

# SCREEN WATCH



GEOSTRATEGIC FORSIGHT  
SECURITY MONITORING  
COUNTER-TERRORISM  
RESISTANCE TO EXTREMISM

#05 - DECEMBER 2019 / JANUARY 2020

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## HIDDEN FUNDING: Swiss foundations escape transparency

### EXCLUSIVE

While Switzerland adopted a law on the automatic international exchange of information in tax matters in 2017, foundations continue to derogate from the rule. The Confederation has more than 13,000 of them, each more opaque than the next.

**B**e careful, Switzerland is no longer a tax haven in the eyes of the European Union since October 2019. Since January 1, 2017, Berne has applied the international standard governing the automatic exchange of information relating to financial accounts in tax matters (AEOI). Clearly, it is (theoretically) no longer possible to defraud in the land of cows, lakes and chocolate. Doha will therefore no longer be able to use the financial centres of Geneva, Lugano or Zurich to water Europe, as Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot say in «Qatar Papers» whose English version, published by Global Watch Analysis, is included as a free supplement to this issue of Screen watch.

However, to wash it whiter than white, Switzerland still has to admit its defeat at the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes, an OECD initiative. This Forum must ensure that there are no loopholes that can be used to circumvent the standard of automatic information exchange. The Federal Council (Swiss government) has therefore presented a preliminary project extending the automatic exchange of information to foundations that flourish in the Confederation.

But, bang! On the sly, on 20 November 2019, the Federal Council decided not to lift this exception. In a statement, he said it was “too early to implement the World Forum’s recommendations in this area”. The subject “must be the subject of further international debate”.

In fact, fraudsters no longer open accounts in Switzerland, it’s too risky, and therefore too old-fashioned. They are setting up foundations (301 new ones in 2018, 54 of them in Geneva). The Confederation has more than 13,000 of them. It’s simple, to hide your money, just ask a lawyer to imagine a foundation for Palestinian seal pups, battered women or orphans. Your name does not appear and you do not pay taxes.

According to the Centre for Philanthropic Studies at the University of Basel, the assets of these foundations exceed 70 billion Swiss francs (63 billion euros). But there is still no directory of foundations, no public data. The majority of them do not even appear on the Web. They are under no obligation to disclose information and therefore to respond to the press. In short, a wonderful black hole for organized crime and terrorism.

A few years ago, the think tank Avenir Suisse asked that these foundations should have at least “the obligation to devote at least 5% of their capital annually to the achievement of their statutory purpose”. As we have understood, the owners of foundations (and in particular many Swiss bankers) are not really great philanthropists. Their primary purpose is not to help the widow and orphan, but to hide undeclared money.

Some of these foundations will still be used for years as vehicles to supply the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe. But also the actions of the Diyanet, the presidency of religious affairs in Turkey, which is increasingly active on the old continent. ●

As a free supplement to this issue of Screen Watch, the English edition of the book:

## QATAR PAPERS

How Doha finances the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe

By **CHRISTIAN CHESNOT** and **GEORGES MALBRUNOT**

PUBLISHED BY GLOBAL WATCH ANALYSIS EDITIONS



# Why the elimination of General Soleimani is (in fact) a relief to the Iranian regime

**D**espite the fiery war of words and threatening gesticulations promising to avenge his death, the elimination of General Qassim Soleimani, killed by an American drone on January 3, is a relief for the Iranian regime! And not only for the reformist current led by President Hassan Rouhani and his Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif.

Described sometimes as the number 2 of the Regime, general Soleimani was officially only the commander of a subdivision of the Pasdaran (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps), the Quds Force transformed, especially since the coming to power of the ultra-conservative President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005 - 2013), into a real "foreign legion" working to strengthen Iran's military influence in the Middle East.

The 'Arab Spring' revolutions and the fratricidal wars which followed were an opportunity for the Quds Force to transform this Iranian influence in the Middle East into a direct military presence, whereas until then it had operated by proxy via some 60 pro-Iranian militias essentially implanted in Lebanon and Iraq.

General Soleimani quickly established himself as the undisputed warlord in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. His meteoric rise has considerably strengthened the Pasdaran's hold on the political and economic decision-making centres in Iran. Under Ahmadinejad, the Pasdaran was already described as a "State within the State". Thanks, in particular, to its economic empire, articulated around Khatam-al Anbiya, a Trust which counts more than 2000 companies in the sectors of banking, oil, construction, tourism and telephony.

Under the aegis of general Soleimani, the income generated by this empire quadrupled. In 2010, it generated 12 billion dollars a year. Today, it exceeds 50 billion. And this

is thanks to the informal economy fuelled by trafficking of all kinds from Iran's neighbours. Traffic that passes through some sixty clandestine ports and a special airport managed by the Pasdaran.

This "vampirization of the Iranian economy" by the Pasdaran exacerbated the animosities against general Soleimani at the very heart of the mullahs' regime. However, the reasons for the unspoken but very real relief following his elimination are not limited to economic factors. Because, strengthened by the impressive military influence that he had acquired and the huge war treasure that he had accumulated, the powerful general believed that he was able to free himself from the authority of the government. And, as a final sacrilege, he allowed himself to defy the authority of the Supreme Guide, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, by ordering the attack on the Saudi oil sites of Abqaiq and Khurais in September 2019, without even informing the Guide's Office in advance.

In doing so, general Soleimani crossed the final red line, which united against him the numerous and divergent clans of the Iranian mullahcracy and gave the Americans the implicit green light to eliminate him, without any real fear of reprisals on the part of Tehran! ●



CONFIDENTIAL

## Let down by Qatar, the 'Swiss Bin Laden' is reduced to making the quest at Zurich Central Station!

● In our previous edition (Screen Watch, No. 4, October-November 2019) we revealed that after Nadia Karmous, founder of the Museum of civilisations of Islam in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Qatar has decided to leave to his (sad) fate Nicolas Blanco, President of the Islamic Central Council of Switzerland (ICCS).

Because of a financial shortfall from Doha, the "Swiss Bin Laden", as he was nicknamed by the local press, is no longer able to organise events in the Swiss Confederation. He has even been forced to organize a collection at Zurich Central Station in December 2019!

The ICCS is struggling to pay the rent for its premises in Bümpliz, a district of Bern, which is said to amount to 4,000 Swiss francs. In addition, "Muslim fitness center" owned by the Zurich Swiss Legacy Investments AG, which is linked to the ICCS, has gone bankrupt.

And as a misfortune never comes alone, Turkey has also made it clear to Nicolas Blanco that he is no longer welcome in Istanbul. ●

## MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD: Migration Season to Malaysia

● The worldwide office of the Muslim Brotherhood has recently initiated discreet but intense contacts with a view to transferring to Malaysia some of the most eminent leaders of the Brotherhood, currently based in Qatar and Turkey.

The aim is to find a new haven and protection land for the most sought-after Muslim Brotherhood leaders, whose security could be compromised in the perspective of Qatar's reconciliation with its Gulf neighbours or because of Western pressure on Turkey.

## SAUDI ARABIA: Local complicity in the attack on Aramco

● According to a confidential note issued by a Western intelligence service, the Iranian Pasdaran benefited, during the attack on the oil sites of the Saudi company Aramco (Abqaiq & Khurais), from local complicity on the ground, which helped to guide the ballistic missiles and drones used in the final stages of their trajectories to reach their targets.

## Rwanda actively coveted by Qatar

● Qatar actively covets Rwanda, which is experiencing a great economic boom and whose president, Paul Kagame, is very influential in Africa, after having held the presidency of the African Union last year.

Following the visit of the Emir of Qatar to Kigali last December, a number of economic agreements were concluded between the two countries, including an important partnership between Qatar Airways and the company RwandAir and a Qatari participation of 60% in the capital of the future Bugesera airport (located 40 km from Kigali), estimated at more than one billion euros.

## IRANIAN NUCLEAR: When Israel supplies Iran with sensitive equipment!

● A confidential Western memo recounts an incredible story that saw Israel, Iran's sworn enemy, provide Tehran with sensitive equipment for its milita-

ry nuclear programme! The story goes back a little more than a year, when a shipment from Turkey bound for Iran was grasped in Dubai. During the inspec-

## AFRICA: Oil partnership between Total and Qatar

● Qatar recently submitted a major proposal to the French oil group Total for a strategic partnership in the field of oil well exploration in Africa.

## NATO modernizes its AWACS fleet

● The Atlantic Alliance will release a huge budget, estimated at over \$1 billion, to modernize its fleet of radar reconnaissance aircraft, which includes 14 AWACS aircrafts.

## GABON: Recovered, Ali Bongo will visit Saudi Arabia

● The Gabonese president, who has resumed all his presidential activities, plans to visit Saudi Arabia soon to thank the crown prince, Mohamed Bin Salman, for the quality of care he received following the stroke he suffered in Riyadh during his participation in the 'Future Investment Initiative conference' in October 2018.

## ALGERIA: Eagerly awaited visit of President Putin

● Russian President Vladimir Putin will make a long-awaited state visit to Algiers before the end of March. To rekindle relations with Algeria, Russia's long-standing ally, Putin will be accompanied on this visit by a large military and economic delegation.

tion of the cargo, inspectors found electronic capacitors of the type CSP 18-300, which were prohibited for export to Iran because of their possible nuclear use. The incident was reported to the United Nations, which initiated an investigation. When questioned, the Israeli company Celem Power Capacitors, which manufac-

tures this type of capacitor and is based in Jerusalem, said that it had sold the capacitors to a Turkish company, after obtaining the necessary permits from the Israeli Ministry of Defence. The Israeli company claimed that the resale of this sensitive equipment to Iran was done without its knowledge!

France is concerned about the repercussions of Brexit on counter-terrorism cooperation in Europe

President Emmanuel Macron has asked all French intelligence services to study the legal feasibility of a privileged partnership between the United Kingdom and the European Union in the security field. The aim is to maintain effective counter-terrorism cooperation after the Brexit.

### Russia arms Mali's air force

Russia recently delivered MIL MI-35 M helicopters to the Malian air force. These attack aircrafts are stationed at Air Base 101 in Senou-Bamako. In addition, Moscow is considering sending 50 military advisers to Mali, as well as armoured reconnaissance and attack vehicles.

## COUNTER-TERRORISM

### ISIS still has a war chest of 30-45 million dollars

According to a recent UN report, ISIS still has an estimated \$30-45 million war chest. The report states that this is mainly cash, but notes that large part of this war chest has been recently converted into investments, via shell companies and nominees, in Iraq, Syria and especially Turkey. ●

### Washington wants new counterterrorism agreements with Morocco.

During a recent visit to Rabat, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, former director of the CIA, visited the headquarters of the General Directorate for Territorial Surveillance (DGST), where he had a long meeting with Abdelatif Hammoudi, the head of the DGST.

According to our sources, the Secretary of State expressed, during this meeting, the willingness of the U.S. Administration to develop new counterterrorism cooperation agreements with Morocco.

### African jihadists finance themselves through medicine trafficking

According to a UN investigation, jihadist groups in Africa have set up a new means of financing their terrorist activities through the trafficking of fake medicines. Mali is designated as the main hub of this juicy traffic.

# Night in Paris, Lights on the Middle-East

By **Martine Gozlan\***

The French should be proud. Their values – secularism, citizenship, equality – are today being waved in bruised and divided countries, where we didn't expect it. In Lebanon, huge crowds, young, colorful, united beyond their differences, demand that an end is being put to the old confessional system. Born after the civil war, hostile to the manipulation of their small country by rival and predatory powers, Saudi Arabia and Iran, these demonstrators reinvent, in Levant, the beautiful "fatherland" word. Hezbollah, contested for the first time in its own strongholds, vainly sends its soldiers to attempt to crush the movement.

In Iraq, other crowds, other youngsters, strangely similar, occupy Baghdad's largest square: they are fed up with this cluster of factional groups set up against each other, they want a united country, delivered from the venomous capture by its neighbour, Iran. Rebels are massacred from one end of the country to the other, from Rachid Street in Baghdad in flames to the suburbs and canals of Basra, this Venice of the Middle-East, struck by poverty and corruption at the very heart of this oil-producing region.

At the other end of the Arab world, for the last 6 months, the "Hirak", this spectacular pacifist Algerian upheaval movement, defies a regime which, from now on, quells it mercilessly. Here again, the old tribal and ethnical divisions have vanished: the regime tries to reignite them by jailing all those who carry the Kabyle flag. Yet, this flag is there to assert the fusion between individuals and the collective. It waves to complete the harmony of the Algerian mosaic which post-colonial masters, in a foolish and suicidal movement, strive to break down.

Now, what's happening in France in the meantime? Confessional claims are pounding the pavement. A tricolor Islamic veil unfurls as a division standard. Obscurantism parades in the streets of Paris at the screams of "Allah Akbar", a few hundred yards away from the Bataclan and of Charlie Hebdo's headquarters, where Islamism perpetrated its killings in January and November 2015. Political men and women, filled with cynicism, lost intellectuals far from the paths of thought, support a movement conducted by the Muslim Brotherhood. The extreme-right gains in audience, communitarianism in visibility. Against a social crisis backdrop, the country is fracturing a little more. The identity fire is rekindled. In the medium term, there is a risk of civil war.

The contrast is quite stunning between France and huge parts of the Arab world, without forgetting the Persian world which defies the ayatollahs. What French apprentice wizards dare to claim, children from the Middle-East refuse with all their hearts and souls, at the cost of their lives. Reject of Confessionalism, call for a citizenship freed from religious bewitchment: What was precisely called upon, in 2004, the Lebanese historian and journalist Samir Kassir.

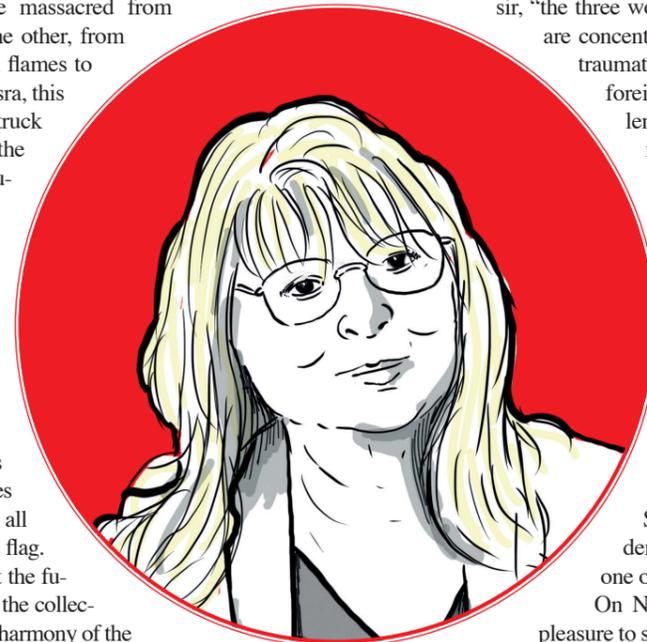
In his brilliant book "Considérations on the Arabe Woe", he identified the wounds which were inflicted on this immensely sick body: national and religious mythologies, cultural retardation, obsession with other's gaze. Iraq was then convulsing in cumulated pains which result from an American intervention and Saddam Hussain's poisoned heritage. "The devastation feeling which irradiates the Iraqi blaze would in itself be enough to describe the scale of the Arab stalemate", wrote Samir Kassir, "the three wounds which obstruct the future are concentrated here: dictatorship, always traumatic even after its disappearance, foreign occupation and blinded violence justified by religious Messianism..."

These lines touched me all the more because I had done three reports in Iraq and I was preparing an exposition of contemporary Iraqi artists at the Montparnasse Museum on the theme "Baghdad-Paris". These works were influenced by French-Oriental currents, irrigated by waters of the Tigris, the Euphrates and the Seine. Young Iraqis are today demonstrating under the fresco of one of these artists, Jawad Salim.

On November 15th 2004, I had the pleasure to share a dinner with Samir Kassir, during one of his stays in France. Peace and reason of St. Germain-des-Prés, which I didn't deem fragile at the time, were smiling at us. While drinking a good glass of wine, he was speaking about his hope of universality and, knowing my empathy for Iraq, he dedicated me his book with these words: "As gardens of Eden, those of Baghdad need to blossom again". Samir Kassir was assassinated on June 2nd 2005 in Beyrouth. Thanks to men like him, young Lebanese today attempt to get rid of this envelope of prejudice and corruption whereas young Iraqis risk their lives to get out of the night.

Meanwhile, some people in Paris wish to shut the lights off! ●

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



# Iran- USA: towards the clash?

By **Christian Malard\***

**D**onald Trump's decision to eliminate General Qassim Soleimani, N°2 of the Iranian Regime, undeniably transforms a conflict that was slowly simmering into a sudden powder keg. It is undoubtedly the most dangerous and risky decision taken by an American President since the 2nd Gulf War in March 2003.

Donald Trump had to re-establish a policy of deterrence and to demonstrate to the highest Iranian authorities that their attacks against targets in friendly countries (Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates) would not go unpunished. For a President who wanted to withdraw his troops from the Middle East cauldron, it will now be difficult to escape from it, until the end of his first term in January 2021 or 2025, if re-elected.

Donald Trump engaged his country in a conflict which harbors many unknowns. It may not be a conventional war, as Iranians prefer to excel in an asymmetric conflict. The Ayatollahs' regime will not go for a frontal clash with the United States but will do everything possible to provoke a significant number of American casualties in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq where, following a vote in parliament, the 5,200 soldiers stationed in the country will, in principle, have to reposition themselves. But there is no shortage of American targets around the world.

Nevertheless, for an American President who oscillates between his isolationist impulses and his desire to project an image of power to his enemies throughout the world, the revolt of a majority of Iraqis against Iraqi regime, subservient to Iran, may



reinforce the desire to maintain an American military presence in the region, especially at a time of resurgence of ISIS.

Whether we agree or not, the elimination of Soleimani is an act of self-defence. Soleimani was responsible for the deaths of several hundred victims, whether American or other nationalities, in Iraq or elsewhere in the region, and was planning further attacks.

At the same time, Donald Trump finds himself confronted with the growing threat from Iran, which has just signed the death certificate of the July 2015 nuclear agreement. Soleimani's death will indeed not prevent the Iranians from accelerating their quest for nuclear power, a year from now, according to experts.

This could prompt the United States and Israel to carry out cyber attacks on Iranian nuclear sites. So far, sanctions have been essentially economic and have crippled the country's economy. The regime is on the brink of collapse in the face of a majority of Iranians who want its downfall, but it has not yet capitulated.

If Donald Trump realizes that this regime only understands the balance of power, by adding military pressure to economic sanctions, then 2020 will perhaps see the fall of Iran's « Ayatollaharchy » that has been in power for 40 years, for too long. ●

*\* International policy expert and diplomatic consultant.*

# Antiterrorism: facing "the enemy from within" (3/3)

By **Roland Jacquard\***

**I**t is obvious that the modus operandi adopted by the neo-jihadism of ISIS poses new challenges to the intelligence services and confronts them with new problems. But, more than ever, as this neo-jihadism is settling into the daily life of Western societies, Intelligence must remain the cornerstone of the fight against terrorism.

The proof is that, three years after the tragic attacks of November 13, 2015, despite the complexity of the problems generated by the endogenous nature of the threat they face, the French intelligence services have taken up the challenge of in-depth reform to give themselves the human, organisational and technological means to deal with the threat.

No one today denies that if 42 major terrorist actions have been thwarted in France since the beginning of 2016, it is thanks to this effort that a global overhaul of the approach and work of the intelligence services in the area of counter-terrorism has been possible.

To do so, it was necessary to provide the human resources. First of all, with a considerable increase in the number of staff in the services involved. Thus, the staff of the Directorate General for Internal

Security (DGSI), which is the lead agency of the new French anti-terrorist system, has increased by 18.25 % in four years, to reach 4038 agents. Those of the Central Service of Territorial Intelligence (SCRT) have been increased by 24.34 %.

Thus, the SCRT, created in 2014 to fill the gap left by the suppression of the General Intelligence (RG), now has 2600 agents. Dedicated to the evaluation and analysis of information relating to public security, it has once again made it possible to have, as in the days of the RG, a "network" covering the entire national territory, with the exception of the Paris region, which comes under the

authority of the Paris police prefecture. This is thanks to its 97 departmental services which oversee 158 branches throughout the country (87 territorial branches, 63 local branches and 8 airports).

As a result, the SCRT has become one of the pivots of the new anti-terrorist system, particularly in the area of surveillance and monitoring of individuals with terrorist records. Indeed, while the processing of the "high spectrum" of this file, which includes the 4,000 most dangerous

files, is the responsibility of the DGSI, the SCRT is responsible for processing 5,500 files on a total of 19,744 persons registered in this file, which now bears the name "Watch List for the Prevention of Terrorist Radicalisation" (FSPRT).

The creation of the FSPRT, and its supervision by the Coordination unit of the fight against terrorism (UCLAT), was a decisive turning point in the strategy to reform anti-terrorist Intelligence. Previously, individuals suspected of terrorist affiliation were included in the "S file" (the Public Safety Threat Index), which was only a sub-chapter of a global index called the "File of Wanted People" (FPR). The latter comprised five other sub-chapters: the TE file (persons of foreign nationality prohibited from entering French territory), the M file (runaway minors), the V file (prison escapees), the T file (persons in debt to the public treasury), the PJ file (persons wanted by the judicial police).

Of the 19,744 persons registered in the FSPRT file, between 10,900 and 11,000 so-called "active" records (the rest of the records are either on standby or being evaluated) are permanently assigned to one of the Intelligence services. They are therefore subject to continuous monitoring. This is a mammoth effort, with no comparison whatsoever with the situation that prevailed three years earlier.

Another major development in the overhaul of the French intelligence community is the creation in February 2017 of the Central Penitentiary Information Office (BCRP). The strengthening of this service dedicated to the fight against radicalisation in prisons (notably through a new staffing of 108 posts) is one of the 32 key

measures of the "Action Plan against Terrorism" (PACT), unveiled by the French government on 13 July 2018.

For a long time, emphasis was placed on the danger that the return of the French fighters who had joined ISIS could pose. However, this phenomenon of "returnees" turned out to be very marginal: out of 718 Frenchmen present in the Iraqi-Syrian jihadist zones, only 253 have returned since the fall of the Caliphate of ISIS. And among these, 207 have returned via the 'Cazeneuve Protocol', signed with the Turkish authorities in September 2014. The majority of them are, therefore, voluntary returns of people taking the initiative to surrender to French justice.

For this reason, the PACT considers that the endogenous threat (from unintended radicalized individuals from abroad) will remain predominant. And at the heart of this endogenous threat is the time bomb of "leavers", i.e. radicalised prisoners released from prison.

In French prisons, there are 513 detainees convicted of jihadist terrorism. This represents only a tiny minority among the 70,000 or so prisoners in France. However, in contact with these 512 jihadist prisoners, no less than 1145 common law prisoners have become radicalized in prison.

Moreover, the overwhelming majority of these jihadist detainees, sentenced before 2016, were sentenced for short terms. France only "criminalized" acts of radicalization after the attacks of November 2015. Thus, 48 of them are released before the end of 2019 and 143 others will successively leave prison by 2022. And this will be accompanied by 402 common law prisoners radicalized in prison released before the end of 2019.

To counter the major risk posed by these "leavers", a permanent unit for monitoring radicalised prisoners after their release has just been set up within UCLAT. It will serve as an interface between the Intelligence services that manage the FSPRT files (DGSI, SCRT, Paris Police Headquarters) and the brand new Central Penitentiary Information Office. ●

*\* Writer and consultant, President of Roland Jacquard Global Security Consulting (RJGSC).*

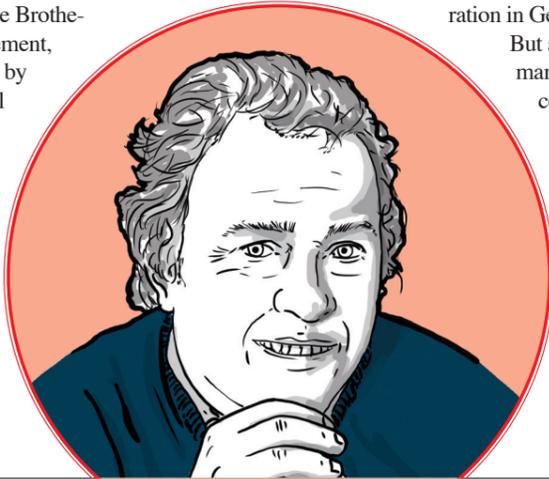


# The Muslim Brothers: the forgotten archives of Gamal al-Banna

By **Ian Hamel\***

About fifteen years ago, I had the privilege of entering Gamal al-Banna's lair, the youngest brother of Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood. In a small apartment in a working-class district of Cairo, he had collected more than 30,000 books, many of which cannot be found today, hundreds of unpublished documents, such as handwritten notes on the secret links between the Brotherhood and the Free Officers Movement, the military organization founded by Gamal Abdel Nasser. During Gamal al-Banna's lifetime, these treasures did not interest many people. What have they become since his death in January 2013?

Gamal al-Banna was probably not completely telling the truth. He claimed he had never belonged to the Brotherhood. However, he was the editor of their newspaper *Al Ikhwan Al Muslimin* in the 1940s. He had also been the editorial secretary



of *Al-Shihâb*, another organ of the movement. Arrested in December 1948, along with many Muslim Brotherhood leaders, Gamal al-Banna was only released in 1950, one year after the murder of his eldest son. But very quickly, indeed, he had moved away from this Islamic organization to devote himself to the workers' cause. He had worked in a textile factory, then became head of the General Union of Textile Industry Workers, and finally founded the International Islamic Labour Confederation in Geneva in 1981.

But above all, Gamal al-Banna has taken many iconoclastic positions, which will contribute to his marginalization in his country. Because if he opposes the Islamists, he is no more soft with the Egyptian regime (at the time of our meeting, Hosni Mubarak was in power). In particular, he publishes "Freedom of belief in Islam", "Islam and rationalism", and above all "The failure of the Islamic State in modern times", which was prohibited. "I consider that the Islam of the Sheikhs of Al-Azhar is

not the Islam of the Koran. They don't have a very broad general culture, they get cluttered with details," the old man with grey hair had told us. In 1994, in a booklet entitled "Kalla thumma Kalla" (No, still no!), he was outraged that a religious authority, in this case Sheikh Mohammed al-Ghazali, had been able to justify the murder of the writer Faraj Fouda, accused of atheism. Faraj Fouda, a human rights activist and symbol of the Egyptian secular intelligentsia, was murdered in Cairo in June 1992 by militants of the Gama'a Islamiyya.

"The Koran is a guide for believers, not an exact science. As for the hadiths, they were made over the centuries to serve religious or political interests. It makes no sense to refer to it to answer today's questions," did not hesitate to declare the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood's own brother. This had led him to be soberly presented by the Egyptian official press as a "modernist Islamic thinker, often challenged by traditional circles".

The foundation for "Islamic culture and information", which he had created with his sister Fawiya, was located on the first floor of a crumbling building on El Geish Street in the Egyptian capital. The small apartment was overrun, from floor to ceiling, by thousands of books, old magazines and unpublished documents on the Brotherhood. In the book "The Project", just published by Alexandre Del Valle and Emmanuel Razavi (*L'Artilleur*, Paris, November 2019), the authors describe their meeting with Gamal

al-Banna in July 2007, which they present as the "legatee of original documents inherent to the Brotherhood". When asked about his nephew, Tariq Ramadan, Gamal al-Banna told them: "He looks like a Muslim Brother and has the speech of the Brothers on the surface. But he's not one of them. He of course knows part of his grandfather's work, but he has not read it entirely, because I am one of the few to have what is left of his texts".

Gamal al-Banna, who was born in 1920, died in January 2013, at the age of 92, in a state of general indifference. Since his death, Hassan al-Banna's unpublished texts have apparently not reappeared. What happened to his younger brother's invaluable collection, the last of a family of five boys and two girls? Was it dispersed or even permanently lost?

While Emmanuel Macron announced in November 2019 "new concrete actions" aimed at "political Islamism" of those who have "a project of separation from the Republic", and Christophe Castaner, the Minister of the Interior, asked to make the "fight" against "Islamism" and "communitarianism" a strong "new axis" of State action, it is regrettable that nothing has been seriously undertaken to date to collect as much information as possible on the most dangerous and structured of Islamist organizations, the Muslim Brotherhood. ●

\* *Journalist and writer, specialist in the Muslim Brotherhood.*

## The challenges of water management in the Middle East: Geopolitical stability and sustainability (3/3)

By **Fabienne Durand\***

The last change concerning water management in the Middle East has to do with global warming. It has resulted, for example, in a loss of water reserves in Mesopotamia. The brutal drought between 2006 and 2011 contributed to destabilizing the Syrian regime of Bashar El Assad, leader of the Ba'ath party, an agrarian party that took power in the 1960s, by placing self-sufficiency and water management at the heart of its public policies. He found himself overwhelmed by the massive rural exodus of one million eco-refugees, cornered by the rupture between reality and discourse, beyond the question of questioning the excess of the regime.

Blue gold is thus at the heart of tensions and conflicts in the Middle East. All Arab countries in the region are facing water shortages, which are worsening due to population growth, the expansion of the urban fabric, the implementation of ambitious agricultural projects requiring significant irrigation and the degradation of existing resources, in the light of groundwater pollution and salinization.

The control of water resources leads to rivalries and asymmetric conflicts between the states of the region, between Iraq, Syria and Turkey in the hydro-conflict valley of the Tigris and Euphrates, even more so since the inauguration of the Atatürk Dam in 1992, and the vast GAP project involving 22 dams and 17 hydroelectric power stations, and a double irrigation tunnel. Or even between Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority over the Jordan River, between Israel and the PNA over coastal aquifers and mountain ranges in the West Bank, and between Iran and Iraq over the rivers of Karun-Shatt-Al-Arab.

Solving the water crisis in the Middle East is fundamental, because blue gold is a factor of tension and geopolitical destabilization, beyond environmental considerations. According to the World Bank, a regional approach is essential to achieve water peace, through a programme of cooperation between states. It is also a question of communitarizing techniques, sharing knowledge and know-how in the field of desalination. The world's largest desalination plants are located in Jebel Ali in the United Arab Emirates, specializing in spray technology, and Ashkelon in Israel, using

reverse osmosis membrane technology, where pure water is extracted by a filtration process through a membrane, whose pores, permeable to water molecules, block ions and dissolved non-ionized molecules; but this process remains very energy-intensive and is therefore not yet profitable in agriculture.

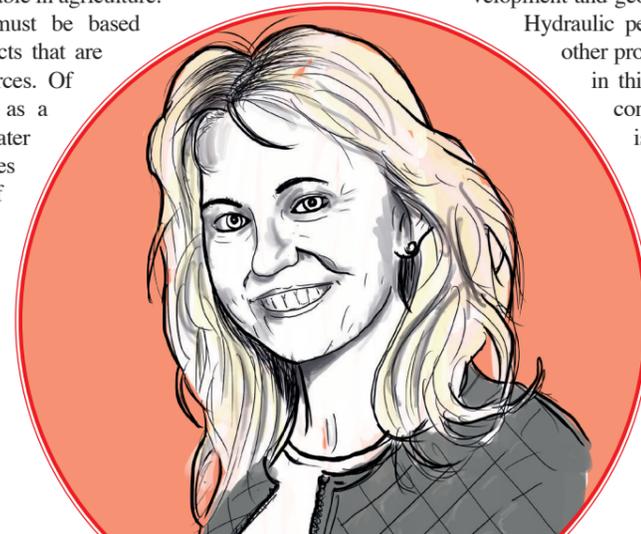
Economic development must be based on public policies and projects that are consistent with water resources. Of the countries in the region as a whole, 7 consume more water than their renewable resources allow, particularly in the Gulf countries. Saudi Arabia, for example, grows wheat in the middle of the desert by extracting water from fossil groundwater.

Raising awareness of responsibility among States,

but also among populations, is a major challenge, because "Each by himself is responsible for all", to quote Saint Exupéry, who particularly loved the desert.

Thus, water management is a key factor for sustainable development and geopolitical stability in the region. Hydraulic peace cannot be separated from other projects in favour of general peace in this area which is tending to become Balkanized. Can the water issue and the awareness of environmental issues reinforce the spirit of peace in the Middle East? ●

\* *Political scientist consultant in communication on sustainable development and global warming.*



# Where does the Jihadist violence come from?

By **Hamid Zanaz\***

According to Islamic ideology, no way of life is valid or deserves to be experienced, other than the one defined by the Koran. And so, even if all problems were solved, Islamic fundamentalism would remain. The long-awaited, long-desired Islam of Light, this dreamed Islam, is an "impossible". It only diverts young people away from universal values, attracting them more to Islam, then to fundamentalism, and eventually to terrorism. There's no hope of change other than destroying this whole system. But Muslims in Europe are taking the opposite approach by exploiting the multicultural environment in order to demand that host countries adapt to their religious requirements.

Naipaul, Nobel Prize for literature in 2001, did not understand the "multicultural racketeering where immigrant's descendant claims rights and protection without showing a minimum of empathy for his adopted country". But what kind of empathy can we expect when the intolerable is tolerated? In his book in Arabic, entitled "On Earth's Division According to Islamic Fiqh", a member of the Dublin-based European Council on Fatwa and Research, Abdallah B., wrote: "Make jihad against unbelievers via your word, your persons, your goods, and your hands". Isn't this a good integration advice for young people of Muslim origin in Europe?

All sincere Muslims, who do not practice concealment or Ta-

qiya, advocate for application, even imposition, of Sharia law by force. They consider non-Muslims as lost people who must be brought back to the true religion: Islam!

Islam therefore carries within it the rejection of secularism. Indeed, the expression "political Islam" is a perfect pleonasm because in Islam, there is no separation between orthodoxy (what we must believe) and orthopraxis (what we must do). Law and faith are the two sides of a same coin.

A good Muslim feels guilty for failing to establish the Islamic state, either by persuasion or by force. This ideal, this ultimate goal is based on his pride as a Muslim. He is proud of who he is, not of what he does. Instead of being what he's going to become, he wants to be what he was. This blockage results in a dichotomous attitude and, if he accepts technical modernity, he rejects its metaphysics. He thus lives a development without progress because he remains stuck to the sacred: the forbidden, the halal, paradise, hell, the torments of the grave... In his case, purity and fear prevail over freedom process.

This intrinsic guilt eats away any Muslim who suffers from a blatant "lack of being" in a not yet completely Islamicised world, which makes him an unhappy conscience! Living in an open culture framework and in a secularized society, while at the same time immersing himself in an archaic and closed Islamic culture, he suffers from tragic instability.

Religious practice has nothing to do with whatever spiritua-

lity, it is the result of community pressure, a diversionary let off. Isolationist Islamic communitarianism is a "ready-not-to-think" hypermarket.

That is why it is very difficult to meet a well-rounded Muslim believer today because he is crushed under the weight of a Leviathan: the Fiqh, the Muslim canon law, being his only GPS in life. A Muslim is a fighter who assails evil, meaning anything that is contrary to the spirit of his religion. It is at constant war with the non-Islamic world. His ultimate goal in life: to see Islam triumph, to impose its law everywhere, to govern all humanity!

Activist fundamentalism reaps the fruits of this ordinary Islamic socialization that provides it with beings prepared to blindly obey the precepts of Islam. It is said, when the student is ready, the teacher arrives and only has to show the way to paradise. Exploiting whatever Islamic families, mosques, Islamic colleges and grammar schools, Koranic satellite TVs and (so called) Islamic cultural centres have sown in the minds of young Muslims living in the Western world.

The rapid evolution of society further complicates the life of a Muslim obsessed with the "lawfulness" of everything.

To be in line with his time without throwing away his cultural identity, his reflection is limited to finding answers to questions posed by novelty: does Islam prohibit this, tolerate that, disapprove or recommend this or that thing, this or that innovation, this or that fashion?... A colonized life, burdened by the myth of its supposed glorious past.

This is why followers of Political Islam define themselves as "Muslims in Europe" rather than "European Muslims". Doesn't the "Islamic-World-being" carry war and "clash of civilizations", as clouds carry rain? The pressure is beginning to bear fruit: did the Archbishop of Canterbury, spiritual head of the Church of England, not consider the implementation of Sharia law in Great Britain inevitable?

The task of Muslim intellectuals is immense. It is a question of undermining a false idea deeply rooted in the unconscious of a majority of Muslims. The idea that their unease would be due to abandonment of their founding norms and that a complete return to these forgotten Islamic norms alone would guarantee them a better future and an assured glory... Will Muslims one day detach themselves from the Marja'iyya Islamiya, the Islamic reference, or will they wade forever in a firstly isolationist, then warlike, "self-referencing"? Should the intellectual help the masses out of voluntary servitude or comfort them in their dangerous convictions? Should he approach Islam from within, according to a religious approach in conformity with what it says about itself, or should it approach it from outside through social sciences, which, alone, enable to objectively see how the Koran was constituted, what are its sources, its influences, its rewritings...? ●

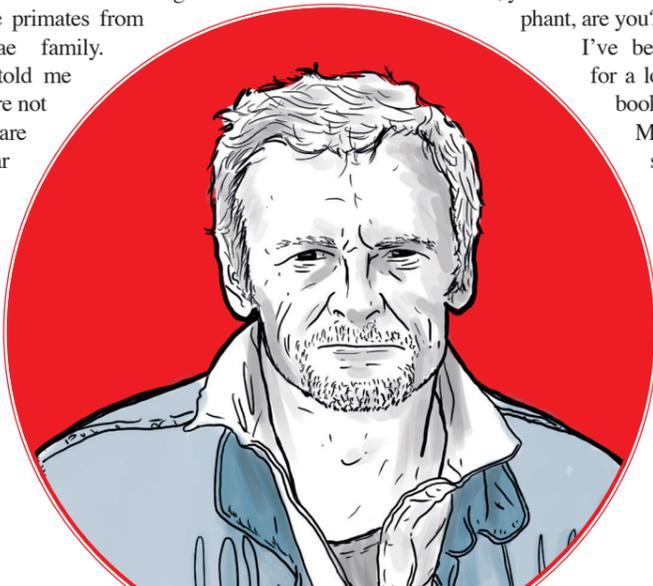


\* Writer and essayist, latest book published "L'Europe face à l'invasion islamique" (Editions de Paris, 2019).

# Orangutans, Bears and Jews

By **Jean-Marie Montali\***

Some time ago, I stopped buying Nutella. Because of palm oil, deforestation and orangutans which are primates from the Hominidae family. No one ever told me "Strange, you're not an orangutan, are you?". I also worry about polar bears, which are marine mammals from the Ursidae family, which splash around on ice packs, and for whales, those marine mammals from the Cetacea infraorder, which are harpooned day and night by the Japanese and (I think) the Norwegians, and for elephants which are mammals



from Proboscidean order... Yet, no one ever told me: "That's odd, you're neither a whale, nor a bear, nor an elephant, are you?"

I've been working on the Shoah for a long time in order to write a book which will be published in March. I am gathering stories, searching archives and looting historians. The Shoah is the extermination of Jews who belong to the human specie. As I do. As you do. I think it's a good idea: History enlightens the future. And we need light. If we'd be enlightened, maybe Mrs. Knoll would still be alive.

Obscurantism kills. Well, since I started this project, people cannot help but say: "How strange, you're not a Jew, are you?"

Strange indeed...

The Nazi concentration camp system was a universe entirely devoted to persecution, to confinement, to slavery and eventually, to death at industrial scale. Besides the Jews, political opponents, criminals, stateless persons, Jehovah's witnesses, anti-socials (a mishmash category which presented the advantage of gathering anybody: from poachers to beggars, from small persistent offenders to handicapped people and, broadly speaking, the "useless", etc.), from homosexuals to Gypsies and POWs. But 6 million Jews were exterminated. 6 Million! Men, women, children.

The Nazis' great project, or idea, was not only to exterminate the Jews. Rather, to set a world where Jews never existed. To achieve this, not only they needed to be killed and their bodies eradicated, but all that could testify of a Jewish existence had to be destroyed or burnt: books, art works, synagogues... everything. The Jews' past, present and future had to be annihilated, this included the

assassination of kids. Amongst those children, how many would have ended up as Einstein, Mendelssohn, Freud or Spinoza? How many would have become doctors, engineers, architects, painters, craftsmen? What have the Nazis deprived humanity of? Not only the sole Jew community but humanity as a whole? The Shoah is our common heritage, of all mankind, Jews or not.

Of course, no one is asked to love the Jews, who are as different amongst themselves as can be any members of any other community. Yet, the remembrance of these 6 million assassinated people simply must be respected. Rejecting the Shoah or diminishing its monstrosity is crap talking. Of course, the Nazis have ended in history's dust bins. But there's always a fool who can lift the lid and let them crawl outside under a new name, with new slogans, new uniforms, a new chief, a new God. Whatever, as long as blood flows.

Fanaticism, wherever it's coming from, whether political or religious, is a universal threat, a challenge to humanity, a lethal danger which must not only unite us in our differences, but also wipe out these differences. To differentiate means taking the risk creating indifference. It means preventing everyone from identifying with the victim when, in reality, everyone is threatened.

Indifference is the start of complicity. ●

\* Journalist and essayist, former Executive director of Le Figaro Magazine.

# Abdul Rahman al-Suwaidi: 35 years in the hell of the Muslim Brotherhood (2/2)

Abdul Rahman al-Suwaidi is a former Emirati Islamist leader. Repentant, he delivers here a relentless testimony about the 35 years he spent in the hell of the Muslim Brotherhood. In front of our cameras, he reveals, in a series of uncompromising interviews, the Brotherhood's best kept secrets, unmasking his double discourse and reveals the hearing of his hidden tentacles implanted throughout the world...

Interview by  
**Atmane Tazaghart**

**How does the "world office" of the Muslim Brotherhood work? And why is it surrounded by so many secrets and intrigues?**

The world organization of the Muslim Brotherhood can be vertically subdivided into 3 levels: the 1st level includes the so-called National organisations, such as the Organization of Muslim Brotherhood in the Emirates etc. Those ones are autonomous. They have their organization and their executive officer who is the Controller or the Emir. It also has its own association. The 2nd level includes Regional Groups organized as Regional Councils. In the Emirates, it is called the Gulf Coordinating Council (GCC) or Gulf Council. It includes 8 countries. The 6 GCC countries: Oman, Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait. To which are added Yemen and Iran. Given Yemen is located in the Arabian Peninsula and Iran has a facade on the Gulf. Likewise there is an Asia Office, a Europe Office, an Africa Office etc.

The chief executives of nation-based organizations are responsible for structuring and coordinating these Regional Groups and selecting their Chief-Officers. The 8 Gulf Council countries are required to agree among themselves to designate the Chief Officer, the Secretary and the delegate of the Gulf Office. These latter, in turn, hold joint Gulf-Asia-Africa-Europe meetings which are often held in Europe and precisely in Great Britain, in order to choose the members of the World Office.

By declining these 3 levels, national, regional and global, we see that the status of Egypt is somewhat incompatible with the logical of this hierarchical order. On the one hand there is Egypt, the country of the founder of the Organization, Hassan Al-Banna. On the other hand is the UK-based "World Office" that manages the global activities. This presence in Great Britain makes it possible to improve communication, especially since there is a lot less security worry, compared to Egypt where the situation is of-

ten unstable. So the Comptroller and the members of the Organization in Egypt do not have the prerogatives to communicate, order or proscribe things. Thereby the Egyptians have a certain hold on the World Office, though this grip has recently begun to ease with the proliferation of organizations.

**Why local Muslim Brotherhood organizations in some countries deny the very existence of this "world office"?**

Some channels of the Brotherhood have denied any membership in the World Organization, but following the recent crisis they announced their withdrawal from this Organization to which they said they did not belong! The precarious and shaky foundations on which the big entity was built are mostly at the origin of the contradictions we observe today. The Organization is shaking at regional and global levels. These contradictions can be expected to increase, especially when local organizations in some countries are in crisis and reveal things that would not have been disclosed in times of stability.

All organizations classified as a terrorist organizations, in all countries and religions, including the Muslim Brotherhood, have two faces: one open to the general public, the other hidden. This also applies to the secret World Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood whose existence is denied by some and not by others.

**They could simply hide the existence of the "world office", why do they go so far as to publicly deny its existence?**

Is the absence of the patriotic dimension in the thought of the Brotherhood the main reason for this confusion? Yes, it is a contributing factor. Even if it's not the only one. Because loyalty must be exercised naturally towards the state and the government of the country where we

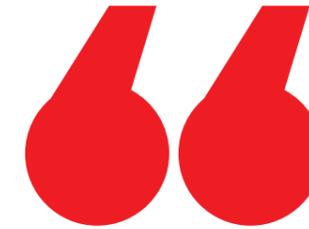
live. This is in fact what many Muslim jurists have mentioned since the Abbasid period, when the State had scattered into many Islamic sultanates. None of these jurists said that the Muslim must give up his loyalty obedience and allegiance to the prince of such Sultanate, Emirate or State.

It is true that the Caliph had a symbolic authority but it was to the prince of each region that allegiance is pledged. We have never heard that in such country allegiance was pledged to another country or another thought.

This is the contradiction in the organization of the Muslim Brotherhood where, by a succession of sermons, loyalty is concluded by allegiance to the Supreme Leader. So, the official allegiance lent to the ruler of the country where we live becomes a formality.

Concealment causes an inferiority complex in some. Because their allegiance is not for the ruler of their own country but is pledged to others. So, they deny the existence of the International Organization, to make credible their allegiance to the leader of their country, which is in reality only an appearance.

As far as I'm concerned, it does not make sense that there is a double loyalty, as if it were a person with a split personality. If you have two



**The absence of the patriotic dimension in the thought of the Brotherhood is a source of confusion and contradictions.**

referents at once, one says to go to the left and the other to the right. And you say to yourself: I am as loyal to this one as to that one. If they both agree, you do not have to worry. But, if they disagree, which one will you follow?

That is why we never mention these things at the middle and lower levels of the Brotherhood. It is stated that loyalty is only to the leader of the country where we live. Otherwise, new recruits risk fleeing the Organization if they learn that their allegiance must go abroad.

The most experienced members of the Brotherhood end up understanding how do the structures of the Brotherhood work at the global level. They consider that their loyalty to their country is formal and that their fundamental allegiance is to the Supreme Leader of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, this is problematic. If a precise position must be →



stopped, concerning a given situation in the country or around the world, should they conform to the position of the Supreme Leader or the one of the leader of their country?

Very often it is the position taken abroad that is retained. That is why they attempt to hide the existence of the world directional entity or the World Office of the Muslim Brotherhood, call it as you want. They say that such an instance does not exist. Which is contradictory.

That is why Bay'a is the main cause of the promulgation of laws criminalizing certain practices. If your ID documents, your nationality and your passport specify that you are from such a country, how can you pledge allegiance to a foreign organization? The law regards this as treason or intelligence with the enemy. Denying the existence of the World Organization makes it possible to reduce the risk of prosecution. So they formally say that their allegiance goes to their country and do not acknowledge having pledged allegiance abroad.

This concealment makes it possible for them to circumvent the fact that having two entities that can give instructions and assign responsibilities is not logical. Because, if they agree, everything is fine. But in case of disagreement, their instructions will be contradictory and will provoke a kind of schizophrenia among the members of the Brotherhood. On a personal level, this causes dissociative disorders, between the outside and the inside, and leads to what is called taqiya, that is, duplicity.

This duplicity generates a confusion and a cacophony perceptible by the close entourage of the person in question. Especially when the Organization adopt points of view very far from those of the State of which that person bears the nationality and to which he must be loyal. That person is therefore in contradiction with the national interest. This generates an intrinsic conflict. Because, belonging to the Fatherland becomes dependent on the orientations of the Organization. While it is in the interest of the Motherland to prevail on the support a person can have for an Organization and the sympathy it can show for the activities and the instances of this Organization.

That's why the law criminalizes this type of practice and punishes their authors by the deprivation of nationality or citizenship, since their loyalty goes abroad. Some countries call them agents serving the enemy, others accuse them of intelligence with a foreign entity. So



## Denying the existence of the world office of the Muslim Brotherhood aims to reduce the risks of legal proceedings.

what about people with total allegiance and dependence? They undoubtedly abandoned patriotic belonging for the benefit of another supranational Organization.

### During the 35 years you spent with the Muslim Brotherhood, what relations did you have with the secret authorities of the Brotherhood?

My membership in the Organization allowed me to establish a lot of contacts but my area of activities was part of the public and open interfaces. My links to internal organizational secrets were limited because my main area of work was open.

I was Director of the Al-Islah Association, Chairman of the Relief Committee and Board Member of several associations and institutions, some of which belonged to senior state officials, who have official contacts abroad. The organization felt that I needed to be kept away from the dark areas inside and outside the country because it was not suitable to them, nor to me.

I worked most of the time in official institutions, but guidance came from the Organization and my role was rather organizational. I did not necessarily work in hidden entities but the orders came to us from hidden entities.

### Under what circumstances did you flee when the Brotherhood was banned in the UAE in 2012?

Inquiries were launched on the grounds that the Organization and its members violated the law and the decision was taken to punish the incrimi-

nated members of the Brotherhood under Penal Code in force in the country. And the arrests began as part of the investigation process. I did not want to be brought to justice, so I decided to flee the country.

I forced myself into exile for three and a half years and I was confronted with several problems. Then I came to revise my decision and return to reason for three main reasons.

First: bitterness of exile, finding myself a fugitive forced to abandon my family, my elderly mother and many close relatives. It was very difficult for me. I am sociable by nature, close to my family, parents and even my neighbours. The rupture with my relatives was terrible.

Secondly: when I was arrested in Indonesia because of residence permit, I thought that the Indonesian Organization [of the Muslim Brotherhood] would move heaven and earth to get me out of this situation. It was not the case. I was abandoned and treated like the other detainees. When I visited Indonesia with money transfers for construction of institutes, schools and for humanitarian aid, I was warmly welcomed. But during my detention I did not get any sign of solidarity. I was assigned a lawyer but he only gave me 3 or 4 visits at the most. This second test was hard for me. Finding myself exiled and seeing the Organization turning its back on me.

Thirdly: this is the most important reason. On my return to the country, I had dark ideas about interrogations because of the brainwashing I suffered from the Organization and everything that circulates on social networks. I was surprised to be treated in a respectful and civilized manner. I have been informed of the reasons of my arrest and what I have to do to comfort myself with the law.

I told myself that sincerity will be my salvation. I said what I knew. I was interrogated professionally. My dignity was respected and I was detained in clean places. I benefited from health care services and all officials, whether chiefs or subordinates, ensured my good treatment. Several visits were organized with my family, parents and children in a private villa. Sincerely, it had nothing to do with the scary image on the State Security Services. I came to realize that they are civilized Services and close to the citizen.

These are the 3 reasons that led me to revisit my decision: A painful exile, the fact of being abandoned by the Organization in a moment of distress and the very respectful and civilized way in which I was treated on my return to my country.

It made me turn my back on this part of my life and tell the truth to people, about what I went through, by my own free will and without any constraint.

The story of this exile or flight, I consider it a moment of suffering and torment and my return was a relief and a deliverance, contrary to what I feared

### Tell us more about your long journey during these three and a half years of flight?

I crossed the border by road to Oman and then I joined Yemen. Oman was just a transit. In Yemen I stayed for about a month, a month and a half. It was in July 2012, just before the month of Ramadan. I then went to Turkey where I took part in Istanbul to activities of the Organization intended for fugitive members incriminated in the same case as me. I stayed 3 days with them. Then I returned to Yemen, but the situation was not safe there. I then decided to go to South-East Asia where I thought I would find support because I was in charge of the charities in the following regions: Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia.

I went to Thailand. I stayed there for about a year and a half, then I went to Malaysia. My sentence was pronounced against me while I was in Thailand. So an international arrest warrant was issued against me by my country. Because of this arrest warrant, we become wanted in the country where we are. Which complicates the situation and any moves becomes difficult.

The Organization has managed, through bribes, to get me across the border from Thailand to Malaysia. I was arrested for a while in Malaysia, but the Organization intervened and got my release. Once in Indonesia, I was offered the issuance of Indonesian ID, what was illegal of course. It was told that in Indonesia, ID can be obtained easily against a certain sum of money. And I ac-

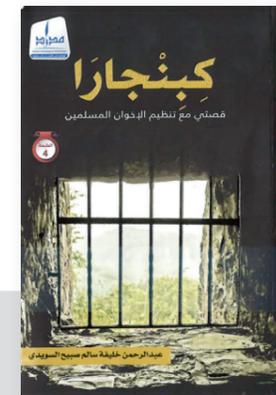
tually know the languages and literature of this country but not its administrative procedures. So it was a new experience for me.

Everything has been arranged for me, but during the procedure the Indonesian authorities noticed an irregularity. So I was arrested for this. In the meantime, the Indonesian authorities realized that an arrest warrant has been issued against me by my country of origin. I was detained in Indonesia for two months. Then my extradition took place, in accordance with the agreements in force between Indonesia and the Emirates.

This was done rapidly since a lawsuit against me was pending in my country. At the same time, my relaxation was pronounced in Indonesia not by the prosecutor's office, but by the police who considered that the charges of forgery and use of false deductions against me were unfounded. The police found that I was a victim of fraud from Indonesian citizens who have broken local laws and so relaxed me.

I think the authorities of my country have contributed to mitigate the burdens on me in Indonesia. The process of respect and benevolence has begun since my relaxation in Indonesia and my return to the country. And as I said before, all the proceedings took place in good conditions until my amnesty and release.

I returned to the Emirates after three and a half years of flight. Then, I served three and a half years before being pardoned which is seven years in all.



In his book entitled « Ke Penjara », Abdul Rahman Al-Suwaidi explains that after fleeing his country, during a stay in Turkey, he took part in a course for fugitive Muslim Brothers during which the Brotherhood offered him to join the new head of his Emirati branch established in exile and made up of fugitives like him. But, he declined this offer and preferred to return to Yemen.

### Under what conditions did you decide to leave the Muslim Brotherhood and repent?

Belonging to an entity where part of the activities is legal and another part is illegal creates confusion in the mind. It pushes the person to rethink matters constantly. Moments of crisis offer the opportunity to question everything and to scrutinize all the contradictions observed within the Organization. It's a long process. In my case, it's like the accumulation of drops of water falling on a scale. They did not tip the scales right away, it took a while. When I was a student, I often questioned my reason for being in this organization. Then events occurred and drove this questioning out of my mind.

Over time, we record some successes and we are the subject of praise from those around us, so we forget the questions that torment us. But new problems arise, caused by crises like the occupation of Kuwait and many other hardships. Once I met Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, our patriarch, peace in his soul. By shaking his hand, I experienced, inside myself, that my allegiance should go to him and not to others. And it was the beginning of new torments.

There is a perpetual back and forth phenomenon within the organization. Some integrate it and others leave it. In my case, the determining factor was the violation of the law which became public and clear. I suffered from exile and went through painful moments. I was arrested and the Organization turned its back on me and thus showed its true face. For information, the Indonesian Organization is the largest regional organization within the Muslim Brotherhood. I didn't expect such a drop from them.

There was a lot of confusion in my mind, due to a long accumulation of contradictions. But this turnaround from the Brotherhood was decisive for me. We always make decisions based on our personal convictions but these and change according to the positions of our environment.

### How do you explain these perpetual movements of dissent within the Muslim Brotherhood or these "back and forth", as you call them?

If we take the Organization as such, regardless what revolves around it. It is composed of a group of individuals who are linked by specific ties →

and whose affairs are secretly managed. Some people join the Organization and stay, others leave. These back-and-forth have always existed within the Organization. There are those who joined and left and those who stayed.

Everything looks good in the beginning, when you join the brotherhood. But after it becomes painful, whether you stay inside or you leave! Because those who remain inside are in violation of the law, they are threatened at all times. Those who leave early may be saved. But those who leave following major events or as a result of violent unrest may have to be brought to justice, but whatever the severity of justice, it is more lenient than staying inside a secret Organization. The person can always rebuild and make a new start, even if he has to go through prison.

**How can such a rupture take place in spite of the indoctrination that the Brotherhood exercises on its followers?**

Repentance is about the relationship with God. And no other person can judge its authenticity. That's why I prefer to use the term recusal of membership in the organization. This recusal may be made public verbally or in writing. I find it more accurate, both linguistically or legally.

Of course, every man must repent of his sins towards God. In fact, for me, the recusal process was the result of a long gestation. When it has matured, I have announced my position clearly and frankly.

It is not the first time that I have expressed this through the media explaining my point of view in a simple, straightforward and unambiguous way. I have also recorded my position in writing, in a book, explaining at length the circumstances of my joining the Organization and my decision to leave it. My



**Everything looks good at the start, when you join the Brotherhood. But after it becomes painful, whether you stay or you leave...**

goal is to help those misled, who are in the Organization and are attached to it, to get out.

My approach was welcomed, especially among young people who are new to the organization. On the other hand, those who have been brainwashed for a long time criticized my approach. But the encouragement of some and the criticism of others does not change anything for me, since what matters to me is having a good conscience towards Allah. To both of them I have the same message: quit illegality.

My second message concerns the doubtful status of the Organization which

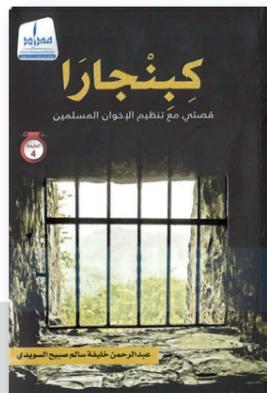
claims to channel young people's energy into voluntary charity. However, there are a multitude of associations, acting legally, which have the same vocation and can channel your energies, without you taking orders from the Brotherhood.

Whether it's Islamic preaching or charity, the private, public and government sectors have numerous social and voluntary bodies. This is not the exclusive fact of the Brotherhood. Put your energies, your centres of interest and your know-how in the appropriate legal framework. Integrate the private, associative or even governmental sector, to be sure to remain legal and to live in all serenity, without sinking into the schizophrenia of what should be made public and what should be kept secret. Instead of such duplicity, choose to have a single course of action.

**What do you recommend to counter the Brotherhood's propaganda and indoctrination methods?**

In this regard, a distinction must be made between two categories that make up the Brotherhood: new recruits, on the one hand, and those who are already active, on the other.

Before trying to help the members of the Brotherhood to leave it, it is necessary to dissuade the new recruits from joining it, by emphasizing the fact that it is an illegal entity because anyone who plans to join an illegal entity should know that he is taking the risk of being punished according to applicable laws, the provisions of which are clear and unequivocal.



*In his book entitled « Ke Penjara », Abdel Rahman al-Suweidi explains that he was arrested for trying to obtain an Indonesian identity card, using a fake Yemeni passport provided by the local Muslim Brotherhood's branch. Through this fake passport, established in the name of Sayed Habib al-Attas, he wanted to take advantage of the fact that some Yemeni ethnic groups of Hadramaut legally benefit from Indonesian identity documents.*



This argument also applies to active members, who will know that prosecution will be brought against them for belonging to an illegal organization. This could push them to leave the Organization.

Legal provisions exist and are not recent, but some countries prefer to leave space for repentance. However, in the event of a threat to the country's security and stability, the interest of the fatherland takes precedence over leniency measures.

From my own experience, it was very difficult to dissuade people from joining this Organization or to convince its members to get out, before the recent crises [alluding to the banning of the Muslim Brotherhood in the UAE and other Arab countries]. In this sense, this crisis has been a blessing, in that it has enabled people to appreciate the real risks of breaking the law.

Rather than warning the law, it was decided to apply the law to offenders. And things got more serious. I think this rigor had a deterrent effect, since it allowed people to know the fate that awaits them if they persist on the path of illegality.

The Emirati experience in this area should be pondered. You cannot blame any state for applying the law. Because it's always better to imprison a hundred people to save ten million. This is a given

not a loss. Without this rigor in the application of the law, it would have been very difficult to prevent future recruits or to push the members of the Brotherhood to leave.

**So you consider the banning of the Muslim Brotherhood to be a good decision?**

Indeed. This made it possible to appreciate the consequences of the illegality that no one had previously cared about. Classifying the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization was a good decision. This has made it possible to counter the drifts which arise from the fact of tolerating the activities of this illegal entity.

The charitable activities carried out by the Brotherhood can be exercised within legal frameworks, like charities and non-profit associations. The Brotherhood brings nothing more, except to direct the allegiance of the citizens towards foreign entities.

I can understand that we have feelings guided by faith, but we must place our

feelings where necessary. Declaring the Brotherhood as a terrorist organization puts it back in its true place and alienated many from those with good intentions.

To these people I say: Be good citizens, loyal to your country and expend your energy through legal institutions. There will then be no dissension and you will have nothing more to fear for your religion, your work and all your activities. Exercise your activities in broad daylight, legally. Thus, you will not suffer from any intrinsic conflict or schizophrenia and you will no longer have doubts about the legality of your acts. Go for simplicity and ease. Be faithful to Allah and his Messenger, loyal to believers and pledge allegiance to the leaders of your country. Work transparently, legally. You will then live in peace with yourself... ●

Read the full interview & watch the video on our website  
[www.global-watch-analysis.com](http://www.global-watch-analysis.com)

# The Muslim Brotherhood and the Iranian Pasdaran: A Secret Alliance?

Nothing predestined the Quds Force, an elite unit within the Iranian Revolutionary Guards (Pasdaran) and the World Organization of Muslim Brotherhood to come together. Yet, documents issued by secret archives of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence reveal the inconceivable: negotiations took place between these two apparently rival organisations, in order to confront their common enemy, Saudi Arabia.

The leaking of these documents issued by the archives of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Iran's National Security (rival of the Pasdaran) reveals a secret rapprochement between the Sunni Islamic Muslim Brotherhood and the Al Quds Force, the elite unit of the Pasdaran, considered to be the sword arm of political Shi'ism in power in Iran, long led by powerful General Qassim Soleimani, who was assassinated by an American drone in Iraq on January 3, 2020.

According to these documents revealed by the online investigative newspaper The Intercept (see box below), senior officials from Muslim Brotherhood and Pasdaran met in 2014 at a secret summit held in a hotel in Turkey. The meeting's aim was to "find a common ground between the two sides and explore possibilities for coordination in

countries where they are present".

The Intercept points out that the AL Quds Force and the Muslim Brothers are apparently antagonist due to their ideological basis and organisational nature. Pasdaran are Shi'ites and respond to a near-military and state logic, whereas the Muslim Brothers are Sunnis and adopt a transnational network based essentially on entryism in state and international institutions.

Despite these fundamental differences, both organisations have begun negotiations to initiate a secret rapprochement, which took place in a particularly tense Middle East geopolitical context, especially with the rise of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, in 2014 and Riyadh's support of putsch of Marshal Abdel Fattah al-Sissi against the Brotherhood President Mohamed Morsi a year earlier.

The documents show that first contacts between Pasdaran and Muslim Brothers

took place way before these negotiations in Turkey. Contacts were initiated during the rapprochement between Egypt and Iran, following the coming to power of Mohamed Morsi in 2012. But this process of rapprochement was interrupted by the putsch that impeached Morsi and forced the Muslim Brotherhood leaders to go back into hiding.

The Turkish government, being on good terms with both Muslim Brothers, whose ideology, known as "political Islam" it shares, and with Iran's regime to which it is linked by a strategic alliance, has given its approval for secret negotiations between the two organisations to take place on its soil, as confirmed by one of Iran's secret documents published by The Intercept and commented by its great reporter, James Risen.

An agent of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence, present during the negotiations, reported that General Soleimani, who was unable to take part in the negotiations in Turkey because he was subject to a UN visa ban, was replaced by Al Quds Force senior officials. On the Muslim Brothers' side, many historical leaders, living in exile, attended the negotiations: Ibrahim Munir Mustafa, Mahmoud El-Abiary and Youssef Nada. The latter, considered as being the Muslim Brotherhood's occult financier, asserted in a statement addressed to The

## The Intercept: Journalistic investigation servicing whistleblowers

Launched in 2014, The Intercept is an online investigative journal. The project was founded and funded by eBay boss Pierre Omidyar, through the First Look Media journalistic platform.

At its inception, the site published articles based on documents revealed by Wikileaks. It then created a "documents section" allowing whistleblowers to disclose documents classified as secret, while protecting their anonymity.

Thanks to its network of investigative journalists, The Intercept revealed several political scandals concerning the US Administration, including Edward Snowden's revelations about the NSA's global surveillance programme and the Drone Papers, about the US programme of targeted strikes in Afghanistan, Yemen and Somalia.

In Europe, The Intercept has forged partnerships with major media outlets, such as the Disclose investigative site in France and Der Spiegel in Germany.



Intercept that he neither had knowledge of such meetings nor had he participated in them.

Talks between the two delegations explored the possibilities of forging alliances in countries going through political crises, such as Yemen, Iraq or Syria. "Present in 85 countries", according to statements from Brotherhood leaders participating in the summit, the Muslim Brothers proposed to the Pasdaran to "ally to fight the common enemy which is Saudi Arabia", as reported by one of the secret documents. It adds that "According to them [the leaders of Muslim Brotherhood], Yemen seemed to be the propitious terrain for such a war, given the influence of both parties on Shi'ite

and Sunni tribal components". Iran being able to rely on Houthi militias in Yemen, while Muslim Brothers had total control over Sunni tribal armed factions, thanks to Brotherhood's Islah movement and its alliances with tribal leaders.

Regarding Iraq, the Muslim Brotherhood delegation said it was opposed to war and proposed to Pasdaran to "help reduce the gap between Shiites and Sunnis, by ending the war and allowing Sunnis to participate in the government".

As for Syria, Muslim Brotherhood representatives refused to take sides in the conflict, considering that the multitude of interveners in the Syrian war would force them to distance themselves from it, as "obviously, the question of Syria is out of the hands of Iran and of Muslim Brothers, and there is nothing special we can do about it".

Besides, documents of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence reveal that, upon returning to Tehran, the Al Quds Force's delegation attempted to present the alliance with Muslim Brotherhood as a possibility, but certain Iranian officials found this alliance to be meaningless.

The documents note that the willingness to work together against the common Saudi enemy did not prevent doubts and differences from arising in the negotiations between the Al Quds Force and the Muslim Brothers.

For example, one document reports that the Brotherhood representatives declared that they were "patient" and wanted "peaceful reform" of the region. This was seen by Pasdaran representatives as being an "insult" to Iranian politics.

However, the document concluded that the differences that emerged did not prevent the parties from planning to extend their talks in new meetings held in Istanbul and Beirut. ●

# Abdelhakim Belhaj

## Ex-jihadist, future Turkish proconsul in Libya!

Of all the militia leaders vying for power in Libya since the fall of Gaddafi, Abdelhakim Belhaj is the most controversial. Born in 1966 in the popular district of Souq Al Jum'aa in Tripoli, he joined the ranks of the Arab mujaheddin in Afghanistan at the age of 22, where he founded the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) with other jihadists among his compatriots.

At the end of the anti-Soviet war, the LIFG decides to return to Libya, with the aim of overthrowing Gaddafi's dictatorship. However, the assassination attempt that it fomented in 1994 only succeeded in slightly wounding the "Guide". And the Group is repressed in blood.

Belhaj manages to flee to Sudan, where he reunites with Osama bin Laden, once known during the anti-Soviet jihad. Having become the chief emir of the LIFG, under the war name of Abdallah Saddek, Belhaj decides to ally himself with Al-Qaeda. This led him to follow the bin Laden organisation when it left Sudan for Afghanistan in 1996.

Disappeared from the radar after the attacks of September 11, 2001, the CIA found its way back to Malaysia in 2004. Arrested, he is secretly handed over to the Gaddafi regime.

In 2009, a mediation in his favour was conducted by the Muslim Brotherhood. Imam Ali al-Sallabi, leader of the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood, and sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a leading figure in the Brotherhood's "Global Office" and star preacher for the Qatari channel Al Jazeera, succeeded in convincing Saif al-Islam Gaddafi to release Abdelhakim Belhaj and his jihadist companions, following the publication of a long 417-page missive in which they denied the jihadist ideology and affirmed their renunciation of violence.

Two years later, Belhaj takes up arms again. In May 2011, he joined the anti-Gaddafi rebellion. In August, after Gaddafi's flight, he seized the capital and proclaimed himself commander of the "Tripoli Military Council". He then set up his headquarters at the military airport of Maatiga.

He soon shows an unsuspected appetite for business. So much so that barely a year later, his name appears on the list of the 100 richest Libyans of the post-Gaddafi era and his fortune is estimated at more than 2 billion dollars!

A year later, he founded his airline al-Ajniha (the wings) and thus established de facto monopoly on flights to the Libyan capital: the airport of Maatiga, which he controls, has become the only operational airport since the destruction of the international airport of Tripoli.

In January 2019, Belhaj was finally caught up with justice. A British parliamentary report points to his involvement in migrant smuggling. And the Libyan public prosecutor, Siddiq Al Sour, issued a warrant against him for "abuses".

Cornered, Belhaj decides to move to Istanbul. For a while, he is thought to have definitively turned to business. But, in December 2019, when the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, decided to intervene militarily in Libya, Belhaj put four planes of his company al-Ajniha at the disposal of the Turkish government and installed an air bridge between Istanbul and Maatiga airport, which remained under the control of his men. This allowed the Turks to transfer to Tripoli more than 6,000 jihadists from Syria.

In doing so, Belhaj did not only revive jihadism once again. In Erdogan's grand design to resurrect the Ottoman Caliphate, the former head of the LIFG now dreams of himself as the Turkish proconsul of Libya! ●

### 5 DATES

**1988** He founded the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, later affiliated to al-Qaeda.

**2004** Arrested by the CIA in Malaysia, he is handed over to the Gaddafi regime.

**2011** At the head of the "February 17th Brigade", he seized the Libyan capital and proclaimed himself commander of the "Tripoli Military Council".

**2012** His fortune is estimated at over \$2 billion.

**2019** Based in Istanbul, he puts at the disposal of the Turkish government four planes of its airline company al-Ajniha, to transfer to Tripoli more than 6000 Syrian jihadists.

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BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER  
PUBLISHED BY THE SITE:

[www.global-watch-analysis.com](http://www.global-watch-analysis.com)

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PUBLISHING COMPANY:

**COUNTRIES REPORTS  
PUBLISHING**

COMPANY NUMBER:  
**06741319**

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**IT & web:** AMAR MERIECH.

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DE SAINT-JOB 267, 1180, UCCLE, BELGIUM