation – Europe Aid; and Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations	Development Cooperation Instrument, EIDHR: European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights; Humanitarian Aid.
2007	4,990,391 for IRW	Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations	Humanitarian Aid
TOTAL	**40,026,424**		

Despite eye-watering levels of funding from European bodies, and similar support from several member states, Islamic Relief has found its reputation increasingly questioned. These questions centre on its association with the Muslim Brotherhood, and extremist comments by some senior employees. Press coverage, for example that in the German media concerning the Muslim Brotherhood in 2019, has typically prompted a strong denial.[265] However a prominent former Muslim Brotherhood activist, Kamal el-Helbawy, who has represented the Ikhwan in Egypt, Pakistan and the UK, explained to Lorenzo Vidino:

> "IRW's leadership", explains Helbawy, "are Brotherhood, but the people who contact [donors] for donations are not necessarily even Muslims; they can be Christians and Jews, and whatever."[266]

An examination of the leadership of Islamic Relief during its history reveals a prominent Muslim Brotherhood leader as central to the organisation. This is Essam el-Haddad (sometimes written as al-Haddad), a former advisor to Mohammed Morsi in Egypt, who, having been a co-founder of Islamic Relief Worldwide, sat on its board[267] while simultaneously serving on the Guidance Bureau of the Muslim Brotherhood.[268] Following the Egyptian revolution, el-Haddad returned to Egypt from the United Kingdom and served as Mohammed Morsi's campaign manager in his successful bid for the Egyptian presidency. For this he was rewarded with the important position of Foreign Policy Advisor to President Morsi.[269] In that capacity he was among the Muslim Brotherhood leaders to attend the Ikhwan's December 2012 meeting in Cairo with Qassem Suleimani, the then Commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Revolutionary Guards.[270]

Essam el-Haddad is from a prominent Muslim Brotherhood family – one of his sons, Gehad, was a spokesman for the organisation in Egypt, while another son, Abdullah, has carried out a similar role for the organisation from London.[271] Founding and leading Islamic Relief appears

(265) 'Response to Allegations of Links to Muslim Brotherhood', Islamic Relief, 18 April 2019, **https://www.islamic-relief.org/response-to-allegations-of-links-to-muslim-brotherhood/**.

(266) Vidino, L., *The Closed Circle*, p. 47.

(267) 'Islamic Relief', The Global Muslim Brotherhood Daily Watch, **https://www.globalmbwatch.com/islamic-relief/**, last visited: 1 October 2019.

(268) 'Islamic Relief: Charity/Extremism/Terror', Middle East Forum, 2018, p. 8, **https://www.meforum.org/MiddleEastForum/media/MEFLibrary/pdf/Islamic-Relief-Dossier-v3.pdf**.

(269) Ibid., p. 4.

(270) Tomlinson, H., 'Iranian spy chief's visit to Cairo was meant to "send a message to America"', *The Times*, 8 January 2013, **https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/iranian-spy-chiefs-visit-to-cairo-was-meant-to-send-a-message-to-america-qxrgkws09dw**.

(271) Vidino, L., 'The Muslim Brotherhood in the United Kingdom', GW Program on Extremism, December 2015, p. 9.

entirely consistent with Essam el-Haddad's political activities. Nor is he alone – according to a Swedish former member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Pierre Durrani, two prominent Swedish figures in Islamic Relief Worldwide, Abdallah Salah and Mustafa Kharraki, attended Muslim Brotherhood *usra* meetings in Sweden.[272] As these are private discussion meetings for members only, this would indicate that potentially they too, were members of the Ikhwan.

Islamic Relief's Scandals

Islamic Relief has recently gone through a period of critical scrutiny by the media, which has uncovered members in senior positions making extremist and anti-Semitic comments. In a 2016 article in the *Washington Times,* Islamic Relief's Deputy CEO Tayeb Abdoun promoted the organisation's work in the following manner: "We are trusted by hundreds of thousands of individual donors around the world to assist people in need, as well as by UN agencies, the US and UK governments and the European Union."[273] He stressed that the organisation abhorred terrorism, condemned critics as motivated by "islamophobia" and declared that "Islamic Relief prides itself on its commitment to humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality and on its multi-faith approach."[274]

In 2020 Abdoun's 25-year career at Islamic Relief was brought to an end after he posted an image of a knife on his Facebook page with the words "Lay the bodies of the Jews on the top of the mountains, so that no dog in Palestine must suffer hunger." This posting occurred the day after a deadly terrorist attack which killed three Jews in Jerusalem. Abdoun had also posted previous comments asking whether western countries were the "real terrorists" and a rhetorical question about the differences between Christians, Jews and the devil.[275]

Earlier in 2020 Heshmat Khalifa, a trustee of Islamic Relief Worldwide, resigned after *The Times* discovered he had praised Hamas, referred to Jews as "the grandchildren of monkeys and pigs" and described Egypt's President as a "Zionist pimp."[276] Mr Khalifa was replaced as a trustee by Almoutaz Tayara, Chairman of Islamic Relief in Germany. A second scandal then promptly broke out, as researchers discovered he too had spoken in support of Hamas and made anti-Semitic comments. The entire board of Islamic Relief Worldwide resigned in the wake of these revelations.[277]

Common themes appear to emerge in the Islamic Relief scandals – anti-Semitism, sup-

(272) Vidino, L., *The Closed Circle*, p. 92.

(273) Abdoun, T., 'Islamic Relief: A Humanitarian organisation dedicated to saving lives', 28 January 2016, **https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/jan/28/tayeb-abdoun-islamic-relief-humanitarian-organizat/**.

(274) Ibid.

(275) Ben-Nun, S., 'Islamic aid director resigns after getting called out for antisemitism', *Jerusalem Post*, 15 November 2020, **https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/islamic-aid-director-resigns-after-getting-called-out-for-antisemitism-649171**.

(276) Norfolk, A. and Watts, R., 'Islamic Relief leader quits as Times discovers antisemitic posts', *The Times*, 24 July 2020, **https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/islamic-relief-leader-quits-as-times-discovers-antisemitic-posts-5dplrw9vv**.

(277) Norfolk, A., 'Entire board resigns at Islamic Relief worldwide', *The Times*, 22 August 2020, **https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/entire-board-resigns-at-muslim-charity-tnktpgb2g**.

port for violence, and sympathy for Hamas. Here it should be noted that at its inception, the founding charter of Hamas in 1988 declared it to be a Palestinian wing of the Muslim Brotherhood.[278] Naser Haghamed, Chief Executive of Islamic Relief Worldwide, has strongly denied that IRW has links to terrorism, or that it is affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood.[279] These are clearly matters that require a definitive answer.

In 2019, German media reports suggested the federal government considered Islamic Relief to be connected to the Muslim Brotherhood.[280] The following year further reports emerged suggesting that the German authorities would end funding to the charity over concerns that Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) and Islamic Relief Germany (IRD) are connected to the Ikhwan.[281] This has since been followed up by a government statement that Islamic Relief has 'significant personal connections to the Muslim Brotherhood'.[282] Since then the government in the Netherlands has announced that it will not fund Islamic Relief because of the organisation's connections.[283]

In December 2020 the US Department of State issued a declaration from its Office of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism. This condemned Islamic Relief and observed:

> this record of anti-Semitism presents a significant issue for all donors and donor countries to IRW. The consistent pattern of spreading the most vile anti-Semitic vitriol by IRW's leadership causes us to question the core values of the organization.[284]

This was followed by media reports that the State Department would no longer work with Islamic Relief Worldwide.[285]

As governments internationally move away from working with Islamic Relief, questions will increasingly be asked about the organisation's relationship with Brussels. How can the European Union justify passing money from its hard working taxpayers to an organisation involved in such unpleasant controversies? Especially when several of Europe's national governments appear to be putting distance between themselves and IRW?

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(278) 'The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement', 18 August 1988, available at: **https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp**, last visited: 5 April 2021.

(279) Haghamed, N., 'Islamic Relief is a charity not a terrorist group. We're going to court to prove it', *The Guardian*, 27 September 2020, **https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/sep/27/islamic-relief-charity-terrorist-court-israel-palestinians**.

(280) '«Islamic Relief» hat Kontakte zur Muslimbruderschaft', *Frankfurter Rundshau*, 16 April 2019, **https://www.fr.de/politik/islamic-relief-hat-kontakte-zur-muslimbruderschaft-zr-12196714.html**.

(281) Bell, J., 'Germany cuts funding or Islamic Relief aid group over ties to Muslim Brotherhood', Al Arabiya, 7 December 2020, **https://english.alarabiya.net/News/world/2020/12/07/Germany-cuts-funding-for-Islamic-Relief-aid-group-over-ties-to-Muslim-Brotherhood**.

(282) Robin Simcox, 'The UK must consider further action on Islamic Relief. Counter Extremism Group', 1 March 2021, **https://counterextremism.org.uk/the-uk-must-consider-further-action-on-islamic-relief/**.

(283) Ibid.

(284) US Department of State, 'Other release: Office of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism: Islamic Relief Worldwide', 30 December 2020, **https://2017-2021.state.gov/islamic-relief-worldwide/index.html**.

(285) Kredo, A., 'State department cuts ties with Islamic charity over anti-Semitism', *Free Beacon*, 18 January 2021, **https://freebeacon.com/national-security/state-department-cuts-ties-with-islamic-charity-over-anti-semitism/**.

CHAPTER#7

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

In this report, we have tried to show how the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe is organised and operates. While any attempt to identify a centralised body officially registered under the label 'Muslim Brotherhood' would be in vain, a galaxy of individuals and organisations united under Hassan al-Banna's principles indeed exists, and it pursues a common goal. Clever words and pragmatic tactics should not conceal the fundamental dissonance of this goal with the liberal democratic values we cherish, as vastly documented by researchers, former MB members and security agencies.

For these reasons, we conclude by offering a set of policy recommendations that, in our view, should lay the basis of a comprehensive response to the Islamist threat.

- European authorities and policymakers should not search for the 'Muslim Brotherhood' in Europe as a centralised organisation with a single structure and membership cards. In order to identify the multifaceted MB galaxy, they should rather dig deeper to spot cross-country ideological patterns, individual ties, common umbrella organisations and funding sources.

- Understanding the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe is complex. Indeed it has been made deliberately so by the secrecy surrounding the organisation, and its tendency to operate more as an ideal than a formally structured political organisation. This has obscured understanding by policy makers in Europe. The EU and national governments should commission research and analysis to understand the Muslim Brotherhood's structure and goals. This will require far stronger commitment from the European Union and member states Interior Ministries to focusing on Islamist currents and the challenge they pose, with appropriate funding of specific academic research. There are also facilities that are currently untapped but which need to be brought into play – for example The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats.

- Member States should consider the recommendation of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group and establish expert groups on Islamism in the Ministries of the Interior. The EU could coordinate these efforts and give an autonomous contribution by establishing a similar group at DG Home.

- It is crucial that the abovementioned academic and policy analysis focus not only on jihadism, but more widely on its ideological substratum, as happens with far-right and far-left ideologies.

- Given the number of former activists now emerging from this milieu, greater understanding of the Ikhwan's nature and long-term aims is now available. The European Union needs to listen to these voices, and compare them to what has been said by some of the Muslim representative organisations in Europe.

- The European Union and its member states must reject the concept of 'group rights' and multiculturalist policies that divide society into compartmentalised boxes. They have the duty to always ensure that individual rights are not compressed under communitarian policies, and to reject separatist attempts that hinder integration and societal cohesion. It must always be borne in mind that minorities within Muslim communities and non-Islamist Muslims are the first victims of Islamists' intolerance.[286]

- European authorities at all levels should avoid at all costs the formation of religious enclaves, and ensure the primacy of state law. The universal notion of 'citizenship', with the individual rights and duties it entails, must never give in to communitarian demands.

- Public authorities must vet every organisation that purports to represent 'Muslims' as such – with attention to both their commitment to the liberal democratic norms and their actual representativeness of a wide spectrum of local Muslims. They must always ensure that dialogue with religious representatives covers a plurality of views and identities. With regards to Muslim representative organisations, engagement should be expanded to include those organising as 'ex-Muslims.'

- Never conflate the concepts of 'anti-Muslim hatred' and 'Islamophobia'. The first refers to an immoral and illegal discrimination against Muslim individuals because of their faith and identity; the second aims to censor any criticism of Islam as a system of tenets – many of which, in their orthodox interpretation, are incompatible with liberal democratic rules and values.[287]

- European policy-makers, at the local, state or EU levels, should not endorse Islamists under the pretext of promoting a 'plurality of views': there is nothing liberal or democratic in supporting those who wish to destroy liberal democracies. After all, nobody would suggest giving money and representational power to neo-Nazi groups in order to ensure pluralism.

- Education is a pillar of the Muslim Brotherhood divisive strategy. Hence, it is particularly crucial that authorities in charge vet private schools' curricula and textbooks, as well as individuals and organisations entrusted by the state to provide any sort of educational training. This is particularly important when the relationship involves vulnerable categories, such as children, youngsters and newcomers.[288]

(286) See also Virgili, T., 'Whose "Identity"?

(287) See also Virgili, T., 'Lifting the Integration Veil: Outcasts from Islam in Western Europe', Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, Brussels, 2020, **https://www.martenscentre.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/paper_lifting_the_integration_veil-v2-web_1-1.pdf**.

- The European Union needs to know who it is working with. That principle needs to guide relationships with organisations that have long been associated with Muslim Brotherhood networks in Europe. That means Brussels must conduct due diligence before platforming or funding FEMYSO, the FIOE, the EFOMW and the like.

- Islamic Relief stands out because of exposure of its problems with extremism and its association with the Muslim Brotherhood. The European Union, and each of its member states should call an immediate moratorium on funding Islamic Relief Worldwide, and the various national branches of Islamic Relief, to ensure a full investigation of these matters.

- There needs to be a thorough investigation, utilising the full intelligence-gathering capabilities of member states, into the relationship between Islamic Relief and the Muslim Brotherhood. A second aspect of this investigation must focus on the question of Islamic Relief and extremism. What commonalities can be found in the scandals that have followed the organisation across Europe?

- Where there is evidence of Muslim Brotherhood supporters or activists from outside of the EU endorsing or inciting hatred and violence, the EU should develop a clear approach to banning such individuals from its common area, as happened in the past with Tareq al-Suwaidan, a radical anti-Semitic preacher banned from the Schengen zone.[289] Yusuf al-Qaradawi should also meet the same fate. These decisions should not be isolated but systematic, and they would be better dealt with under a common EU framework or multi-state concert, rather than uncoordinatedly.

(288) Cfr. European Foundation for Democracy, 'Refugees in Europe. Review of Integration Practices and Policies', 2018, **http://europeandemocracy.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2018-Refugees-In-Europe-Full-Version.pdf**.

(289) 'Interrogazione a Risposta Immediata n. 3-02158 Dell'On.Le Molteni: Iniziative Volte a Negare l'ingresso Nel Territorio Nazionale Ad Un Noto Predicatore Islamico Kuwaitiano Di Tendenze Radicali e Antisemite', Italian Chamber of Deputies, 6 April 2016, **http://briguglio.asgi.it/immigrazione-e-asilo/2016/aprile/interrogazione-molteni-alfano.pdf**.

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