

AFGHANISTAN
A country on the brink

TUNISIA
A Coup or A Karcher blow?



SCREEN WATCH

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SURVIVALISM **ANTIVAXS**
TEENAGE BRAWLS **NEO-JIHADISM**

The “emerging violence” virus

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SPECIAL CASE
THE VIRUS OF "EMERGING VIOLENCE"
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SCREEN WATCH



GEOSTRATEGIC FORSIGHT
 SECURITY MONITORING
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ISLAMISM

Austria bans the Muslim Brotherhood



Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz and his Home Secretary Karl Nehammer are determined to do battle with the political Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood.

At the end of a legislative process initiated in the aftermath of the Vienna attacks, on November 2, 2020, the Austrian parliament adopted, on Thursday July 8, a new anti-terrorism law offering the authorities greater prerogatives in the field of surveillance and control of extremist circles. When this new law was tabled in the federal parliament on December 16, Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said its objective was «to affirm the will to do battle with political Islam». Indeed, the main provision of this new counterterrorism device is the inclusion of the Muslim Brotherhood on the blacklist of «extremist groups linked to religiously motivated crime».

The Brotherhood's name thus joins four other Islamist organizations on this blacklist since last November: ISIS, al-Qaida, Hamas and the armed wing of Hezbollah.

According to the provisions of this new anti-terrorism law, the possession or the propagation of slogans or documents defending the groups registered on the blacklist will be punished with a fine of 4,000 € and / or a prison sentence of one month. This Austrian so-called «symbol ban» strategy has proven to be very effective. More than 27,000 infractions have been observed, according to Interior Minister Karl Nehammer, since its establishment in the aftermath of the November 2020 attacks. More judicious than the simple act of banning groups or associations, which are immediately reconstituted under new titles, this strategy of banning symbols is starting to be emulated in Europe. Germany, in turn, has just passed a federal law criminalizing the possession or dissemination of slogans or documents promoting extremist groups.

This German federal law, enacted just hours after the new Austrian anti-terrorism law, on July 8, in turn placed the Muslim Brotherhood on the blacklist of organizations whose slogans are banned. A severe blow for the Muslim Brotherhood networks in Germany, which comes on top of the ban that struck, on May 6, the al-Ansar organization, one of the allegedly humanitarian arms of the international organization of Muslim Brotherhood, outlawed by German authorities for its links with the al-Nusra group in Syria and with the Shebab in Somalia. The terrorist ramifications that led to the ban of al-Ansar are catching up with another humanitarian arm of the Muslim Brotherhood and not the least: Islamic Relief, the largest Islamist NGO active in more than forty countries around the world. A recent Die Welt investigation sparked a lively controversy Germany. She pointed to the European Union's largesse to NGOs linked to radical Islamism. According to the German daily newspaper, Islamic Relief continued to benefit from European funding reaching € 712,000 in 2019, despite the cascading scandals, which led to the resignation of its director, Heshmat Khalifa, then of all of its board of directors, because of anti-Semitic remarks and links with Hamas! •

Scan the QR code to read our survey: Austria, historic bastion of the Muslim brotherhood, now sworn enemy of the brotherhood.

QATARI FUNDING

The heavy silences of the french National Education on the Averroès High School in Lille

In a chapter entitled "When Qatar wants to buy the Averroès High School in Lille", in the book "Qatar Papers", journalists Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot reveal that the first Muslim school under a contract of association with the French state received three million euros from Qatar Charity, the main "NGO" of the gas emirate. Knowing that at the origin of the creation of this private high school in 2003, is Amar Lasfar, 61 years old, the president of Mu-

sulmans de France (ex-UOIF), the french branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Ministry of Education quickly launched a pedagogical and financial inspection of the school. The first report, number 2020-047, was entrusted to the General Inspectorate for National Education. The next audit, number 2019-59-202, was carried out by the General Directorate of Public Finances. These two reports arrived last autumn on the desk of Xavier Bertrand, the

chairman of the Hauts-de-France region. Their conclusions apparently did not satisfy him, since he asked Jean-Michel Blanquer for clarification. The Letters from Bertrand have remained unanswered to date. On our side, we have not had any more luck. According to our sources, the reports do mention the foreign funding from which the school benefits, but do not draw any conclusions about the compatibility of this funding with the contract with national education!

While the National Education Department has not moved two years after the release of "Qatar Papers" and continues to pay the sums provided for in the association contract with the State, Xavier Bertrand has suspended a 45,300 euro subsidy from the Hauts-de-France region from October 2019. "45,300 euros is not much, but it is symbolic. Xavier Bertrand's attitude towards the Averroès school has changed a lot. It should be remembered that he went to the school the day after the Charlie Hebdo attacks, not to denounce Islamism but to reassure those in charge by declaring that he was not making any amalgam," recalls Mohamed Louizi, author of "Why I left the Muslim Brotherhood". •

'Political Islamism' welcomes the Taliban's victory!

The whole world was stunned at the overwhelming images of Afghan civilians clinging, by dozens, to the cabins of American military planes, which were about to take off from Kabul airport, abandoning them to their sad fate under the Taliban cut back to power, twenty years after being driven out, in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001.

A tragic and unbearable distress which leaves no one indifferent. Almost nobody. Because, during this time, in the supposedly moderate Islamist circles, which advocate a "political Islam" known as "golden mean", supposed to be the exact opposite of the obscurantist and medieval doctrine of the Taliban, some self-congratulate, in an obscene delight, of a «grandiose victory» falling under the «divine will»!

Thus, from Doha to Algiers, via Gaza and Aden, the Muslim Brotherhood and its allies, among activists of Arab «civil society», engage in an unrestrained concert of celebrations and congratulations.

In Gaza, Ismail Hanié, the head of the political bureau of Hamas [Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood], prides himself on having been the first foreign figure to reach on the phone his «counterpart», Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the head of the Taliban political bureau, to «salute the political and media performances of the Taliban» and «congratulate them on the crushing of the American occupation» which he considers «the sign of the defeat of all the forces of injustice and at their head the Israeli occupation in the land of Palestine».



In Algiers, Abderrezak Mokri, the leader of the other Hamas, renamed «Movement of the Society for Peace», the main formation of the Algerian Muslim Brotherhood, congratulated the Taliban for what he called a «grand victory» for «all the mujaheddin, militants and Afghan reformers and at their head the movement of the Taliban which carries out the jihad».

In Doha, the World Union of Muslim Scholars, founded by the chief theorist of the Muslim Brotherhood, Youssef al-Qaradawi, supposed to bring together the elite of «Muslim scholars» embodying the line of «moderation and the golden mean», issued a mind-blowing press release, considering that «the success of the Taliban in taking power is a divine will in support of Islam and constitutes a resounding victory against the tyranny of the occupiers», while warning Muslims who dare to criticize the Taliban that «all those who oppose the Islamic regime adopted by the Taliban will be in opposition to the precepts of the Sharia».

And in Yemen, since the badly named Aden [Eden, in Arabic!], Tawakkol Karman, activist close to the Muslim Brotherhood (she claims to be a feminist activist, while being veiled and member of the Brotherist party al-Islah!), Crowned with a controversial Nobel Peace Prize in 2011, during the «Arab Spring», far from worrying about the terrifying fate that awaits Afghan women under the new reign of the Taliban, argued in a post on Facebook (of which she is a member of the committee of ethics - supposed to fight violence and hatred online - for the Middle East region) that «the truth is that many Islamist movements will regret having adopted the line of Ennahda [the Tunisian Islamist party] and not having done like the Taliban. Alas, this is the worst lesson. Hello freedom, the revolution continues»!

Such a surge of hatred and obscurantism, on the part of those who are supposed to be the spokespersons of tolerance and moderation, brings us, once again, to the bitter truth: the «useful idiots» who, in the West, continue to believe or make believe that Islamists can be moderate or enlightened, are no less caricatured than a certain Barack Obama - another Nobel Peace Prize laureate! - who invented, in March 2009, the grotesque concept of «moderate Taliban»! •

Notice To Readers

From September, *Screen Watch* will be available for sale in newsstands on the third Thursday of each month. Next meeting: September 16.



AP/SIPA

NATO-TURKEY Security audit at Incirlik base

The discovery of an attempted break-in at Incirlik airbase in Turkey has led Nato to conduct a comprehensive security audit of the base, where the US Air Force stores some 50 B61 nuclear bombs. The Atlantic Alliance, which has growing concerns about Erdogan's Turkey's unprecedented souring of relations with some Alliance members, including France, has also been alerted by an unresolved security breach at the Incirlik base last fall.

USA Biden's New Silk Roads

US President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken have tasked major US departments to work with major banks on an ambitious project to create 11 Silk Roads, similar to China's. According to our sources, the White House plans to involve several allied countries in this project, including Japan, Great Britain and Australia.



SUSAN WALSH/AP/SIPA

USA Class struggle in the CIA!

The Covid-19 vaccination campaign has caused an unprecedented stir within the CIA. Many US Central Intelligence Agency agents have quietly expressed their discontent. According to them, the vaccination campaign started in the ranks of the CIA last January privileged the Agency's top brass, to the detriment of field agents who are more exposed to the risks of contamination because of their «contacts» with the public!



TERRORISM The danger could come from the Balkans

A report by the French anti-terrorist services warns of a jihadist terrorist threat that could come from the Balkans in the coming months. Several hundred ISIS fighters, having fled Syria or Iraq, have taken refuge in the Balkans, notably in Macedonia, Kosovo and Bosnia. Furthermore, following the terrorist attack in Vienna in November 2020, secret documents found in the possession of the commando leader (a Macedonian jihadist) mentioned the creation of an autonomous ISIS structure in the Balkans.

FRANCE-RUSSIA Macron in Moscow in November

Unless new tensions arise in Franco-Russian relations, Emmanuel Macron should pay an official visit to Moscow in November. The idea was born out of a telephone conversation with Vladimir Putin during which the French President expressed his concerns following Russian military manoeuvres near Ukraine last April. While blaming NATO for the tensions with Ukraine, Putin proposed to Macron to «come and discuss it in Moscow».



RAPHAEL LAFARGUE-POOL/SIPA

QATAR-PAKISTAN-TURKEY Defense agreements under negotiation

Shunned by its neighbours, Qatar is seeking to strengthen its relations with Turkey and Pakistan. The three countries have been quietly negotiating a new defense and security cooperation agreement since last March. To this end, General Omar Javed Bajwa, the Chief of Staff of the Pakistani Army, visited Doha and then

Ankara, followed by a delegation from the Pakistanian Aeronautical Center (PAC). Several meetings between the intelligence services of the three countries were also held in Doha.

F-35 PROGRAMME US Democrat lobbyist to Ankara's rescue

In an attempt to convince the Biden Administration to reverse its decision to permanently exclude Turkey from the F-35 fighter programme, Ankara called on the American lobbying firm Arnold&Porter Kaye Scholer. Known for its closeness to the Democratic Party, the company donated \$1.6 million to Democratic candidates in 2020, including \$391,900 to the Joe Biden campaign. According to our sources, Ankara paid \$700,000 to hire Arnold&Porter Kaye Scholer in order to get back into the game after being definitively excluded from the F-35 programme last April.



PETROS KARADJAS/AP/SIPA

This decision followed a temporary freeze in 2019 after Turkey acquired Russian S-400 missiles.

TURKEY Qatari Rafale participate in Anatolian Eagle exercise

For the first time since their creation, the Turkish military manoeuvres Anatolian Eagle, whose 2021 edition was held at the end of June, saw four Rafales take part in the exercise. These are aircraft belonging to the Qatari air force, which owns about thirty of them. Thus, during the air demonstrations which took place at the Turkish base of Konya, Turkey and India, which also took part in the manoeuvres, had an unhopd-for opportunity to test, on the ground, the capacities of this type of aircraft developed by Dassault Aviation, which is used by the air forces of their respective sworn enemies: Greece and India.

This indelicacy on the part of Doha made Paris cringe. All the more so as at the time of the exercise, the Turkish parliament was called upon to ratify a military agreement that had just been signed by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Yasar Güler, and his Qatari counterpart, General Ghanem Bin Shaheen Al Ghanim. The agreement allows the Qatari air force to use Turkish air bases, deploying 250 soldiers and 36 of its warplanes, including French-made Rafales and Mirages-2000.



CHINE NOUVELLE/SIPA

France: The Ambassador Shaye's threats

The Chinese ambassador in Paris, Lu Shaye, was very threatening in a letter to the senators of the France-Taiwan friendship group on the eve of a visit to Taipei planned by the group last July: «If you go to Taiwan, you will be responsible for Chinese economic sanctions against France». Shaye had already been very virulent when he was summoned by the Quai d'Orsay last March, following his inflammatory statements against Antoine Bondaz [China researcher at the Foundation for Strategic Research]. In front of the Asia and Oceania Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bertrand Lortholary, the Chinese ambassador was very explicit: «We will no longer let ourselves be taken advantage of by the French anti-Chinese lobbies. We will fight back every time, including with lawyers and complaints».

The Chinese government goes into... publishing!

Chinese propaganda is no longer satisfied with classic diplomatic and media channels. The «warrior wolves», activists attached to Chinese embassies around the world, who conduct very muscular campaigns on social networks against Beijing's opponents, have just activated a new lever of influence: publishing. On Beijing's instruction, several publishing houses have been created in Europe, including one in France, with a not very discreet name: La Route de la Soie - Éditions! It has just published a first opus entitled «Ouïgours, pour en finir avec les fake news».

(Chinese) Soldiers versus (Iranian) Oil

After renewing their strategic and military partnership agreements last April, Iran and China are negotiating a new trade and economic treaty designed to circumvent international sanctions against Tehran. 410 billion dollars could be invested by China in Iran over the next 25 years in return for an Iranian commitment to supply Beijing with oil and gas at preferential prices. According to our sources, among the secret clauses of this treaty is also the creation by Beijing of a military base in Iran, which will permanently house 4,500 Chinese military officers and advisers.

France-USA: Working group on Chinese nuclear power

During her visit to the Pentagon on 9 July, the French Minister of the Army, Florence Parly, agreed with her American counterpart, Lloyd Austin, on the creation of a Franco-American working group on the Chinese nuclear issue. According to the Pentagon, China, which currently holds 350 nuclear bombs, aims to double its arsenal by the end of the decade.

SPECIAL CASE
THE VIRUS OF "EMERGING VIOLENCE"

CONJUNCTURES

SURVIVALISM, CONSPIRACY, ANTIVAXS

The new breeding grounds for far-right violence

From France to Belgium, facsimile ideologies, survivalism and conspiracy theories are in the process of reviving the foul beast of right-wing violence that the Old Continent thought it had eradicated...

By **Malika Madi**

In Belgium, Jürgen Conings, a 46-year-old heavily armed radicalised soldier who disappeared on 17 May after telling his girlfriend he "wanted to join the Resistance", was found dead on 20 June. This man, whose links with the extreme right are numerous, had made many threats, against the symbols of the Belgian state of course, but also against a well-known virologist and, not surprisingly, a mosque. His tracking was one of the priorities of the Belgian authorities - but also Interpol- through an international warrant. He was finally found in northern Belgium, shot in the head. It seems that he committed suicide.

Neo-Nazi ideology, survivalism and conspiracy ideas; the influence of the far right in the military is much greater than we think. The radicalisation of Jürgen Conings is not an isolated case within the armed forces in many Western countries. Nicolas Lebourg, a researcher at the University of Montpellier and an expert on the far right, even states that the terrorist threat today is no longer only a consequence of jihadism, but also comes from the ultra right. Even more worrying is the fact that this right-wing radicalism is accompanied by a survivalist myth, a response to a catastrophe fantasised by these new Ramboes of the 21st century.

Let us remember recently the Mia case, kidnapped by a three-man commando in the Vosges. The murder of three gendarmes in the Puy-de-Dôme, by a survivalist competition shooter, whose profile was considered particularly worrying and particularly overarmed. Another example: at the end of 2018, a dozen people, from the same movement, were arrested, suspected of plotting to assassinate Emmanuel Macron.

All these cases are linked to the survivalist doctrine according to which the end of the world is near, without it being clear whether it will be caused by a natural disaster or by some economic, health, social or migratory crisis, etc. In this apocalyptic vision of the future, there is only one way to survive: relying on oneself.

This survivalist movement was born in the United States in the 1960s by Kurt Saxon, a xenophobic libertarian who was close to the American Nazi Party and the Church of Satan, and who was especially devoted to weapons. His statements and writings, in which he called for defence against "the enemies of the Nation" (in general: communists, foreigners and even student democrats), earned him, at the time, an indictment for terrorism and incitement to hatred.

Sixty years later, survivalism has crossed the Atlantic to Europe, and is a fashionable

practice for a few who train in survival techniques in anticipation of the worst. Most of the time, they are wacky people who do not harm anyone. For a minority, however, it goes as far as the fantasy of a lost society, infiltrated by Muslim extremists, which must be defended with weapons. A question of survival, literally!

What do far-right survivalists have in common? Their fierce opposition to all state representations.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, they have defined the restrictions as "a health dictatorship". Conings' death threats against Marc Van Ranst, a renowned virologist and a well-known face in the fight against Covid-19 in Belgium, confirm these extreme ideological shifts. The anti-state ideas are such that some followers of the movement do not only refuse vaccination. Worse still, they advocate armed attacks on vaccine production centres.

ANTIHERO FOR A MAJORITY, HERO FOR A MINORITY

Conings was supported by the Belgian far right, but not only. He enjoyed a certain popularity, especially on social media. People who were able to mobilise, from the day after his death on 17 May, in very active support groups. What brought them together, beyond

Neo-Nazi ideology, survivalism and conspiracy: The influence of the far right in the military is far greater than we think.



Survivalism fair organised, in Porte de la Villette, Paris, March 24, 2018.

cused on the fight against jihadism. The actual or potential violence of ultranationalists is no longer underestimated.

THE ARMY FORCED TO ACT

In Belgium, measures were taken to prevent further actions. Soldiers deemed to be close to the extreme right have been suspended from access to arms depots and sensitive infrastructures. Last March, Mediapart revealed that around fifty neo-Nazi soldiers had been spotted in France. They assume and display their convictions both at their training ground in France and during missions carried out by the French army abroad.

Conings embarked on a military career in 1992. He was deployed several times on external operations, notably in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon and Bosnia, where he served as a rifleman and sniper. Wars from which he never really seems to have returned. In his car, found a few days before his death, a small arsenal was discovered: four rocket launchers and numerous munitions.

With Jürgen Conings dead, the security services are studying the risk of aficionados appearing who might be seduced by Conings' personality and destiny, to the point of wanting to imitate his "exploits". However, such acts are not done impulsively. Rather, they are carefully planned. Thus, the survivalists of the ultra-right prepare their escapes in advance: procuring heavy weapons, ammunition, food... Before his act, the Belgian Rambo had even written letters of farewell and placed his military decorations on his parents' grave. ●

"LOW TECH" TERRORISM, "LONE WOLVES", "PROPAGANDA THROUGH ACTION"

The new tricks of the jihadist threat

The crushing of al-Qaeda and the fall of the proto-Islamic state of ISIS have given rise to an "inspired" neo-jihadism which, unlike planned and projected terrorism, relies on rudimentary means, poorly trained and often self-proclaimed executors, and the formidable contagion of "propaganda through action"...

By **Jean-Marie Montali**

When Bin Laden was in Afghanistan, protected by Mullah Omar, he quietly planned the 9/11 attack: the Afghanistan of the Taliban was then the first country in human history to be primarily dedicated to the training and export of terrorists (and drugs). And when ISIS was firmly established in Iraq and Syria, it carefully and just as quietly planned the 2015 attacks on France.

In both cases, and in many others, terrorist organisations had a base from which to ideologically train new recruits, militarily train them to become killers without conscience. Assassins and bombers would then infiltrate the target countries, with a well identified and meticulously prepared mission.

This threat was called "planned terrorism". But on the ground, assassins don't necessarily make good fighters, and Bin Laden and ISIS have taken a beating. The terrorist groups found themselves in a way homeless: no more accomplice countries, no more base, no more refuge. But they have adapted very quickly to this new situation: since "planned terrorism" is more difficult to implement, they now rely on "inspired terrorism". It is no longer a question



STEPHANE LEMOINTAN-POOL/SIPA

of deploying trained men, equipment and logistical means, but of projecting an ideology (via social networks and encrypted messaging, in particular, but also through preachers of hate, gatherers of lost souls who advocate Jihad). A virtual and very effective propaganda, aimed at empty heads, most often failures, small thugs without glory, eaten away by frustration and hatred, but seduced by redemption in the blood of the innocent.

These empty-headed people are wrongly and too often called "lone wolves". Wrongly so, because behind them there is a whole propaganda organisation that propagates, stirs up hatred, plays on baseness, manipulates weak minds, encourages them, puts practical advice online and sometimes even provides personalised advice via an encrypted message service. It's a group effort and logic. It's a job for moths.

Terrorist groups advise these not-so-lone wolves to use rudimentary and easily accessible means: knives, machetes, ram cars, or any other weapon of opportunity. The idea is to kill in a spectacular way and thus create a state of stupefaction and fear in the population of the victim country. It is not so much low-cost as low-tech, since there are no longer any bases for training terrorists in other, more advanced specialities. Low-tech also has the advantage of being available everywhere, in any shop, of not costing much, of being difficult to spot and,

on the contrary, of being very easily usable by any moron, of the kind that has been striking in France since 2015.

The preferred targets are obviously those that symbolise the State and the Republic: police officers, soldiers, etc. But also what are called "soft" targets, chosen at random, without any tracking or tailing, often at the last moment and therefore almost impossible to protect, but whose murder of unprecedented savagery, generally with a knife, will strike people. These murders are what terrorists call "propaganda by deed", or "propaganda by fact". In other words, it is about setting an example. For what repels normal people, seduces the followers of the cutthroat sect.

Finally, some figures, because figures are always needed. These are taken from a study by the Ifri (French Institute of International Relations), carried out by Marc Hecker and Elie Tenenbaum, both specialists in terrorism, jihadism, guerrilla warfare and urban violence: "At the end of 2018, one of the main American think-tanks, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, published a report on the evolution of the jihadist threat since the attacks of 9/11. The conclusion is worrying: there are now between 100,000 and 200,000 jihadist fighters, the highest level for forty years. The high estimate would represent a 270% increase since 2001.

However, we have to remain cautious about these figures as they include groups with local ambitions without differentiating between objectives, as distinct from the transnational jihadism of al-Qaeda or ISIS. The former strike and kill in their own countries, the latter are murderers without borders. ●

The Prime Minister, Jean Castex, awards the Legion of Honor, posthumously, to policewoman Stéphanie Monfermé, murdered on April 23, 2021, at the Rambouillet police station.

These murders are what terrorists call «propaganda by deed». Because what revolts normal people, seduces the followers of the cult of the cutthroats.

Scan the QR code to read also on our site: Covid pushes ISIS to increase its cyber activity

TEENAGE BRAWLS

From the "ghettoisation of minds" to ultra-violence

According to the French Ministry of the Interior, 357 clashes between gangs were recorded in 2020, an increase of almost 25% compared to the 288 recorded in 2019. In March 2020, the government declared a general mobilisation against brawls between young people, after several fatal brawls, particularly in the Ile-de-France region. An emergency: every 44 seconds, according to an INSEE survey, a gratuitous violence is committed. A complaint is filed every two minutes!

By Hamid Zanaz

Worse still: these figures are no longer surprising. They are just statistics that do not tell the suffering of the victims. We have become used to violence, used to being afraid of our young people. "We have children who hit more and more, earlier and earlier and who hit harder and harder. It's already happening in the nursery, and then in primary school", warned Maurice Berger, a child psychiatrist, several years ago.

This physical violence by adolescents is explained by most observers and analysts as the consequence of, perhaps even the inevitable response to, the violence of a society unable to offer them a future. Ultra-violence against precariousness, unemployment, racism. In a word, against ghettoisation. Political, social and economic ghettoisation... But this explanation is a bit short-sighted, because it excludes cultural confinement, which is nothing more than a devastating "ghettoisation of the mind".

In his book "Sur la violence gratuite en France - Adolescents hyper-violents, témoignages et analyses", Maurice Berger proposes a new psychological approach to try to understand what is going on in the mind and the unconscious of these young people, whose violence is sometimes unheard of. His approach is based on his experience, as a doctor, with a group of teenagers of whom he studies some specific cases. It is therefore a very different view from the usual discourse, even if it means shaking the comfort of received ideas.

Working in a reinforced educational centre for juvenile offenders, Maurice Berger, who is confronted daily with young perpetrators of "gratuitous violence", discovers the role of family disintegration experienced by the majority of forei-

gn families from Africa, the Maghreb countries, Kosovo, Albania and the Roma. Cultures which, according to him, accept inequality between men and women and where children are often witnesses of domestic violence. "In the centre where I work, we have 88% of young people of North African origin, he told Sud. Radio, that's where the most important traces remain."

In 69% of cases, these violent children were exposed to domestic violence in the first two years of their lives. Cultures with high levels of gender inequality have more violent children, which correlates directly with more domestic violence. This violent image of the father that these children carry within them resurfaces whenever they find themselves in a conflict situation. They are capable of acting violently for a shove or for what they consider to be a "bad look". The exchange of blows is their favourite game, a kind of muscular eroticism. Violence has become the norm. A means of expression.

The primary causes of violence, the doctor explains, are to be found in early childhood. Mothers have often had such a disastrous childhood themselves that they are unable to smile at their babies, to talk to them, to understand when they need to be reassured by a hug. As if expressing tenderness was impossible, and love was an unaffordable luxury. Like play. Indeed, most of these parents, for whatever reason, do not play, or not enough, with their children. And yet, play is essential to an individual's psychological growth. The result is that too many of these children reach adolescence with simple, poor, stunted thinking and no imagination. And above all a total lack of empathy. Banalization of violence and non-thinking. And most of them are unable to explain their actions other than by this one word: "normal". "Normal" to beat up...

Deprived of a normal and peaceful life during their early years, these children fail to develop

thinking skills. They have a language delay and therefore have difficulty learning. Surrounded by family and neighbourhood prejudices, they fear being different from their ethnic or religious group. Lacking argumentation, they quickly resort to hitting, even for a minor dispute.

What some consider as "enslavement" is the defeat of the word. Impulsive, they see the other as an object on which to unload the tension they feel in the moment, as a burden. Unable to understand the emotions expressed by the other's face, they interpret them as threats. We are therefore far from Emmanuel Lévinas' thesis: the face of the other, for these adolescents, does not command "Thou shalt not kill". On the contrary, the face of the other invites them to an act of violence.

Victims of difficult memories, they live only in the present. A present which, according to them, has little to offer them, but which has the advantage of isolating them from the past as much as from the future, a present where everything is settled by violence. Immediate and gratuitous violence, with little or no legal sanction. And when one is not punished, one starts again. "You get a six-month suspended sentence for hitting someone who will never be able to do his job or walk again", Maurice Berger laments.

According to Maurice Berger, this phenomenon of violence has a psycho-cultural basis. It can be said that this basis is maintained and even aggravated by the victim discourse that is increasingly developed in the neighbourhoods: France doesn't want you, France doesn't like your religion, France doesn't consider you to be fully French, you are discriminated against in employment, France refuses to provide you with housing, France exploited your parents, colonialism massacred your grandparents, France refuses to recognise its crimes in North Africa, etc. This is a dangerous and irresponsible discourse, not only because it ethnicises and Islamises the debate, thus rejecting a priori the idea of integration into society, but also because this insidious incitement to hatred pushes some young people to commit the irreparable.

The most serious thing about this case is that, by some semantic sleight of hand, they have managed to make people believe that fighting against this discourse of exclusion and confinement is, on the contrary, an expression of racism and of France's supposed Islamophobia. But it is exactly the opposite! ●

Violence has become the norm : A means of expression, A kind of muscular eroticism.

Mortar fire during clashes in Nantes, June 21, 2021.



SEBASTIEN SALOM-COMIS/SIPA

PLATFORM



SILIM ABID/AP/SIPA

Tunisian President Kais Saïed takes a walkabout on Avenue Bourguiba, Tunis, August 1, 2021

TUNISIA

A coup or "karcher" blow?

Tunisia was boiling under a scorching heat on July 25, 2021, its national Day. For the 64th anniversary of the Tunisian Republic, thousands of people took to the streets to demonstrate their discontent, demanding the dissolution of parliament and the departure of the Islamists from power.

By Bahía Madani*

The President of the Republic Kais Saïed, a former professor of constitutional law, an austere, enigmatic, ultra-conservative personality nicknamed «Robocop» because of his jerky diction and impassive face, created, in the evening of July 25, 2021, the surprise with exceptional announcements that were widely applauded and supported by the Tunisian people. By activating Article 80 of the Constitution promulgated on 10 February 2014, the President of the Republic orders:

1- Freezing the activities of the Assembly of People's Representatives (ARP) for the next 30 days (renewable in the absence of a constitutional court).

2- The lifting of the parliamentary immunity of all deputies and the launching of legal proceedings against those accused of committing terrorist crimes and corrupt parties that received illegal funding (an investigation involving the Ennahda, Qalb Tounes and Aich Tounsi parties has been opened).

3- The dismissal of the current Head of Government supported by a broad coalition of the ARP. The dismissal of the Ministers of Justice, Defense and the President of the Tunisian National TV. The executive power will thus pass under the supervision of the President of the Republic who will appoint a new government.

«Ennahda» denounced a «constitutional coup d'état» on the airwaves of its fetish channel «Al Jazeera», an inflexible supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood whose office in Tunisia was expressly closed and whose journalists were fired.

In a few hours and after two years of astonishing immobility, the presidential «Mr. Clean» took action and fulfilled the wish of the Tunisian people, by chasing the usurpers off the political scene.

Kais Saïed listened to the cry of distress of a desperate people, suffocated by an Islamist stranglehold and bruised by an unprecedented health crisis that ranks Tunisia as the

country with the highest death rate from Covid-19 in the world per capita. To date, it has recorded 19,000 deaths for a population of 11.7 million.

This chaotic climate has worsened:

- With a government that is totally incompetent in its management of the COVID-19 crisis;

- An assembly shamefully represented where some deputies use both verbal and physical violence against their political opponents, like the Islamist offshoot «El Karama». Several acts committed within the hemicycle should be prohibited by the President of the Parliament.

Worse still, with the blessing of the «sheikh» and his cronies, trade and financial agreements with Qatar and Turkey have been orchestrated, which risks compromising the country's independence and national sovereignty. This Islamist-backed foreign interference poses a serious threat to Tunisia's very fragile political and socio-economic balance.

The glass, already well filled with so much exasperation and anger, finally overflowed with the chilling ultimatum of «Ennahda» which demanded from the Tunisian state a compensation of 3 billion Tunisian Dinars (about €1 billion). This «dignity fund», as the Nahdhawis call it, was intended to compensate, among their followers, the «martyrs» who suffered repression and torture under the former regimes of Habib Bourguiba and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. All these factors have fuelled the anger of Tunisians and increased their protests: the people who bravely revolted in 2011 are now crying out their suffering, their hunger and their fed up. They find in the President's initiative the only possible recourse to straighten out the state, clean up the institutions, but above all to enable them to get out of the social misery that has plagued them.

Nevertheless, Kais Saïed's decisions are not insignificant. They may jeopardise the democratic process, which has been under artificial respiration since its implementation. The irony of fate is that thousands of Tunisians are today, like their young democracy, in full respiratory distress because of the pandemic.

Thus, Kais Saïed, who does not belong to any political caste, has turned the table upside down by seizing all the powers alone. As the guarantor of respect for the Constitution, he is taking a great risk by eliminating any possibility of counter-power. Are we living in a national emergency, the time to organise new legislative elections democratically? Are his intentions patriotic or just populist? Will he protect a democracy that was weakened at birth? Will he ensure the return of constitutional order? Will he defend the separation of powers?

In fact, this uprising risks further destabilising the country and scaring away the few investors interested and/or involved. In addition, the West is wary of engaging economically with an over-indebted country that is entirely dependent on the IMF and is unable to pay its debts. Not to mention the thorny issue of jihadist terrorism that has plagued the country since 2013.

This situation can only worsen if the President of the Republic, through populist stubbornness and lack of a clear vision, delays taking solid action that will save the country and its young democracy from an imminent danger that has two faces: the return of Dictatorship and the entrenchment of Political Islam.

Today, Kais Saïed is the only one responsible before his people for what will happen. This unprecedented political purge should also allow for serious and independent investigations into the thorny issue of foreign funding of the 2019 legislative and presidential election campaigns.

While waiting for the veil to be lifted on the burning issues and for them all to be treated impartially, the «Knight» of the Tunisian Republic must urgently face the political, social and economic crisis that is raging. Will his risky gamble really save the country and strengthen the fundamental principles of its young democracy, the only real achievement of the Tunisian Revolution of 2011?

Time will tell... ●

* Tunisian academic and associative activist.

BANGLADESH

The growing influence of Islamists

Bangladesh made headlines, last October, when thousands of protestors came out to the streets in Dhaka to protest against France. The protesters, around 50,000 in number, were demanding the closure of the French embassy in the country. A dummy of President Emmanuel Macron was also burnt during the protest with Junaid Babunagari, the Secretary-General of Hefazat-e-Islam (Hel) - one of the biggest Islamist groups in the country - stating that «Emmanuel Macron should beg for forgiveness». Apart from Dhaka, there were protests in smaller towns including one large protest in the port town of Chittagong, the headquarters of the Hel.

Again in March 2021, violent demonstrations in Bangladesh, reportedly by activists of Hel, led to deaths of four during the recent 50th anniversary celebrations of the country. The demonstrations also coincided with the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Like the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) in Pakistan, the Hefazat is also an influential group with a large support base. However, unlike the Pakistani political party, it has tactically not declared itself as a political party, even though its influence has been all-pervading and has threatened to dilute the historically moderate nature of Islam in Bangladesh.

During the birth of Bangladesh in 1971, after it broke away from Pakistan following a bloody war of liberation, language and culture was at the core of Bangladeshi national identity rather than religion. However, since the assassination of the country's founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975 and increasing control of the military, either directly or as



By
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proxy for the next 15 years, conservative Islamic views became more central to Bangladeshi politics and society. In 1979, the commitment to secularism was removed from the preamble of Bangladesh's constitution and in 1988 Islam was made the official state religion.

The gradual rise in the influence of Islamist forces from 1975 onwards was reflected in the increase in the number of religious Islamic schools or madrasa in the country. While in 1975 the country had 1830 approved madrasas, the number grew to 5793 in 1990. The military rulers of the country during this period, viz. Gen. Ziaur Rahman and Gen. H M Ershad, brought Islamists into the political mainstream and removed 'socialism' and 'secularism' as two of the 'pillars' of Bangladesh's Constitution.

Bangladesh has seen an increase in terrorist activity in recent years, including attacks on foreigners, activists and religious minorities. This period laid the foundation for a society that would be more open to embracing of more radical form of Islam in the years to come. Radical changes were seen in initial decade of the 2000s, with the return of Bangladeshis who had participated in the West-sponsored anti-Russia conflict in Afghanistan. These 'veterans' sought to transplant their ideas in Bangladesh.

Therefore, from 1999 to 2005 Bangladesh, the world's third largest Muslim country, was swept by a wave of Islamic militancy. It flourished under the administration of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, whose party the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) allied with the pro-Pakistan Islamist party, Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel). The Jel with 18 lawmakers in the Parliament headed some crucial Ministries in the BNP/Jamat combine government. The party's influence in the politics of Bangladesh conti-



nued, though with less intensity, even during the army-backed 'neutral' government from 2006-08.

During this period from 2001 to 2008, two jihadi groups, Jamaat-ul-Mujhdeen Bangladesh (JMB) and Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI) had a free run in Bangladesh. Religious minorities and political opponents, including then opposition party leader and current Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina were targeted. The Khaleda Zia government initially even denied the very existence of these groups, till there was an outcry in the local and international media and the US State Department threatened with economic sanctions.

Though when Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government was voted to power in the 2008 elections and the concept of 'secularism' was restored in the Bangladesh Constitution, the country continued as an Islamic Republic. This was largely because the ruling government probably understood that though the Islamists did not win votes in elections, they

exerted considerable influence in the social and cultural arena and in education, besides running a chain of 'Islamic' banks.

In the last decade, Islamists in Bangladesh have resorted to «street power» for mobilization against secularism. The Hel was formed in 2010 following a move by Sheikh Hasina's government to abolish religious-based politics and the madrasa/religious school education in the country. In 2013, the party took up the issue of blasphemy and in a 13-point list of demands, it called for death penalty for anyone committing blasphemy. The group also asked for an end to Bangladesh's education policy, which in its view prioritized «secular» subjects like science and maths over religious studies, and called for compulsory Islamic education.

To appease Islamist interests, the government agreed to meet some of these demands. One major concession was expanding the government's ability to crack down on those who «hurt religious beliefs» and for «acts of defamation.» Under this revised law, called the

Anti-French demonstration in Dhaka, Bangladesh, November 2, 2020. The sign says: let's boycott French products, starting with secularism!

Information and Communication Technology Act, Bangladesh has arrested at least eight bloggers and charged more than 1200 persons since 2013, for their alleged crime of writing articles critical of the Saudi government, posting derogatory remarks about the Prophet Muhammad online etc. The Information and Communication Technology Act was replaced by the Digital Security Act of 2018. Though Hel did not see all their demands met, there is no doubt that over the last decade, the country's education policy has also moved closer to Islamic education.

In today's Bangladesh, there is another influential group who are aspiring to shape society according to their interpretation of what constitutes «pure» Islam: the Mullah or the Preacher. It has been observed that popular Islamic tele-evangelists reach millions across the Muslim world, spreading the notion that Islam in the Indian subcontinent must be «purified» of non-Arab elements. They prescribe Arabic as God's language and promote that Muslims should use Arab practices and the language whenever possible.

As these Islamist groups and preachers, many funded by Saudi Arabia, attempt to change the religious character of Islam in Bangladesh, eroding its secular culture, even the constitutional concept that guarantees the separation of religion and the State, has started to be projected as anti-Islam by them.

With secular political parties like the Awami League forced to depend on the support of Islamists during Parliamentary and local body elections, it will take an extremely strong resolve on the part of secular Bangladeshi political groups and civil society to prevent the country from being overrun by Islamists and their ideology. ●

AFGHANISTAN

A country on the brink



By
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One cannot understand Afghanistan if one does not know its history, written in wars and punctuated by invasions from Alexander the Great, to the Soviets (20th century), via the Mongols (13th century) and, of course, the British in the 19th century.

Each occupation obviously provoked a war of liberation until the invaders left. And every liberation of the country has been followed by a civil war. This is the Afghan curse. Joe Biden's decision to withdraw the last 2,500 American troops, along with 7,700 NATO and allied troops, is therefore bound to have serious consequences. The Taliban - whose obsession was the withdrawal of Western troops - were not contained by the former government, which was subservient to the United States, and which owed its survival to the presence of an American contingent.

The fragile, precarious status quo, a simulacrum of armed peace with the appearance of a phoney war, where everyone shows their muscles, was shattered overnight, to the surprise of everyone. And yet, it was an open secret: the Taliban did not respect any of their

Hundreds of Afghans fleeing the Taliban's return to power, aboard a US Air Force cargo plane.



commitments made in the agreement of 20 February in Qatar. They refused the ceasefire, refused to hold elections and, of course, refused to share power with the former Afghan President, Ashraf Ghani. Worse still: as on 24 April in Istanbul, they did everything possible to undermine the negotiations that had barely begun between the warring parties.

The Taliban want only one thing: power. They have it now. A power they intend to exercise alone. They want to turn Afghanistan into an Islamic republic again, just as they did between 1996 and 2001, before an international coalition drove them out of power after the 9/11 attacks. The country had then sunk into the Middle Ages, years of nightmares, especially for women who were forbidden to study, to work, to go out alone, without being accompanied by a male relative. It was also the Afghanistan of the Taliban that gave asylum to Bin Laden, who was already public enemy number one at the time. It is therefore to be feared that the capture of Kabul will once again encourage the relocation of terrorist organisations - Al Qaeda, Islamic State or others - in the country.

The Taliban are in a strong position. Government troops are routed and resistance is struggling to be organised in the Panjshir valley, led by the son of Commander Massoud. The major cities are in the hands of the Taliban, who also hold the country's borders. What about tomorrow? There is every chance that the resistance to the Taliban, essentially Tajik, will have the greatest difficulty, without outside help, in containing, if not controlling,

a situation that is all the more explosive because the risk of terrorism is still very present. The Taliban, apart from large-scale attacks, are also specialists in targeted attacks to eliminate their own people.

In 20 years, the Americans have spent hundreds of billions of dollars to keep Afghanistan alive - almost artificially. The country is now dying. Joe Biden promised the Afghan government that he would continue to provide military aid after the withdrawal of his troops, so that the country would not sink completely. He was said to be considering a repositioning in several Central Asian republics: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan. It could also count on fighter planes and bombers already positioned in the naval bases of the Gulf and the Indian Ocean. It is not certain that today these promises are still worth anything, or that this possible redeployment will impress the Taliban in the slightest... At least that is what William Burns, the head of the CIA, fears. He is much more reserved than Antony Blinken, the Secretary of State, for whom "Afghanistan will not become a springboard for terrorists again".

Afghanistan is thus on the verge of collapse. As was Iraq in 2011, when Barack Obama made a premature withdrawal of American troops from Iraq. Three years later, the Islamic State appeared...

Let there be no mistake: the Taliban once again in control of the country is catastrophic news. For the Afghans, of course. But not only that: everyone should be aware that the situation in the country is almost identical to the one that preceded 9/11. ●

THE NILE

Will there be a water war?

In the Middle East, crushed by this year's merciless heat, water is more than ever a hot topic. A question of survival. And the cause of extreme tensions between three countries: Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt. This is why the decision taken - unilaterally - by Ethiopia to fill the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is perceived as a real provocation by its neighbours. Especially since in 2020, Addis Ababa had already provoked the anger of Khartoum and Cairo by carrying out the same operation without consultation.

The Ethiopian rainy season, from June to September, acts as a natural catalyst. Filling was completed on 19 July and the tank's capacity is 13.5 billion cubic metres. However, since the failure of the African Union (AU) sponsored negotiations in Kinshasa (DRC) in April 2021, the three countries have been unable to agree on the exploitation of the river flow. This is the status quo, but a status quo that has just been trampled by Ethiopia, whose objective is, among other things, to increase its electricity production.

This dam thus reignites the water war in the Middle East. The tension between the three countries is such that the African Union is having difficulty managing this crisis. In the UN Security Council, Russia decided, very solemnly, to support Addis Ababa. And for good reason: Ethiopia is a very important economic ally of Moscow, a market with a bright future if the exploitation of its natural resources keeps its promises. But Ethiopia is more than just a hope for wealth. For Russia, supporting Ethiopia is also the assurance of putting one foot, perhaps both, in a country of considerable geostrategic importance in this region of the world.

Since 2020, this extreme tension over water in the Middle East has worried observers. Tensions exacerbated by the current climate change, of course, but also by Ethiopia's ambition not to leave the management of the Nile to Egypt alone. It has therefore decided to build a titanic dam on the Blue Nile. An ambition - and a construction - that endangers Egypt's water supply and seriously tilts the cards: water is power.



The Nile Delta photographed from the International Space Station by French astronaut Thomas Pesquet.



By
Fabienne Durand
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in environmental issues.

The idea of building large dams was abandoned in the 1980s. It is making a strong comeback everywhere in emerging countries: in China, India, Turkey, for example, but also in African countries where less than 5% of the hydroelectric potential is exploited. These huge dams are a weapon in the fight against malnutrition and poverty and - by providing electricity to nearly a billion people who are still deprived of it - accelerate development. They are also part of the priority that must be given to the fight against global warming and to water and energy management.

The Ethiopian decision can only affect Egypt's supply, which is already heavily deficient in water. A nasty blow for the authorities in Cairo. Yet 85% of the Nile's water comes from Ethiopia, even though until now it has used very little of it. A bit of history to understand the present situation: it is explained by an agreement dating back to the (British) colonial era, signed in 1929. This agreement granted Egypt 55.5 billion m³ of water and Sudan, also located upstream, 18.5 billion m³. But downstream, it completely ignored Ethiopia and the eight other countries that border the 6,700 km of the river and its tributaries.

The Ethiopian decision calls into question this historic agreement. Ethiopia is at the head of a five-nation group that is threatening to sign a new cooperation agreement, excluding Egypt and Sudan. It would then take de facto control of the Nile's waters and put Egypt in an untenable situation: with 40 m³ per person compared to the international average of 1,000 m³, the country is already suffering from severe water poverty. Its current water supply is not sufficient for its rapidly growing population (27 million in 1960, 78 million in 2006, with forecasts of 120 million by 2040...). Moreover, Egypt would also lose 30 to 40% of its hydroelectric capacity. Finally, because of the immense size of the Ethiopian dam, up to 3 billion additional precious cubic metres could be lost annually - through simple evaporation!

The tensions between the three countries are, for the moment, political. A military escalation seems to be excluded for the moment. But for how long? ●



MOURAD ALLUI/SIPA

EMIGRATION This opportunity is France!

My grandfather was a farm worker. A labourer. We call that a day labourer. When his father died, he inherited a mule. Nothing else. An old mule that was no longer of any use. My grandmother had nothing. But they both knew how to read and write, which was always a way of winning over misery: it made them want to.

Their village was perched in the Apennines in Italy. Today, there are only two year-round inhabitants. You get there by a path that climbs steeply, twisting in the sun, and which, even today, is not tarmacked. There are about twenty houses, which at the time did not all have electricity or running water. No shops or church. There is nothing. In summer, the sun burns everything it touches. In winter, the snow comes up to the waist and it is so cold that it curdles the blood in the veins.

In 1943, my grandfather - republican by conviction and catholic by tradition - joined the partisans, with his son, my father. Without heroism, a bit like going to the fields, the rifle replacing the spade. After the war, my grandfather returned to the village, breaking his back on a land where nothing grows but stones on which vipers hiss. At the end of his life, he had six cows, a good dozen chickens, as many rabbits, electricity and running water.

My father came to France, like a lot of other Italians, without any diploma, with holes in his pockets. He had the idea of rebuilding his life far from these mountains that blocked his view and his future. He probably preferred action to resignation. He did what he could, like all those who had fled the gallows, the prison, hunger and misery, from Italy, Spain, Portugal, Russia, Africa, Asia and elsewhere: they preferred action to resignation.

France took them all, men and women, whites and blacks, Christians, Muslims and Godless. They rolled up their sleeves, without making excuses, they did not want to be eternal victims, nor did they want to be seen as being condemned to wade in the same molasses all their lives. On the contrary: their idea was to build a lasting happiness for themselves and their children. Happiness as a legacy. France took them. It mixed all this together to make a good cement. There are hundreds, thousands of examples of success. There are foreigners and sons of immigrants from the top to the bottom of the ladder, everywhere: in private com-

panies, in the public sector, in the ministries. One example, just one, that of Elisabeth Moreno: a black woman from Cape Verde, brought up on a housing estate by parents who cannot read or write, and here she is as a minister after having been a company director. That's quite something. What a great example! What pride for this country capable of offering a future to those who know how to seize it, wherever they come from. That is also what France is all about. It is above all that.

The next generation, then, is me. Son of a wop, but above all a lucky child: I am doing what I always wanted to do. I've been a great reporter, I've run newspapers, written books and films, and I've obtained higher education diplomas by having my qualifications validated. So I was a lucky child. And this luck is France. That's why I love this country.

I love France, what it has been, what it is, what it is not, what it would like to be and what it will be, that is to say what we will do with it together. Our past is a kind of compass without which we would be in danger of getting lost. It is true that it has not always been glorious. But what of it? Nations, like people, are made up of light and shadow. Whether we like it or not, the lights of France have shone and continue to shine throughout the world.

To tell the truth, I love everything about France, including what I don't like about her: her arrogance, her bad faith, her mistakes. Love is indulgent. It has contradictions. You see, France is not a country like any other. It has something extra. It's not just a geography and borders. It is an idea. A soul, a spirit. This will make some people snigger and see it as a kind of naive patriotism. Let them snigger! I see gratitude, recognition, and this kind of instinct that pushes us to live these feelings intensely, it's love.

It's a bit counter-current. These are times of shame and flogging. Warm, sticky bliss is preferred to effort. Instead of heroes, we prefer victims. Real or supposed victims, but victims of France, of course, of its injustices, of its racism and of who knows what else. It exists, of course. If that's the case, let's do justice to him and his family. But he can't be a model. We don't care if we find other heroes, white, black, yellow, well-born or born askew, and we'll erect statues of them before we debunk the others.

Another thing, to conclude: France is an opportunity. A pride, too. ●



By **Jean-Marie Montali**
Managing Editor of *Global Watch Analysis*.

ling a world population of 7 billion so they can live [with each other]? It is unthinkable. I say it here, in al-Azhar, in front of preachers and scholars".

It is not France that is preventing the realisation of your utopia. On the contrary, it is the institution you preside over that has fought against any reform. It has not hesitated to excommunicate a number of reformists such as Sheikh Ali Abdel Razeq, the great scholar of al-Azhar, who was accused of apostasy for having thought differently in his book "Islam and the Foundations of Power", in 1925.

Is it not strange, Mr. Rector, that you remain silent in the face of the multiple humiliations and injustices suffered by millions of citizens in the Muslim world, while you react in a zealous and disproportionate manner against France because of a cartoon!

Blasphemy is not an offence in France and it never will be. There is no immutable, uncritical truth under the sky of modernity. To criticise Islam, Mr. Rector, is not to criticise Muslims, just as criticising fascism is not to criticise Italians. The right to criticise the beliefs of one's fellow citizens is the foundation of an open and peaceful society. Freedom of expression is the freedom to tell your fellow man what he does not want to hear.

Al-Azhar, as you already know, has always been the docile relay of the Egyptian power. This is not the case with the Paris mosque or any other mosque in France. And you know this very well, Mr. Rector, as you were a student and then a visiting professor at the Sorbonne.

You should know, Mr. Rector, that no one could force modernity, outside its own country, to submit to its religious obsession. And to conclude, I would like to leave you to ponder on this beautiful phrase by Thomas Szasz: "When a person can no longer laugh at himself, it is time for others to laugh at him..."! ●

paratism", claiming, in bad faith, that he was targeting Islam! Doesn't the Koran, your Holy Book, recommend you in verse 12 of Surah Al-Hujurat: "O believers! Avoid many suspicions, [for] indeed, some suspicions are sinful"? And it is a characteristic conjecture that you are committing there. The French president was targeting political Islam, not the Islamic religion.

You should sweep your mosque's front door. Didn't Sheikh Rashad Hassan Khalil, former head of the Sharia faculty of your mosque/university, once edit that "getting naked during sex invalidates marriage"?

Worse still, did not two theologians from your institution issue a fatwa that allows an employee to suckle his colleague at work so that she becomes his sister and could thus remain alone together in the same office. Because your religion forbids a person to be alone in a room with another person of the opposite sex, outside of marriage or without a close family relationship!

Have you removed from your libraries and courses "Al Iqnā' fi Hal al Alfāz Abi Shujā' by Imam Shams ad Dīn Muhammad, this reference book on which you rely to teach Shāfi'ite Fiqh to the students of the third year of secondary school in your institution's schools, and which tolerates - in black on white - cannibalism?"

When one observes this kind of debate within your misnamed "University", the rest is easy to imagine, Mr. Rector: archaism and modernity do not speak the same language. They do not live in the same century.

You perpetuate separatism, hatred of non-Muslims and jihad in your speeches and your theology books. The French Republic produces fraternity, modernity and universality. It welcomes migrants of all religions.

Your own president called you out, right in your mosque, in an accusatory tone in 2014: "Can you imagine 1.6 billion [Muslims] kil-

local) by developing good relations with influential people in various circles of society (politics, civil society, economy) in which they themselves try to gain positions of influence (entryism) and through which they try to control or rally a wide range of organisations and NPOs [non-profit organisations] with the real aim of paving the way for their worldview and implementing it."

However, the report stressed that "Ihsane Haouach, as far as we know, is not herself a member of the Muslim Brotherhood and has never attracted (our) attention by taking concrete extremist positions [...] the Muslim Brotherhood has a history of concealing its true beliefs and motivations and does not generally reveal itself as a Muslim Brotherhood to the outside world. It cannot therefore be excluded that Ihsane Haouach herself is not (fully) aware that she has close contacts with the Muslim Brotherhood."

The report further noted that "The European

Muslim Brotherhood chooses a gradual and very pragmatic approach, whereby it allows itself some flexibility in relation to certain orthodox Islamic prescriptions, adapts its discourse to its audience, and conceals its true intentions and beliefs. They cultivate a public image of well-integrated, moderate and (relatively) progressive European Muslims, but this conceals their victim and internal discourse and their underlying message, which is that Western values and way of life are irreconcilable with Islamic values and rules".

The Muslim Brotherhood's agenda for our democratic societies, as described in this report, is not to be taken lightly or underestimated. But the Haouach affair also reveals the inability of European states to find a point of convergence with different communities and the inability of our politicians to communicate with the ethnic and religious minorities that make up society. As a result, this gaping hole is being taken over by the fringe and communalist movements. ●

Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo and Equal Opportunities Minister Sarah Schlitz, heard by a committee of the federal parliament on the Ihsane Haouach case on July 12, 2021.

help. Justice, independent and fair in France, is the guarantor of his rights. And fortunately, this Justice never makes a difference between a Muslim and a non-Muslim, as you do in your sermons and in your theological courses from another time!

Your institution dares to qualify as "racist" Emmanuel Macron's remarks on "Islamic se-

Ennaffais fi adilat hadm el kanaiss (The Best Islamic Justifications for Demolishing Churches): this book praising the destruction of churches is still published and distributed in your country. Is it not still in your school curricula, Mr. Rector of al-Azhar?

The French Muslim expects nothing from you, does not count on your verbal and political



The rector of the al-Azhar mosque, Ahmed Muhammed Ahmed el-Tayeb.

ISLAMISM Open letter to the rector of the al-Azhar Mosque



By **Hamid Zanaz**

Writer and essayist, latest book published "L'Europe face à l'invasion islamique" (Editions de Paris, 2019).

What are you meddling with, Mr. Rector of the Egyptian al-Azhar Mosque, when you talk about the situation of Muslims in France? The law of the Muslim in France is the law of his country. You are neither the representative nor the advocate of Muslims in France. "We Muslims are not persecuted in France" is the title of a text distributed by the French Council of the Muslim Faith in all the country's mosques. There is no better answer to your allegations.

Apart from a tiny minority of fanatics - close to the Islamist ideology propagated by your mosque - Muslims live their Islam in France peacefully and freely. Their rights are guaranteed by the laws of the Republic: like all other believers, they are full French citizens.

On the other hand, this happy French religious freedom is very absent in your country and you do nothing to change things, you don't even talk about it! Worry first about the fate of the Egyptian Copts, your fellow citizens, humiliated and ostracised every day! As well as Shiites, agnostics, atheists and all non-Muslims living in the land of the Pharaohs.

In France, Muslims freely build mosques, while in Egypt, in your dear Islamic country, Christians are not even allowed to restore a church inherited from their ancestors! Building a new one is forbidden.

BELGIUM What is the case of Ihsane Haouach?

You have to have spent the last few weeks on the planet March not to have heard about the turmoil of the Ihsane Haouach affair in Belgium. The appointment (and then resignation) of this 36-year-old veiled woman to the post of government commissioner at the Institute for the Equality of Men and Women has caused a real political psychodrama.

At the end of May, Sarah Schlitz, Belgian Secretary of State for Equal Opportunities, appointed Ihsane Haouach as a commissioner to carry out a very specific mission: to supervise the accounts and relay the decisions of the Institute for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women to her ministry.

In Belgium, there are some 500 commissioners working for ministries and public institutions. But the day after Ihsane Haouach was appointed, the political opposition and the press literally seized on the case, making it the front page of the news for more than six weeks.

Supported by the Ecolo party, which appointed her to the post, she is criticised by the Flemish nationalist opposition, but also by the French-speaking liberal Mouvement Réformateur (MR). The government commissioner eventually resigned, following a virulent cyber campaign and a report by the State Security to the federal government, revealing her links



By **Malika Madi**

Essayist and novelist and Belgian, most recently published « Maternité et Littérature, création et procréation », Éditions du Cygne, Paris, 2017.

with the Muslim Brotherhood, pointing in particular to the fact that she frequents the Inter-cultural Islamic League of Brussels (IBL), one of the main organisations linked to the Muslim Brotherhood in Belgium.

But who is Ihsane Haouach? The daughter of a Moroccan diplomat, she grew up between the very chic Avenue Louise in Brussels and the upmarket suburb of Waterloo. She attended the right schools and in 2008 obtained a master's degree at the Solvay Brussels School of Economics & Management. She quickly obtained a position in the energy sector and was then appointed administrator of Brugel, the regulatory authority for the electricity, gas and water markets in Brussels.

As soon as she took up her post as government commissioner, the young woman was torn between managing her cases, media requests, attacks on social networks and political pressure. For a while she could count on the devotion of her admirers, but the hostility of her detractors was stronger.

Ihsane Haouach has no gift for communication. From blunders to blunders, from untimely Facebook posts to unprepared interviews with the major media, she ended up, last July, when she was more than ever under the watchful eye of detractors from all sides, by raising the controversy once again, by stating in Le Soir that "the discussion is not: are we questioning the separation of Church and State? It's:

how do we break it down with a demographic change?"!

This stance reinforced the arguments of those who pointed to her inability to respect the neutrality required by her position. Especially as she had previously caused controversy by stating that she regretted the lack of willingness of the Muslim community to unite to form a "lobby".

While the vast majority of appointments of government commissioners do not attract any media interest, the appointment of Madame Haouach went so far as to prompt an investigation and a report by the intelligence services. First submitted to the government, then revealed to the press, the State Security report revealed that she is "known for her close contacts with the Muslim Brotherhood. These contacts between the Muslim Brotherhood and Ihsane Haouach may be part of a broader strategy of the Muslim Brotherhood to influence public debate and policy-making (governmental or



SHUTTERSTOCK/SIPA

Scan the QR code to view the full document of the Belgian services report on Ihsane Haouach

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ABIR SULTAN/AP/SIPA



Islamist leader Mansour Abbas received by Israeli President Reuven Rivlin during pre-government consultations on April 5, 2021.

By Martine Gozlan

Journalist and essayist, editor in chief at weekly magazine Marianne, specialist in Islamism and Middle-East affairs.



ISRAEL The Jewish state and its Islamist allies!

EXPERTISES

You have to get used to it, Israel is not a country like the others. Normalcy, the ultimate goal of the Zionist project, is still out of reach...

Under the leadership of the new Prime Minister, Naftali Bennett, from the religious right and supporter of the annexation of the West Bank, personalities that everything seems to separate are working...

But the most astonishing and symbolic is the ultimate alliance that allowed the coalition to exist and finally give Israel a government after four elections in two years...

interests of his community. He considers the systematic opposition of the United Arab List, which he joined for a time, to be counterproductive.

ning, in a country given over to the unbridled ultra-liberalism of Netanyahu's reign. Gang violence is bloodying the community, which blames the Israeli police for not helping it enough.

of Arab affairs in the Prime Minister's Office, overcame two challenges in his first two weeks in office. First, the "march of the flags" organised in Jerusalem by the extreme right...

ABRAHAM CHORDS

Don't tell my mother I live in Tel Aviv, she thinks I'm a rabbi in Dubai...



By Ian Hamel

Journalist and writer, specialist on the Muslim Brotherhood

There's no need to go to the Armani Hotel's kosher restaurant unannounced. It's better to book well in advance. As for the terrace, it is crowded, in order to be able to attend a unique show...



Rabbi Mendel Duchman exiting Kaf Kosher restaurant in Dubai on October 5, 2020.

features of the Dubai Mall. It is, appropriately enough, the largest shopping mall in Dubai. But if you're in the Middle East, Armani, on the other hand, runs like a Swiss clock.

A KITCHEN CONNECTED TO THE RABBI!

The restaurant is certified "kosher". This means that it offers gourmet dishes that comply with the dietary laws of Judaism. Israeli television station i24 news says that Armani "operates under the supervision of Levi Duchman, rabbi of the United Arab Emirates"...

Armani restaurant have an oven connected to the rabbi himself! Don't worry, the rabbi is not permanently in the establishment, Rabbi Levi Duchman has an application on his smartphone: he lights the fire remotely!

WHITE WINE FROM THE GOLAN HEIGHTS

The Times of Israel tells us that Armani is not the first kosher kitchen company in the country. Elli's Kosher Kitchen, a company run by Elli Kriel, the wife of Emirates Jewish Council chairman Ross Kriel, had already been providing meals to Jewish travellers passing through Dubai since 2018.

The background to the dismissal of Prosecutor Al-Marri

Qatar's all-powerful public prosecutor, Ali Bin Fetais Al-Marri, a key player in Franco-Qatari relations, has been quietly ousted. Is this removal, which follows accusations of corruption, intended to avoid controversy that could overshadow the 2022 World Cup, which will be held in Doha?

By **Ian Hamel**, in Geneva

The letter sent to Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary General, is not at all diplomatic. It was sent by Sheikh Ahmed Bin Khalid Al-Thani, on behalf of the "Council of the ruling family of Qatar" (see opposite). He accuses Ali Bin Fetais Al-Marri, the Qatari Attorney General, of being corrupt: "How can the UN provide this person with the status of UN representative to recover funds embezzled in other countries, when the Attorney General is well known to have used his functions for his own interests and those he serves, such as Sheikhha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Missned", he claims.

Sheikha Mozah is the mother of the current Emir of Qatar. Sheikh Ahmed Bin Khalid Bin Mohammed Bin Ali Bin Abdullah Bin Qassim Bin Mohammed Al-Thani, who claims to be "linked to the Al-Thani dynasty by ties of descent, affection and duty", lodged a complaint in January 2021 against "the acts of violations committed by the Attorney General at the United Nations Human Rights Council".

Ali Bin Fetais Al-Marri, 56, Attorney General of Qatar since 2002, is not just anyone. He is the UN's special representative on the "ill-gotten gains" file and chairs the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (IAACA). Finally, in 2017 he established the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption Center (RO-

9 million euros for a Palace in the canton of Geneva.



Ali Bin Fetais Al Marri with President François Hollande, at the inauguration of the Franco-Qatari Voltaire high school, in Doha, June 22, 2013.

The ubiquitous anti-corruption NGO of the Qatari prosecutor!

On its website, ROLACC describes itself as a "key player in the fight against corruption", thanks to an impressive network of experts. Unfortunately, the "Members" section only lists its president, Ali Bin Fetais Al-Marri, 56, who had been Qatar's public prosecutor since 2002 and was abruptly dismissed last July. The latter can however rely on his director Abdulmehsen Hamad Fetais, a member of his family! A recruitment that no doubt respects a tribal logic common in the gas emirate. But is this very wise when one intends to give advice to the whole world on how to fight corruption? After all, Qatar's attorney general also chairs the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (IAACA). He is also the special representative to the UN on the "ill-gotten gains" case!

Ali Bin Fetais Al-Marri has signed a cooperation agreement with the Tunisian Court of Audi-

tors to help it recover the assets of the Ben Ali clan hidden abroad. But for the moment, results are still awaited. Moreover, the ROLACC is not stingy when it comes to awarding prestigious prizes to little-known, but undoubtedly courageous, actors in the relentless fight against corruption: a distribution made in December 2017 at the very headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva, in the presence of the director general of the UN in Geneva, the head of the government of the canton of Geneva, and the mayor of the City of Calvin. Coincidentally, Doha had just written a cheque for 18 million euros for the renovation of a UN building. In fact, ROLACC's action seems to be limited to lobbying operations in favour of Qatar with senior international officials, magistrates and influential personalities.

A key player in relations between Paris and Doha, Ali Bin Fetais

Al-Marri is not only a powerful man, he is also a wealthy man, if his acquisitions in France and Switzerland are anything to go by (see opposite). However, the Attorney General of Qatar, who comes from the small Bedouin tribe of Al-Marri, does not (theoretically) own any personal fortune. How could even a high salary as a senior civil servant allow him to acquire prestigious assets?

For its part, the American press recalls that Ali Bin Fetais Al-Marri is said to have had some minor problems with certain members of his extended family. Ali Saleh Kahlah Al-Marri and Jarallah Al-Marri were convicted and imprisoned in the United States for their links with Al-Qaeda. Nevertheless, it is understandable that with his multiple occupations, the Qatari Prosecutor General cannot necessarily be held responsible for the excesses of his cousins or nephews!

LACC), which has offices in Doha and Geneva. However, key players in the fight against corruption and ill-gotten gains would be hard pressed to point to any concrete action taken by the former Qatari Attorney General in the fight against crime.

Ali Bin Fetais Al-Marri was removed without explanation on 17 June 2021 from his position as Attorney General of the gas emirate, and replaced by Issa Bin Saad Al Jafali Al-Nuaimi, the former Justice Minister.

A LETTER TO MACRON

Is there a link between this dismissal and the letter sent by Sheikh Ahmed to the UN? It is quite possible, especially since this sheikh has also sent equally explosive letters to Emmanuel Macron, the American, British and Swiss justice. Referring to numerous publications on Qatar, including the Qatar Papers by Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot, Qatar, vérités interdites by Emmanuel Razavi and Vilain petit Qatar by Jacques-Marie Bourget and Nicolas Beau, this member of the ruling family writes: "The Attorney General of Qatar and a number of his accomplices have been acting by abusing their capacity as agents of the State of Qatar under the influence and directives of Sheikhha

Mozah Bint Nasser Al Missned since 1995". It states that "these individuals have been working for a long time to divert the wealth of the State of Qatar for their own profit. It is in Europe and more particularly in France that national funds are diverted".

PRIVATE HOTEL IN PARIS, PALACE IN GENEVA

Before the World Cup in 2022 in Doha, did the Emir of Qatar want to remove a character who could overshadow this great sporting event? Indeed, the French-speaking Ali Bin Fetais Al-Marri has already made the headlines in France and abroad, because of his imposing assets.

Since 2013, he has been the proud owner of a private mansion at 86 avenue d'Iéna, which cost 9.6 million euros. In Geneva, he owns a real palace at 15 chemin de Bonnevaux, in Coligny, in the canton of Geneva, overlooking Lake Geneva. Between the purchase and the renovation of the imposing residence (indoor swimming pool lined with Moorish arcades, colonnaded porch...), the Attorney General is said to have paid 10 million Swiss francs (9.3 million euros).

A politically exposed personality, because of his high office, he should have been subject to a special regime of control, in France as in Switzerland.

In addition, through his company GSG Immobilier SA, Ali Bin Fetais Al-Marri owns a building on Route de Ferney in the commune of Grand-Saconnex, which was worth 3.7 million Swiss francs (3.4 million euros) in 2015. The property previously housed the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption Center.

Several books on Qatar, probably ill-intentioned, present Ali Bin Fetais Al-Marri as "the

man of the dirty work of the ruling family". In a way, a "super-chaouch". Curiously, in his real estate transactions, our great man prefers the National Bank of Kuwait to the financial institutions of the gas emirate. And even more strangely, in a document in our possession, dated 20 October 2015, bearing the stamp of the canton of Geneva, the Attorney General of Qatar claims to be domiciled... in Coligny, Switzerland! Contacted on several occasions on this subject, Ali Bin Fetais Al-Marri has never answered our calls.

As a politically exposed person (PEP), due to his high functions, he should normally be subject to a special control regime, in France as well as in Switzerland, regarding the origin of his funds. All the more so as he is the representative to the UN on the issue of "ill-gotten gains". Contacted on several occasions, the public prosecutor has never answered our calls.

Did the letters sent by Sheikh Ahmed, on behalf of the "Council of the ruling family of Qatar" to Paris, Geneva, London and New York attract the attention of the magistrates? This would explain why Qatar has been quick to dismiss the man who is considered a key figure in its shadow diplomacy and influence on the international scene. ●

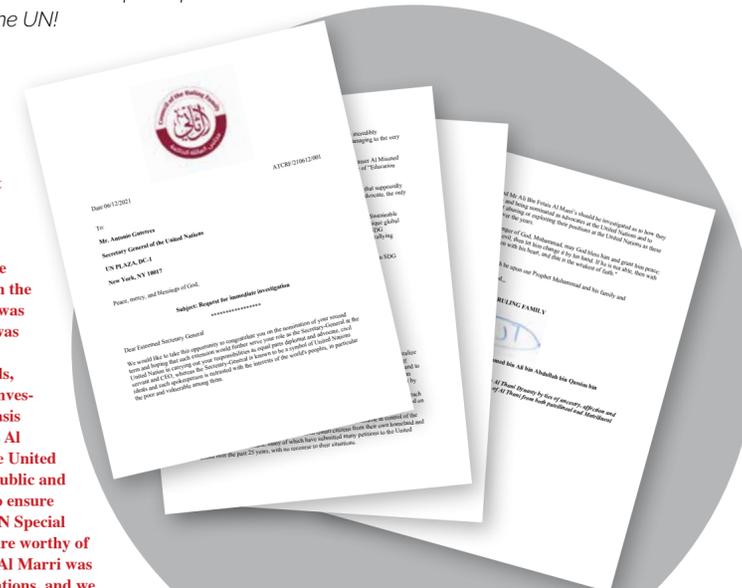
EXCLUSIVE LETTER FROM THE "AL THANI FAMILY COUNCIL" TO THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL The corruption of the Qatari anti-corruption man!

The letter addressed to the UN Secretary General by Sheikh Ahmed Bin Khalid Bin Mohammed Bin Ali Bin Abdullah Bin Qassim Bin Mohammed Al-Thani, on behalf of the "al-Thani Family Council", the ruling family of the emirate of Qatar, is unequivocal as to the corruption of the former Qatari prosecutor appointed to the post of anti-corruption officer by the UN!

In this document, the "al-Thani Family Council" asks "how could the Attorney General, Mr. Ali Bin Fetais Al Marri, who was investigated in a report by the UN Special Rapporteur in 2014, Ms. Gabriela Knaul, be appointed as the UN Special Advocate for the Prevention of Corruption in the same year in 2014, when it was clear in the report that he was behind this corruption?"

"Therefore, the letter adds, we demand an immediate investigation to determine the basis on which Mr. Ali Bin Fetais Al Marri was appointed by the United Nations, and we call for a public and transparent investigation to ensure that future appointees as UN Special Advisors are persons who are worthy of the position. Ali Bin Fetais Al Marri was appointed by the United Nations, and we call for a public and transparent investigation to ensure that future appointees as UN Special Advisors are truly deserving of the appointment and will truly be advocating for the UN agenda and not their personal agenda".

The letter also does not spare Sheikhha Mozah, the mother of the current Emir of Qatar: "It is clear that both Sheikhha Mozah Bint Nasser Al Missned and Mr. Ali Bin Fetais Al Marri have collectively exploited their positions as advocates of the United Nations to advance their ultimate ideology, and surprisingly, they have supported it by providing individuals with appointments by the United Nations. Ali Bin Fetais Al Marri have collectively exploited their positions as advocates of the United Nations to advance their ultimate ideology, and surprisingly, they have supported it by providing individuals with appointments through the United Nations that are used as tools to facilitate and expedite their processes



Scan the QR code to consult on our website the facsimile of the letter sent by the 'Al-Thani Family Council' to the UN Secretary General, denouncing the corruption of the Qatari Attorney General.

while gaining access to several countries to accomplish their ideology".

Accordingly, the letter states that "the Council of the Al Thani ruling family hereby notifies the Secretary General of the United Nations and all esteemed Member States of the United Nations, that Sheikhha Mozah Bint Nasser Al Missned and Mr. Ali Bin Fetais Al Marri must be investigated to determine how they attained such a position and were appointed as UN advisors and to prevent anyone from abusing or exploiting their positions at the United Nations as these two individuals have done over the years".

ZAAATARI CAMP

A hell in earth for eighty thousand refugees

At a time when we are wondering about the consequences that the pandemic will have on our lives and children's lives. At a time when the challenge of getting our economy back on its feet is obsessing our fellow citizens and our leaders, in the Zaatari camp in the Jordanian desert, 80,000 Syrian refugees are trying to have a semblance of life.

By **Malika Madi**

In 2011, the Arab world dreams of a new world that it will define as Spring as a rebirth, a reinvention, where the people will finally take their destiny into their own hands. Syria has not escaped this desire for emancipation, but it was without counting on Bashar al-Assad's extreme and fierce determination to keep power against all. It was then the exodus for thousands of Syrians fleeing first to neighbouring countries with Jordan as their first destination. In order to keep a certain control over the migratory flow, the latter set up camps and this is how the Zaatari camp was born, which would be the largest concentration of refugees in the world. This camp is a territory of just over 5 km² and half of it is made up of children. An average of 80 children are born there every week in one of the three hospitals in the camp. Most of the children who were born there or who arrived there very young have never left. The image of a camp in the collective imagination is that of a few tents pulled and scattered. Refugees in rags and undernourished, but the largest refugee camp in the Middle East has, in 10 years of existence, adopted the appearance of a city, the 4th largest city in Jordan, and the refugees represent 10% of the population.

UNBELIEVABLY OVERCROWDED

At its highest rate of occupation in 2013, 200,000 souls survived there in unprecedented lack of privacy. Hospitals, schools and sports fields appeared fairly quickly. There is also a shopping street made up of a dozen or so shops which the refugees ironically called "The Champs-Élysées". The UN provides monthly financial aid to 470,000 Syrian refugees, including those living in urban areas and in the two refugee camps, that of Zaatari but also that of Azraq, (built after that of Zaatari), which at the height of the Syrian war had received up to 54,422 people in 2016, according to the database of the High Commissioner for Refugees. The bogging down of a war is also an exile that lasts over time. Zaatari has therefore become a new home even if the majority dream of returning to Syria as soon as the security conditions allow. In this agglomeration of prefabricated buildings that block their horizon, many struggle to find work, surviving on meagre humanitarian aid or working illegally. Less than a fifth have a valid work permit. In order for a camp of this size to be managed, a metronomic organisation must be set up. A subdivision into twelve independent districts has therefore been created, each with its own methods of organisation. The management of the districts is entrusted to international NGOs under the authority of the United Nations.

WOMEN, VICTIMS OF WAR AND TRADITIONS

In conflicts, women are doubly or triply victims of the dramatic situations in which their

families are plunged. In Zaatari, where they could be useful to the community, they are excluded from employment opportunities, facing social norms that require them to stay at home. The lack of schooling or its precarious abandonment leads to another problem: young girls tend to marry at a younger age, while they are still minors. In Jordan, however, marriage is forbidden before adulthood. However, in the camps, young women are getting married earlier and earlier to prevent the family from having one more mouth to feed. Local NGOs, who take the subject very seriously, try to raise awareness among as many families as possible, reminding them that underage marriages are forbidden. Estimates are 170 underage marriages per month, and this is estimated to have doubled since 2012, according to the Jordanian Department of Justice. This does not include illicit unions that remain secret.

Thousands of children born in this camp have never seen the outside world.



CHINE NOUVELLE/SIPA

COVID-19 UNDER CONTROL?

On 4 November 2020, a total of 168 cases had been detected in Zaatari. The number of PCR tests carried out was 9,414 (more than 12% of the population). Nevertheless, it is difficult to know the real health situation in terms of the coronavirus pandemic. Washing their hands regularly, disinfecting them, wearing a mask or observing social distancing remains a challenge for the refugees. People live in precarious conditions. Poverty, depending on the families and their financial capacities, can be relative to extreme. The various NGOs managing the districts have advocated confinement with the difficulties that one can imagine in a place whose primary objective was only to become a temporary or transit place. The contagious virus is known to be present in a certain section of the population. In the camp, half of them are under 24 years old and 20% are under 5 years old, but the transmission remains important for the most fragile and the medical means are too insufficient. The African continent has not experienced many serious forms of the disease. In fact and for 2021, the United Nations Organisation estimated in a report published on 1 December the humanitarian needs of refugees around the world at 35 billion dollars because of the pandemic. According to this report, the number of people in need of humanitarian aid will increase by 40% and those on the front line are the most vulnerable, including victims of hunger, conflicts, displacement due to the consequences of climate change and war refugees. ●

Camp Al Zaatari, near Mafraq, on the Jordanian-Syrian border, March 5, 2017.



Julia Ducournau, second female filmmaker to receive the Palme d'Or, 28 years after Jane Campion.

CANNES FESTIVAL 2021

Feminism in all its forms!

At the end of a selection dominated by colourful female characters, the 74th Cannes International Film Festival awarded its Palme d'Or to *Titane* by Julia Ducournau (37). The young French director thus becomes the second woman to win the supreme award, after Jane Campion in 1993. A look back at an exciting selection that was an ode to feminism in all its forms...

By **Atmane Tazaghart**, in Cannes

Of course, only four women directors (out of twenty-four contenders) were competing for the Palme d'Or. However, female characters strongly dominated the official selection of the 2021 Cannes Film Festival. First of all, there was Julia, the atypical thirty-year-old heroine of *The Worst Person in the World* by Norwegian director Joachim Trier, which earned Renate Reinsve an award for best actress that had the singularity of being unanimous, in a controversial prize list.

Renate Reinsve received a female performance award which was unanimously approved.



SIPA/SIPA

Another Nordic female character, just as endearing as Joachim Trier's Norwegian Julie, dazzled the Croisette, offering the Grand Prix to *Compartment No. 6* by Finnish director Juho Kuosmanen (ex-æquo with A

Hero by Iranian director Asghar Farhadi). It is about Laura, a young Finnish student living in Moscow. Lesbian and refined, she finds herself on a long train journey to Murmansk, deep in the Arctic, in the same compartment as a young Russian worker, rough and heavily intoxicated. Everything seems to oppose the two characters, except that this long journey ends up giving birth to an unexpected Dionysian love story marked by that "dazzling beauty that arises from the secret relationships of things that have never been confronted" (Nietzsche).

In the same vein of female characters confronted with inextricable existential crises, Dylan Penn distinguished herself in the role of Jennifer Vogel, a young journalist caught up in the wounds of a childhood torn between an alcoholic mother and a mythomaniac father, in *Flag Day*, by (and with) her father Sean Penn.

Less combative, but just as temperamental, the dual character of Emilie and her digital alter ego Amber, in Jacques Audiard's *Les Olympiades*, faces a heightened existential crisis and struggles to find her bearings in the twists and turns of a large, hyper-globalised metropolis (Chinatown in the 13th arrondissement of Paris filmed in black and white), devoured by digital culture.

In a surprising play of mirrors, the Iranian

Asghar Farhadi, who settled for the Grand Prix (his film *Ghareman* [A Hero] was shortlisted for the Palme d'Or) and his Israeli 'neighbour' Navad Lapid, who won a more than well-deserved Jury Prize (thanks to the artistic and intellectual daring of his fourth feature *Ahad's Knee*), the main character is male, but he is supported by two strong female characters.

In Farhadi's film, *Rahim*, the Iranian lawbreaker burdened by social prejudice, is supported by two women who make him a hero: the elderly charity president, Madame Radmehr, who refuses to give in to public vindictiveness, and Nazanin (played by Sarina Farhadi, the director's daughter), *Rahim's* young lover, who publicly stands up for him, defying - with impressive boldness - the family authority embodied by her older brother, in a country where women are mostly denied a voice.

As for Y., the tormented Israeli filmmaker, in Lapid's film he is torn between two antagonistic female characters: *Ahad al-Tamimi*, a young Palestinian teenager detained and tortured by the Israeli army (whose broken knee gave the film its title), and *Yahalom*, a senior official in the Ministry of Culture with whom he falls in love, despite her virulent opposition to the right-wing and segregationist policy (against Israeli Arab filmmakers) of the ministry she represents.

A selection inhabited by so many female characters, which made it an ode to feminism in all its forms, was the perfect opportunity to see, once again, the Palme d'Or go to a woman, more than a quarter of a century after Jane Campion's *The Piano*.

Unfortunately, the Palme awarded to Julia Ducournau was not unanimous. Her *Titane*, a film of the hyper-violent genre, stirred some sensitive souls. And disconcerted, by its disjointed narrative, even among those who were enthusiastic about her first film *Grave*, discovered at the Critics' Week in 2016.

However, even if *Titane* is divisive and controversial, it is a bit simplistic to sum it up - as the great Nanni Moretti did, not without a touch of humour, whose excellent *Tre Piani* was rejected by the jury - as the story of a woman in love with cars who sleeps with a Cadillac and gives birth to a baby made of titanium, which she breastfeeds with motor oil! ●

Scan the QR code to discover our documentary "Cannes 2021: Feminism in all its forms" (38mn).



Rached Ghanouchi, The Autumn of the Patriarch

By **Atmane Tazaghart**

At the end of several weeks of popular discontent, caused by a serious deterioration in the economic and health situation, which reached its peak on July 25 - the anniversary of the establishment of the Republic in Tunisia - with a day of protest calling for dismissal of the government and the dissolution of parliament, marked by the sacking of several headquarters of Ennahda, the Islamist party in power, especially in poor towns in the south of the country; President Kaïs Saïed has decided to deliver a radical «halt» to the political and social crisis shaking Tunisia.

Referring to article 80 of the constitution, the Tunisian president, elected in October 2019 with 72% of the vote, announces the dismissal of the government chaired by Hicham Mechichi, the freezing of the work of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People (parliament) and the lifting of the immunity of all deputies.



After more than two hours spent in front of the gates of the parliament, the «Sheikh» finally realised: the expected crowd is not there!



A thunderclap described by the supposedly moderate Islamists of Ennahda - and their «big arms» of the El-Karama alliance - as a «coup» damaging «the revolution and democratic institutions». However, the «stop blow» decided by President Saïed is greeted by scenes of popular jubilation all over the country!

And even though the personalities most critical of «President Saïed's interpretation of article 80 of the constitution» agree that «the return to the regime that prevailed until July 25 is neither possible nor desirable», the leader of Ennahda Rached Ghanouchi decides to attempt a counter-offensive to «save the revolution and democracy», according to the terms of a statement posted on his facebook page.

Less than two hours after President Saïed's announcements, Ghanouchi - who also serves as speaker of parliament - holds a long conclave at his party's national headquarter, at the same time when the police force struggled to contain the crowds which poured on the headquarters of the Islamist party determined to sack or burn it, like many party offices across the country.

During this conclave, gathered around «Sheikh» Ghanouchi, his close advisers as well as the leader of the El-Karama Alliance, the deputy Seifeddine Makhoulf. The same one who had attacked, under the dome of the

Bardo Palace (seat of parliament), the deputy Abir Moussi, president of the Free Destourien Party.

The «Sheikh» decides to launch, that same evening, a coup inspired both by the response of Turkish President Erdogan, during the attempted coup of July 2016, and by the «strategy of rotting» adopted by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood during the sit-in in Rabia Square, which ended in carnage.

Like Erdogan, Ghanouchi decides to resort to live facebook, to harangue his troops, calling on them to join him in front of the gates of the parliament occupied by the armored vehicles of the army. A maneuver with a double objective: to gather a crowd large enough to create a balance of power that would oblige the military to



FRANÇOIS MORI/AP/SIPA

Rached Ghanouchi, at the headquarters of Ennahda party, October 19, 2011.

give it access to parliament. Then, the scenario - as it was revealed, in real time, by the zealous deputy of El-Karama, Seifeddine Makhoulf, at the microphone of the Qatari channel al-Jazeera - consisted in summoning the office of the Assembly, chaired by Ghanouchi, in order to launch a parliamentary motion aimed at «dismissing President Saïed for violating constitutional legitimacy». And as in Rabia Square in Egypt, the supporters of Ennahda had to mass in the courtyard of the parliament, to serve as popular backing for the Islamist counter-offensive and as cannon fodder, if the army attempts a coup against the deputies.

However, after nearly two hours spent in front of the gates of the parliament, access to which he was prohibited by the military, the «Sheikh» - surrounded by about twenty people from his close guard - ended up going to the obvious: the expected crowd is not there!

The multiplication of calls, via an official Party statement and a long Facebook live on the «Sheikh» page, relayed by the Qatari channels al-Jazeera and al-Araby, will not change anything. Worse still, around 4 am, the opposite effect occurs: dozens of opponents of the Islamist party flock to the Bardo, to do battle with the «Sheikh» and his companions. The police intervene, but the «Sheikh» realises that his institutional poker game has failed.

Before leaving the scene, a sentence from the crowd of his opponents rang in his ears, like a blow of cleaver: *Ya Ghanouchi Babourek Zaffar!* A formula, in the Tunisian dialect, that could be translated as: Game Over! ●

5 DATES

APRIL
1972

He is elected Emir of the Tunisian Jamâa Islamiya, which will be renamed al-Itijah al-Islami, in April 1981, before giving birth to the Ennahda party, which he has chaired since November 1991.

NOV. 7,
1987

He supports General Ben Ali's coup which grants him amnesty, while serving a life sentence for acts of terrorism.

APRIL 11,
1989

Wanted for terrorism, following the Bab Souika attack, he fled clandestinely to Algeria, then moved to London where he remained in exile for 21 years.

JAN. 30,
2011

Back in Tunisia, in the aftermath of the Jasmine Revolution, he publicly declares that he will not seek any political office.

NOV. 13,
2019

He is elected president of the Assembly of People's Representatives, the Tunisian parliament.

SCREEN
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