

# AFRICA: Mapping Islamic militancy – past, present and future

Author: Yonas Dembele



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July 2019

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Author: Yonas Dembele

*Commissioned by World Watch Research (WWR), Open Doors International, Netherlands*

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## 1. Introduction

To understand the resurgence of jihadist groups in Africa, it is necessary to understand something of the history of radical Islamic ideology, which divides the world in two – into *Dar al-Islam* (house of Islam) and *Dar al-Harb* (house of war). While there is provision for a third category - *Dar al-'Ahd* (House of truce) or *Dar al-Sulh* (house of conciliation/treaty) - this is regarded as a temporary stage en route to establishing peace or waging war. For radical Islamic ideology, therefore, there can be no peace until the whole world becomes the House of Islam. As long as jihadist groups follow this division of Islam, there will continue to be militant attacks on Christianity and on any other religion that is not Islam. Unlike 7th century jihadists, 21st century Islamic militants do not recognize the Quranic protection of the ‘People of the Book’. Further, they also declare war on Muslims who do not practice in accordance with their interpretation of Islam; thus, they regard moderate Muslims as infidels.<sup>1</sup>

Islam first entered Africa through the Arab conquest of Egypt beginning in 639 AD.<sup>2</sup> It then spread to other parts of North and West Africa largely embracing the African traditional customs and religions. In North and West Africa, the Maliki school was tolerant of local customs which led to these being blended into the resulting Islamic practice. The second frontier was the East African Coast where the Sufi brand of Islam was also relatively tolerant of local practices, language and customs. That is how the Swahili culture developed along the East African Coast. This tolerance led to the adoption of Islam as the religion of the African kingdoms and civilizations of the 9th-14th centuries. However, in the 15th century, revivalist movements emerged in West Africa which taught that historical Islamic tolerance to local customs led to a distortion of Islam and that the peace agreements between Islamic authorities and the Christian authorities were invalid. They called for a return to Islam as practiced in the time of the Prophet Muhammed. This was the birth of the subsequent periodic waves of jihadist movements in Africa. There was another wave in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Modern jihadist movements in Africa trace their origin back to Hasan al-Banna’s Society of Muslim Brothers in Egypt in 1928. It was this revivalist movement that has given modern Islamists the ideological and spiritual impetus to justify political Islam and the violence that – as history shows - inevitably follows such an agenda.

This paper gives historical background information and highlights the various forms of Islam in the different regions of Africa. It seeks to illustrate how global developments have had an impact

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<sup>1</sup> For further details see: Bernard Lewis, *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East*, Schocken Books, New York, 1998, pp.121-122.

<sup>2</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica: Egypt – From the Islamic conquest to 1250, available at: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Egypt/From-the-Islamic-conquest-to-1250>, last accessed October 2018.

on the practice of Islam in Africa. It explores the rise of the House of Saud and Wahhabism and the influence of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 on political Islam in Africa and the emergence of militant groups in Africa. The paper profiles a significant number of jihadist groups in Africa focusing on their origin, ideology, leadership, activities, affiliation and impact on Christians in the different regions and globally. The body of this research was concluded in 2018 and readers should be aware that later developments may not have been covered.

The paper argues that military successes against al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, Ansar al-Dine, AQIM, and the Islamic State group (IS) are not sufficient indicators of the defeat of the jihadist cause in Africa. This is because ideology can only be combated by ideology. Military successes are valuable in that they ensure that the state can protect the right to religious freedom. However, if nothing is done to counter radical Islamic ideology through an equally aggressive spreading of tolerant religious ideology, the suppressed radical ideologues and militants will simply remain dormant until a small opening for continued action emerges. They then re-embark on the intolerant jihadist journey to make the world the House of Islam. Because of the weak governments in the Sahel and Maghreb, Islamic militants will continue to have safe havens at their disposal in these regions. The lack of an effective central government in Somalia will continue to make it the source of instability in East and Horn of Africa. The problem of Islamist ideology and enterprises will therefore continue to trouble the African Continent until a comprehensive strategy is adopted.

## 2. The origins of radical Islamic groups in Africa

### 2.1 Islamic presence in Africa

Islam entered Africa through two fronts – the North and East African fronts. These two fronts were independent of each other and thus their variants of Islam have remained relatively distinctive.

#### 2.1.1 The spread of Islam in North and West Africa

Islam entered North Africa from Egypt around 640 AD.<sup>3</sup> This was very early in the development of Islam. The aim was to establish *Dar al-Islam* (House of Islam); everywhere else that was not yet conquered was regarded as *Dar al-Harb* (House of war), which they believed with the help of Allah, would shortly become *Dar al-Islam*. According to Africa expert, Omari H. Kokole, “the Muslim presence in North Africa was established initially through armed conquest, followed by a lengthy period of pacification and consolidation of Muslim control”.<sup>4</sup>

Egypt was a province of the Christian Byzantine Empire and a center of learning, commerce and agriculture. However, it would prove untenable after the Muslim armies had defeated the Byzantines in the provinces of Syria and Palestine. As Walter Kaegi reports:

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<sup>3</sup> Kokole O H: The Islamic Factor in African-Arab Relations, *Third World Quarterly* 6(3), 1984, pp.687-702, available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01436598408419793>, last accessed 7 November 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Kokole O H: The Islamic Factor, 1984, p.688.

The loss of those regions made continuing communications, administrative control, and defense of Egypt almost impossibly difficult for Byzantium. Egypt became isolated and Byzantine troops, leaders, and population in contiguous areas to the west of it, for example in Nubia, could do little to save it, however much some of them may have wished to do so. Its fall was only a matter of time.<sup>5</sup>

Even though the Byzantine empire made efforts at defending Egypt, these efforts proved futile.<sup>6</sup> The Muslim invaders first consolidated their rule in Egypt by offering the largely Christian population the choice of either converting to Islam and adopting the Arabic culture, or war. Over a period of time, most of the Egyptians converted. By the end of the 11th century only the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Christians (being 15% of the population) kept their Christian faith.<sup>7</sup> The Muslim conquerors tolerated their continued existence imposing instead the mandatory head tax (jizya) on these Christians.<sup>8</sup> The Islamic conquerors then sought to move westwards and northwards completing the process of pacification and consolidation of North Africa by the mid-11th century.

In North Africa, Islam had twin projects – Islamization and Arabization. After the defeat of the Byzantine generals, the Muslim leaders had hoped that they would have an easier time taking over the whole of North Africa, however the nomadic Berber tribes resisted the spreading Islamic influence. They did not accept that conversion to Islam meant political submission to the political authority of the Arabs. This rebellion kept resurfacing until the 12th century, when the Sufi-led military expedition by the Almoravids crushed the Berber rebellion, establishing the Sunni-Maliki school in North Africa.<sup>9</sup> The Berbers then acted as a bridge spreading their version of Islam, the Maliki school, from North Africa into West Africa through their trade routes.

Part of the reason for the marked success of the Islamic push into West Africa, which was largely peaceful, was that the Maliki school had a tolerant attitude towards African traditional cultures: It allowed African traditional practices to be fused with Islam. For a long time, these two religious traditions coexisted without undue influence or pressure from either. Levtzion and Pouwels have aptly explained the situation in West Africa:

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<sup>5</sup> Kaegi W E: *The Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquest*, Cambridge, 1992, pp.18-19.

<sup>6</sup> Kaegi reports: "The termination of fighting in Palestine and lower Syria did not mean that the Muslims could overrun Egypt and wreak their will upon it unopposed. Indeed, there were battles at Ayn Shams or Heliopolis, at Babylon (Old Cairo), at Nikiu and its vicinity, and resistance at Alexandria. But the loss of Palestine and Syria meant in effect the defenders of Byzantine Egypt were attempting to resist the Muslims who by the sheer logic of their central position with its "interior lines" could have known much more than the Byzantines. Continuing Byzantine dominance of the sea was very helpful to the Byzantine defense." Kaegi W E (1992), p.20.

<sup>7</sup> Levtzion N and Pouwels R L: *Patterns of Islamization and varieties of religious experience among Muslims of Africa: Introduction 1-18*, Athens, 2012, available at: [https://www.ohioswallow.com/extras/0821412965\\_intro.pdf](https://www.ohioswallow.com/extras/0821412965_intro.pdf), last accessed August 2018.

<sup>8</sup> This was the practice largely practiced throughout most of Muslim dynasties. According to "A Concise Summary of the Evolution of Islamic Law (Sharia) - From its Inception to the Present", University of Pennsylvania PASEF lecture (undated), available at: <http://www.upenn.edu/emeritus/IslamicLaw.pdf>: "Non-Muslim subjects who were Jews and Christians were given a legal status under sharia as *dhimmis*. That is, a people who worshiped the same god as Muslims. They were permitted to worship in their temples and churches without interference under their own clergy and spiritual hierarchy. They paid special taxes, were expected to do nothing that was an offence to Islam or violated sharia. While their status was in many ways inferior to that of their Muslim neighbors, and though there were instances of persecution, dhimmis were, by and large, able to live in security with freedom of worship under Muslim rule and to contribute to and share in the culture, economies, and learning of successive Muslim empires."

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

Conversion to Islam was the work of men of religion who communicated primarily with local rulers. The latter often became the first recipients of Islamic influence, an indication to the importance that states had in the process of Islamization. Thus, for some time Muslims lived under the hospitality of infidel kings, who generally were praised by Muslims for their benevolence toward the believers. This was the situation in eleventh-century Ghana as in nineteenth-century Asante. The process of Islamization advanced when Muslim clerics helped African kings to overcome severe droughts, as in the case of eleventh-century Mali, or to secure victory, as in fourteenth-century Kano and in sixteenth-century Gonja. But, because only the king and his immediate entourage came under the influence of Islam, the ruling aristocracy adopted a middle position between Islam and the traditional religion, patronizing both Muslim divines and traditional priests. It was through the chiefly courts that Islamic elements filtered the culture of the common people.<sup>10</sup>

## 2.1.2 The spread of Islam into the East and Horn of Africa

### 2.1.2.1 The East Coast of Africa

Islam's interaction with tribes of the East Coast of Africa is at least a thousand years old.<sup>11</sup>

Abdulaziz Lodhi reports that archeological findings have confirmed this:

The earliest concrete evidence of Islam and Muslims in eastern Africa is a mosque foundation in Lamu where gold, silver and copper coins dated AD 830 were found during an excavation in 1984. The oldest intact building in eastern Africa is a functioning mosque at Kizimkazi in southern Zanzibar Island dated AD 1007. It appears that Islam was common in the Indian Ocean by AD 1300. When Ibn Batuta of Morocco visited the East African coastlands in 1332, all the way down to the present border between Mozambique and South Africa, most of the coastal settlements were Muslim, and Arabic was the common literary and commercial language spoken all over the Indian Ocean - Batuta worked as a Kadhi, Supreme Muslim Jurist, in the Maldiv Islands for one year using Arabic as his working language. Islam thus seems to have arrived quite early to East Africa through traders. It certainly did not spread through

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<sup>10</sup> Levtzion/Pouwels: *Patterns*, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Wilkinson J C: *Oman and East Africa - New Light on Early Kilwan History from the Omani Sources*, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 14, 1981, pp.272–305. Wilkinson estimates the first interaction between Muslims and tribes of the East African Coast as early as 685 AD: "Slaves from these two major regions of eastern Africa had long played an important part in certain areas of the Gulf. As back as Mu'awiya b. Abi Sufyan's time, a slave community had been established in 'Bahrayn', probably for agricultural purposes, and in A.H. 66 (685/6 A.D.) this was estimated to number four thousand families. In the eleventh century, Nasiri Khusraw tells us how the Carmathians (Qaramita) lived in their center in interior 'Bahrayn', rather like a Greek city-state, as 'citizens' supported by the agricultural labor of a slave class, which he estimated number thirty thousand, of 'Abyssinian' origin. On the other hand, in southern Iraq black slave labor was used from the earliest times (perhaps by reason of their tolerance to malaria), but there must have been a great expansion in their numbers in the ninth century when the Basrans began to invest their wealth from overseas trade in trying to restore the old irrigation system and desalinize the soil in the hinterland with Zanj." (p.279). J. Alexander confirms in his essay "*Islam, archaeology and slavery in Africa*" *World Archaeology* 33, 2001 pp.44-60 (2001), that by the 8th century there were Muslim trading posts along the East African coast: "There was no military conquest by Arabs of the African coast of the Red Sea south of Egypt, but here and beyond the Horn the pre-Islamic sea-borne trade continued along the Somali, Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique coasts to Madagascar trading posts existed from at least the eighth century AD on this coast and, except on the Eritrean/Ethiopian coast, Muslims were in direct contact with Negro animists who could legally be subjected to chattel slavery. Small-scale slave trading may well have begun at this time. The development of a coastal Muslim Kiswahili-speaking society and its slave trade in the interior will be considered below." (p.46)

conquest or settlement, but remained an urban and coastal phenomenon for quite long.<sup>12</sup>

When the Arabs arrived at the East African Coast, their interaction with natives led to the development of a unique culture and language that borrowed both from Arabic and the Bantu dialects of the African natives. This is what became the Swahili people and the Kiswahili language.<sup>13</sup> While this culture adopted Islam, it also adopted some aspects of African native practices, thus indigenizing Islam.<sup>14</sup> This formed the foundation of a civilization that specialized in Indian Ocean trade and opened Africa to the world through East-West-North African trade. As asserted by Ali Mazrui, long-distance trade in both East and West Africa is inseparably connected to the history of the development of Islam in these regions.<sup>15</sup> By the time the Portuguese came to the East African Coast in 1489, the Swahili cities such as Kilwa, Pate and Mombasa were prosperous cities that had existed for centuries.<sup>16</sup> Through their trading activities, the Swahili traders carried the torch of Islam into African hinterlands in what is now called Uganda, Congo, Malawi and Mozambique.<sup>17</sup> The coming of the Portuguese disrupted the Islamic hegemony in the East Coast region and they tried to stem the spread of Islam by forcing Arab sultans to convert to Christianity. However, these efforts were not fruitful as the Portuguese were more interested in trade than in spreading Christianity. Despite the Portuguese ruling the East Coast of Africa for over 200 years, the Muslim/Swahili culture continued to thrive, which is why it was possible for the Omani Arabs to unite with the locals to fight and drive away the Portuguese from the East African coast in 1729.<sup>18</sup>

The Omani interest in the East African Coast dates back to the years following AD 750 when they occupied Soqatra (present day Socotra in Yemen).<sup>19</sup> A century later, the Omanis had to reconquer the island when its Christian population rebelled against their rule.<sup>20</sup> From here they conducted trading activities “beyond Soqatra on an ad hoc basis, their main interest at this time was probably in slaving, and their source of supply was as much Abyssinia (Christian northeast Africa) as the territory of the *Zanj* (‘land and of black people, modern day East African Coast including Zanzibar)”.<sup>21</sup> Instrumental in the Omani interaction with the East African Coast was their adherence to Ibadi ideology which was “an attempt to reestablish the imagined original constitution of the Islamic state before it was ‘perverted’ by ‘Uthman and the Umayyads.”<sup>22</sup> Their strict adherence to Sharia (as they interpreted it) is reflected in the way they interacted with the East African Coast. Professor Abdullahi An-Naim explains that “their theory of Sharia is such that Islam and unbelief cannot exist together; therefore, Sharia requires that whether through active

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<sup>12</sup> Lodhi A Y: Muslims in Eastern Africa - Their Past and Present Nordic Journal of African Studies 3(1), 1994, p.88.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Mazrui A: Islam Between Ethnicity and Economics - The Dialectics of Africa’s Experience, in: Salter T and King K (Eds.), Africa, Islam, and Development: Islam and Development in Africa – African Islam, African Development, 2000, p.16.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Lodhi: Muslims in Eastern Africa, 1994, p.88.

<sup>19</sup> Wilkinson: Oman and East Africa, 1981, p.278.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Wilkinson: Oman and East Africa, 1981, p.276.

fighting or other means, *dar al-harb* (the abode of war) must be brought within *dar al-Islam* (the abode of peace/Islam)."<sup>23</sup>

When the Omanis chose to expand their sultanate to the East Coast of Africa their approach was to either wage war, offer temporary peace, or conclude a lasting peace agreement. As Wilkinson explains:

[T]emporary truces could be made with polytheists (*mushrikun*) but not for more than a year (or two at the most) because in the meantime the Muslims might become strong enough to enforce a full submission. Some authorities maintained that the onus was on the polytheists to renew such temporary agreements, failing which *ghanima* (slaves and booty) could be taken. During such truces the good faith termed *aman* prevailed, so that individuals from both sides could enter the territory of the other in safety...Rather different rules applies to concluding a proper peace (*sulh*) with such people as Christian "Abyssinians." Two arrangements were possible: either they submitted on the basis of a per capita tax (*'ala ru'us*), "as did the Soqotrans with al-Julanda"... or on the basis of supplying so many slaves (*'ala raqiq*). The latter form of submission, however, automatically converted to the poll tax type (*jizya*) in the second year as by then, it was deemed, the population had fully accepted their subject status, and hence become protected peoples (*dhimmis*).<sup>24</sup>

It was this rule by Sharia<sup>25</sup> that ensured that the Omanis and other Muslim sultanates ruled the East Africa Coast cumulatively for over 800 years.<sup>26</sup> 1872 marked the beginning of the end of the sultanate when the British government sent Sir Bartle Frere to negotiate a treaty with Zanzibar aiming for the suppression of the slave-trade. The Sultan agreed to free the slaves; while the British worked with Christian missionaries to establish Frere town for former slaves. This was the beginning of a number of 'treaties' between the Sultan and European powers that led to alienation of the East African coastal strip and eventually to the 1964 revolution in Zanzibar that sent the Sultan and his family into exile.

### 2.1.2.2 The Horn and Southern Africa

In the Horn of Africa, the Muslim immigration had started as early as 780 AD. However, the Christian Ethiopian empire offered a strong resistance to the spread of Islam into the interior of

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<sup>23</sup> An-Naim A: Towards an Islamic reformation – Civil liberties, human rights and international law, 1990, p.150.

<sup>24</sup> Wilkinson: Oman and East Africa, 1981, pp.279-280.

<sup>25</sup> Strictly speaking though, since "Sharia is the religious normative system of Islam which becomes comprehensible to human beings by *fiqh* (understanding), it covers every aspect of a Muslim's life. It includes rules that define and shape doctrine, faith, religious rituals such as prayer and fasting, family relations, community links, trade, etiquette, and personal hygiene." (An-Naim 1981). Jan Michiel Otto explains: "There is no one Sharia but many different, even contesting ways to build a legal structure in accordance with God's vision for mankind. A single Sharia doesn't exist." Otto J M: Introduction - Investigating the Role of Sharia in National Law, in: Otto J M (Ed.), Sharia incorporated, 2010, p.24.

<sup>26</sup> "The Ibadi cult, which is centered in Oman, East Africa, and in parts of Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia, has been sometimes misinterpreted as being a Sunni cult. Ibadi religious and political dogma normally is similar basic primary doctrine, although the Ibadis are neither Sunni nor Shia. Ibadis believe forcefully in the existence of a Muslim society and dispute that religious leaders should be chosen by community leaders for their knowledge and devotion, without regard to race or ancestry." See: Khalilia E: Sects in Islam - Sunnis and Shia, *International Academic Journal of Humanities*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 2016, pp.41-47, available at <http://iaiest.com/dl/journals/4-%20IAJ%20of%20Humanities/v3-i4-Apr2016/paper5.pdf>, last accessed August 2018.

Africa. While the Christian kingdoms and population dwindled and were altogether lost in North Africa, the Ethiopian dynasty overcame the Muslim onslaught often through bloody war, sometimes through negotiated peace agreements, and sometimes even through the payment of the imposed Islamic tax, *jizya*.

While Southern Africa does not have a large number of Muslims, most of the Muslims in this region were originally Malaysians and Indian immigrants brought in as slaves or free people to provide labor for the colonial enterprise in Southern Africa.

### 2.1.3 Foundations of intolerance

Except for the wars of conquest, Islam largely found ways of coexisting with other religious traditions in Africa for over 500 years. However, in the 15th century, violent Islamic movements began to take root in Africa. The Ibadiyya sect made efforts at establishing its influence in North and West Africa but gradually all its converts in these regions reconverted to the Maliki school. However, its teachings never died away and these provided embers that ignited the hearts of various militant groups which were later to confront the North and West African Islamic world. As Levtzion and Pouwels observe:

It is significant that all leaders of the jihad movements in West Africa came from the countryside and not from commercial or capital towns. The challenge to the marginal role of Islam in African societies did not come from 'ulama who were spokesmen for the traders, nor from clerics who rendered religious services in the chiefly courts; it came mostly from the autonomous rural and pastoral enclaves. In the period 1880-1918, three forms of Islamic militancy became interconnected in the Horn. One was against adherents of indigenous religions and lax Muslims; a second opposed the Christian Ethiopian state; and a third resisted European colonialism. In Somalia, Sayyid Muhammad Abdallah Hassan began a jihad in 1898 to purify the country from the Ethiopian and European "unbelievers." The sayyid belonged to the Salihyya brotherhood, an offshoot of a tariqa founded by a disciple of Ahmad ibn Idris. He confronted the Qadiriyya, which collaborated with Europeans.<sup>27</sup>

It is these foundations of intolerance that gave birth to the radical Islamic ideology that has since worked hard to obliterate the vision of Islam as a religion of peace, at least for an objective observer of the atrocities committed in Africa in the name of Islam. It is to explore this ideology - its outlook, its claims and its consequences in Africa - that this study has been undertaken.

## 2.2 Schools of Islamic jurisprudence as practiced in Africa

Islamic Sunnah records the conversation between Prophet Mohammed and Mu'adh ibn Jabal which mentions the foundational sources of *Sharia*:

When the Messenger of Allah intended to send Mu'adh ibn Jabal to the Yemen, he asked: How will you judge when the occasion of deciding a case arises? He replied: I shall judge in accordance with Allah's Book. He asked: (What will you do) if you do not

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<sup>27</sup> Levtzion/Pouwels: Patterns, 2012.

find any guidance in Allah's Book? He replied: (I shall act) in accordance with the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah. He asked: (What will you do) if you do not find any guidance in the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah and in Allah's Book? He replied: I shall do my best to form an opinion and I shall spare no effort. The Messenger of Allah then patted him on the breast and said: Praise be to Allah Who has helped the messenger of the Messenger of Allah to find something which pleases the Messenger of Allah.<sup>28</sup>

From this conversation, Muslims have concluded that the sources of *Sharia* (the Islamic rule of faith) are the Quran, Sunnah and *Ijtihad* (the intellectual effort *{jihad}* to fulfil the will of Allah).<sup>29</sup> It is through *ijtihad* that the development of Islamic law and Islamic jurisprudence has been possible. Thus the different schools of Islamic jurisprudence were developed by scholars applying their minds to the Quran and the Sunnah. "Whenever a principle or rule of Shari'a is based on the general meaning or broad implications of a text of Sunna, as opposed to the direct ruling of a clear and definite text, the link between the text and the principle or rule of sharia is established through juristic reasoning; and [i]t is hard to imagine any text of the Quran or Sunna, however clear and definite it may appear to be, that does not need this kind of *ijtihad* for its interpretation and application in concrete situations."<sup>30</sup> As the Muslim society became larger and the legal system also grew, different schools of jurisprudence developed:

Among the Sunnis, who constitute the majority of Muslims in the world, there are four main *madhahib* (singular maddhab, jurisprudential schools): Hanafi; Maliki; Hanbali; and Shafi'i. These *madhahib* were named after their leading jurists and each is the dominant authority in different parts of the world. The early jurists, through legal judgement and reasoning, justified their findings in terms of interpretations of the hierarchical sources and by paying attention to '*urf* (local customs), building the jurisprudence into a systematic body of texts and practices.<sup>31</sup>

The earliest school was the Hanafi (Hanafiyya) school which was developed by Abu Hanifa (699-767 AD) of Sufa, Iraq. He was a lawyer and a religious scholar whose teachings are followed mostly by the Ahmadi sect. Today his followers are found in Iraq, Afghanistan, India, lower Egypt and the East African region. "As the official doctrine in the Ottoman empire, Hanafi jurisprudence is prevalent not only in Turkey but in other parts of the former territories such as Syria, the Balkan states, Cyprus, Jordan and Palestine."<sup>32</sup> The next earliest school was the Maliki (Malikiyya) school. It was developed by Imam Malik bin Anas (who died in 795 AD) who was a judge in Medina. He compiled his judgments into a book called *al-muwatta*.<sup>33</sup> The Maliki school is found in North African countries of Sudan, Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and the Arabian Gulf including Kuwait. "Maliki doctrine made extensive use of hadith and its reasoning was not confined to *qiyas* (*reasoning by analogy*); and [t]heir use of *istislah* (*man's best interest in a case*), though confined to social transactions as opposed to religious practice, furthered the

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<sup>28</sup> Sunan Abi Dawud 3592, Book 24, Hadith 3585.

<sup>29</sup> Professor An-Naim defines *ijtihad* as 'exercising independent juristic reasoning to provide answers when the Quran and Sunna are silent'. See: An-Naim, Towards, 1990, p. 27.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Sait S and Lim H: Land, Law and Islam - Property and Human Rights in the Muslim World, London, 2006, p.42.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> The Four Schools of Islam, available at <https://free-islamic-course.org/stageone/stageone-module-4/four-schools-law-islam.html>, last accessed in August 2018.

pursuit of public interest.”<sup>34</sup> Both Hanafi and Maliki give considerable room for divergence of opinion within the schools.

The third school is the Shafi’i school which started in Cairo was begun by Muhammed ibn Idris al-Shafi’i (d. 820 AD). “It spread to Yemen, Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and South East Asia; it also predominates in Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.”<sup>35</sup> It was Shafi’i who developed ‘the basic structure and logic of legal epistemology and reasoning that was later developed by subsequent jurists’.<sup>36</sup> The last school is the Hanbali school which was developed by Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal (who died in 855 AD) of Baghdad.<sup>37</sup> It is the most conservative of the four schools. Because of its strictness, it did not flourish. “In the eighteenth century, however, this school was revived with the rise of Wahhabism and the growing influence of the House of Saud.”<sup>38</sup> It is the official doctrine of Saudi Arabia.

It is possible to have adherents of different schools in an area even though there may be one dominant school in a given state or region. While it is widely taught “that the ‘gates of *ijtihad*’ were shut in 1258 by a juristic consensus, which had led to the assumption that *ijtihad* is no longer possible”,<sup>39</sup> this idea has been largely discredited. An-Naim states that since “Islamic law has to adapt and adjust to the circumstances and needs of contemporary life within the context of Islam as a whole, even if this would involve discarding or modifying certain aspects of historic Shari’a ... contemporary Muslims have the competence to reformulate *usul al-fiqh* and exercise *ijtihad* even in matters governed by clear and definite texts of the Quran and Sunna as long as the outcome of such *ijtihad* is consistent with the essential message of Islam.”<sup>40</sup> In fact, he has consistently called for the reformation of Sharia (since Sharia is entirely a human endeavor)<sup>41</sup> so as to make it consistent with international human rights law and Constitutionalism.

The Shias on the other hand disagree generally with the Sunni understanding of Islamic Jurisprudence and Islamic Law. Sait and Lim have summarized the Shia position thus:

The Shi’a minority within the *umma* accepts the *Qur’an*, but consider the only acceptable interpretation as emanating from their Imam (spiritual leader). For Shi’a Muslims the Imam denotes both a religious and a secular leader. So far as the Shi’a recognition of *hadith* is concerned, only those which concern members of the family of the Prophet and his descendants are acceptable. *Ijma* as a source of Islamic law too has to be validated by an Imam or his representative and *qiyas* is dismissed outright. Among the Shi’a sect of Islam, as far as *ijtihad* is concerned the *mujtahid* cannot only

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<sup>34</sup> Sait/Lim, Land, 2006, p.42.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> The Four Schools of Islam.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Sait/Lim: Land, 2006, p.41.

<sup>40</sup> An-Naim: Towards, 1990, pp.7 & 28-29.

<sup>41</sup> This view is further supported by Jan Michiel Otto when he reports: “There is no such thing as a, that is one, Islamic law, a text that clearly and unequivocally establishes all the rules of a Muslim’s behaviour. There is a great divergence of views, not just between opposing currents, but also between individual scholars within the legal currents, of exactly what rules belong to Islamic law. The jurists have had to learn to live with this disagreement on and variety in the contents of the law... There is no one Sharia but rather many different, even contesting ways to build a legal structure in accordance with God’s vision for mankind. A single Sharia doesn’t exist. It is not a book that one can purchase. It is shaped, and interpreted by humans’ differing understanding of what the Qur’an and the Prophet’s life and experience mean.” Otto (2010) p.24.

make judgments and issue rulings on legal matters but also interpret the tenets of religion and the principles of the Shar'ia. Among the Ismaili branch of the Shi'a, there is a hierarchy of various degrees of knowledge and insight, distinguishing between the Imam 'endowed with perfect knowledge', his representatives (*dais*) and all other believers. The main Ismaili legal text is the *Daaimul Islam* (Pillars of Islam).<sup>42</sup>

### 2.2.1 Sunni-Shia differences in Africa

When Islam's Prophet Muhammed died in 632 AD, a dispute arose regarding who was to be his successor. One group concluded that the leader should be a qualified individual who would follow Muhammed's customs, while another faction considered that leadership should be exclusively through the Prophet's bloodline.<sup>43</sup> The group supporting leadership being awarded to an able leader unrelated to Muhammed appointed Abu Bakr as the first Caliph or successor. However, Ali (Muhammed's son-in-law) and his followers who believed that Muhammed had named Ali as his successor rejected this. "Those who supported Ali's ascendancy became known as 'Shi'a', stemming from the term 'shi'at Ali', meaning 'supporters' or 'helpers of Ali'; while the others respected and accepted the legitimacy of his caliphate and opposed political succession based on bloodline to the Prophet. This group, who constituted the majority of Muslims, became known as "Sunni," meaning "followers of [the Prophet's] customs [sunna]."<sup>44</sup> Muhammed's succession was the root of Sunni-Shia disagreement; over time, this initial disagreement has affected questions of doctrine and sources of Islamic law or Sharia. Despite their differing positions, the Shia and Sunni factions are agreed on the following:

The concepts of piety, endeavor for goodness, and social justice are fundamental to Islamic belief and practice. Muslims are expected to live in agreement with the five columns of Islam: (1) shahada—recital of the faith "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Prophet"; (2) salat—five compulsory prayers in a day; (3) zakat—giving donations to the poor; (4) sawm—fast from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan; and (5) hajj—making a religious expedition to Mecca once during a lifetime if one is physically and financially able to make. The essential sources for Islamic jurisprudence, be it Sunni or Shia, are the Quran, the sunna as passed on in the hadith, qiyas, ijma", and ijihad. The primary function of the learned religious leaders is the interpretation of Shari'a.<sup>45</sup>

The most defining feature of the Shia faction is the role of the imam in the life of its followers. They also insist that the rightful imam must be a direct descendant of Muhammed through his daughter Fatima and Ali (*ahl al-baht*).<sup>46</sup> Most of them believe that the imam is the "Perfect Man" (*al-insan al kamil*) who is the link between humankind and God.<sup>47</sup> For them, he is infallible and cannot commit error in any aspect of life.<sup>48</sup> The imam is therefore the final authority on law and religion irrespective of any outcome from *usul al-fiqh* by any *ulama* (jurist).<sup>49</sup> The Sunni faction

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<sup>42</sup> Sait/Lim, Land, 2006, pp. 41 – 42.

<sup>43</sup> Khalilia, Sects in Islam, 2016, pp. 41-47.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> An-Naim, Towards, 1990, p.30.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

however, is open to the leadership of anyone who demonstrates piety and leadership irrespective of whether he is related to Muhammed or not. While the Shia concept of an infallible imam gives no room for change and is susceptible to abuse, the Sunni commitment to *ijma* and *ijtihad* gives some room for flexibility and change.<sup>50</sup> “The main subgroups of Shi’a today include Ithna asharis, or Twelvers of Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and Bahrain; the Ismailis, or Seventhers of India, Central Asia, and Syria, East Africa, South Africa, and Persian gulf region, and the Zaydis of Southern Arabia.”<sup>51</sup> “The Zaydis, who admit the first five imams and deviate from the identity of the fifth, are a minority sect of Shia Islam, mostly found in Yemen; *and* [t]he Zaydis refuse the concepts of the imams’ infallibility and of a ‘hidden imam’.”<sup>52</sup>

These doctrinal differences between Sunni and Shia are often avenues of tension and sometimes violence between the sects. According to Pew Research in 2013, “[a]lthough Shias make up only about 10%-13% of the world’s Muslims, three of the five countries surveyed (Iran, Iraq and Azerbaijan) have Shia-majority populations” and “several of the countries (with significant Shia population) polled also have a recent history of sectarian violence including Lebanon, where a civil war was fought along sectarian lines from 1975 to 1991, and Iraq and Afghanistan, where bombings and other suspected sectarian attacks have occurred in the last few years.”<sup>53</sup> These tensions have also led to violence being planned in certain countries but committed in other parts of the world.

### 3. Saudi Arabia, the Iranian Revolution and their influence on Islamic practice in Africa

#### 3.1 The House of Saud and Wahhabism

It can be argued that Islam was a ‘revivalist movement’ even at its formation. Muhammed sought to revive his society which he had considered ‘modernist’ and therefore displeasing to his understanding of Allah.<sup>54</sup> Throughout the history of Islam many revivalist movements have sprung up in protest to the changes brought about by modernity, urging adherents to get back to the original faith and practice of Muhammed and his companions. Some of these movements have come and gone, while others have left a lasting mark, completely shaping Islamic worldview, doctrine and practice. Modern day reformist movements in Islam have their predecessors in the 18th-19th century revival movement called the *tajdid*.<sup>55</sup> Alarmed by the rapid economic and political changes in their society, these movements sought to renew

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> An-Naim, Towards, 1990, p.29.

<sup>52</sup> Khalilia, Sects in Islam, 2016, p. 45.

<sup>53</sup> Pew Research Center: Shia – Sunni Religious Conflict, November 2013, available at: <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2013/11/Shias-Sunnis-religious-conflict-full-report.pdf>, last accessed August 2018.

<sup>54</sup> Lapidus I M: Islamic Revival and Modernity: The Contemporary Movements and the Historical Paradigms. Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient 40(4), 1997, available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3632403>.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

commitment to the Quran and Hadith and *ijtihad* as the most authentic expression of Sharia.<sup>56</sup> Further, they were

... provoked by the extraordinary flourishing of the "alternative" forms of Islamic belief, worship and community in the period from the 13th to the 18th centuries. In this broad period, Shi'ism spread throughout the Indian ocean basin; the Safavids made Shi'ism the official religion of Iran. Sufism also gained ever wider acceptance among Muslims. Magical types of Islam became ever more common. The conversion of new populations to Islam led to the spread of faith in saints as miracle workers and the veneration of shrines as Sufism formed syncretisms with the beliefs, rituals, and identities of non-Muslim or newly converted but unassimilated peoples.) Among intellectuals, Sufi theosophy and Gnosticism was a bridge between universal religious attitudes and the particular commitments of Muslims... Conservative ulama and Sufis took the lead of movements that sought to stem the tide toward the more florid forms of Sufism, to counter-act court syncretisms, and push back the advance of Shi'ism.<sup>57</sup>

This was the background upon which Wahhabism was formed and with it the establishment of the House of Saud that continues to rule Saudi Arabia today. "The Wahhabi movement...was founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-92), a Sunni theologian who called for a return to austere practices supposedly followed by the Salaf, or earliest Muslims, during the 7th century."<sup>58</sup> For him "images, saints, shrines, communal festivals, and secular life- styles, with music, dance, and socializing, as distractions from true piety; [t]hus he rejected all changes since early Islam as bid'ah, or heretical innovations and idolatry."<sup>59</sup> To guide his followers, he wrote "*Kitab al-Tawhid*" (the Book of God's Uniqueness), "which became the guiding text for his followers, who consequently speak of themselves as *Muwahhidun* (total monotheists) or as *Salafis* (followers of the ways of the first Muslims)."<sup>60</sup> He then set out to try to correct the wrongs he had observed in his community by attacking the tombs of early Muslims in his Uyaynah hometown. The inhabitants expelled him and he found refuge in Diriyah, a city then ruled by Muhammad ibn Saud. When he spoke with the ruler in 1744, the two agreed to a pact: Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab would aid the king in battle, while the king would impose Wahhab's Islam as the official religion in his kingdom.<sup>61</sup> Through this pact

Diriyah, on the outskirts of Riyadh, became the center of Wahhabism; from there missionaries were dispatched to convert other Muslims in Arabia, the Persian Gulf, and Syria to the new sect. Jihad, or holy war, was initiated against Muslims in Arabia who refused to adopt the old Salafi ways as re-prescribed by Wahhab and upheld by King Saud, who was presented as Allah's chosen monarch to whom all Muslims had to pledge baya, or absolute allegiance, so as not to face annihilation as foes of god.<sup>62</sup>

The alliance worked well for both the king and Wahhabism; the king consolidated the Arabian Peninsula under his rule and established the first Saudi kingdom with Wahhabism as the official

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> See <http://www.ilmgate.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Islamic-Revival-and-Modernity-The-Contemporary-Movements-and-the-Historical-Paradigms.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> Choksy C E B and Choksy J K: The Saudi Connection - Wahhabism and Global Jihad. *World Affairs*, 178(1), 2015, pp.23-34, available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43555279>, accessed in August 2018.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

religion of the kingdom.<sup>63</sup> This version of Islam considers itself to be the true expression of Islamic faith and practice and that every other sect, Sunni or Shia, are heresies that have either to be persuaded to convert to Wahhabism or be compelled to convert through jihad.<sup>64</sup> At the creation of the modern Saudi state in 1932, Abdulaziz ibn Saud made the conversion to Wahhabism his rallying cry.<sup>65</sup> When faced with Islamic nationalist movements, the Saudi royals resorted to “the propaganda of Wahhabism”; proclaiming the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as the sole rightful defender of Islam became the long-term strategy for the monarchy's survival.<sup>66</sup> This has led the House of Saud to establish mosques, training centers and madrassas, whose students spread Wahhabism throughout the Middle East and Africa.<sup>67</sup>

It is Wahhabi doctrine that has propelled the House of Saud into involvement in wars that have destabilized Afghanistan, Yemen and most of the Middle East. It is in Saudi Arabia that some of the most aggressive militant groups, such as al-Qaeda were formed. It is from Saudi Arabia that these militants have spread into Africa and other parts of the world.

### 3.2 Shiites and the Iranian Revolution

The rise of Islamic theocracy in the Middle East is recent: “Until the end of the eighteenth century, the Middle East was not characterized by theocracies, but by a practical division of labor between political rulers and the Islamic religious institutions.”<sup>68</sup> The same situation applied in Iran where there had been over two thousand years of the Shah dynasty preceding the coming of Islam. With the coming of Islam, the monarchs and the Shia religious leaders found a working relationship that was mostly peaceful. Traditionally, most Shia groups focused on the leadership of imams, which was often separate from the political establishments around them. This is the situation that prevailed in Iran. However, Islamist elements had long been an influence for political change in the country, which included supporting the democratically-elected *majlis* and the election of nationalist Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh in 1950.<sup>69</sup> They also further supported the overthrow and subsequent exiling of the Shah. When the USA led a coup through

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> “Wahhabism first emerged as something truly revolutionary, taking almost as its motto the hadith “Islam began as a stranger [gharib], and will return a stranger as it started,” which it interpreted to place Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al Wahhab (as leader of the return) in some respects almost on a level with the Prophet (as leader of the first beginning). By modifying the universally-accepted test of what made a Muslim, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab concluded that almost all the Muslims were actually in a state of *jahiliyya*, i.e. were not actually Muslim at all.” See: Sedgwick, M J R: (1997). Saudi Sufis: Compromise in the Hijaz, 1925-40. *Die Welt Des Islams*, 37(3), 1997, 349–368, p.352.

<sup>65</sup> Choksy/Choksy, *The Saudi Connection*, 2015, pp.23-34.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. “According to the Saudi monarchy's official websites, Wahhabi charities and royal trusts, including that of another Saudi ruler, the late King Fahd, spent millions of dollars recruiting students to more than 1,500 mosques, 210 Muslim centers, 202 Islamic colleges, and 2,000 madrassas and on staffing those institutions with nearly 4,000 preachers and missionaries in nations in central, southern, and southeast Asia, as well as in Africa, Europe, and North America. Adherents to Wahhabism used Saudi control of four-fifths of all Islamic publishing houses around the world to spread their fighting words into faraway places.”

<sup>68</sup> Schmidt S: *The Role of Religion in Politics -The Case of Shia-Islamism in Iraq*, *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* 22 (2), (2009), pp.123–143, available at <http://tapir.pdc.no/pdf/NJRS/2009/2009-02-2.pdf>, last accessed August 2018.

<sup>69</sup> Zunes S: *The Iranian Revolution (1977-1979)*, International Center on Non-violent Conflicts. Available at <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/The-Iranian-Revolution-1.pdf>, last accessed 8/12/2018.

the CIA against the Iranian government in 1953, the Shah was reinstated and supported by a US-trained army, the largest and one of the best trained forces in the Middle East.

In 1963, the Shah embarked on an ambitious modernization program which he called the 'White Revolution'. The Shiite *ulama* saw this as an affront on Islam and Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini led the other Shia religious leaders in denouncing the Shah and his plans. Ayatollah Khomeini was arrested and detained, leading to demonstrations throughout the country that killed about 400 people. He was released after two months, but was arrested again and detained for six months in 1964 when he denounced the Shah (and the USA) for allowing US military personnel to be tried by their own military courts for any crimes committed in Iran. On his release, Prime Minister Hasan Ali Mansur tried to convince Khomeini to drop his opposition to the government, but he refused. The prime minister physically assaulted Khomeini and shortly after this incident was leaked to the public, the prime minister was assassinated. Four members of the militant Shiite group, *Fadayan-e Islam*, were charged, convicted and executed for the murder. At this juncture, Ayatollah Khomeini went into exile, from which he continued his opposition to the Shah. It is also here that he conceived the idea of an Islamic State ruled by *Sharia* with the religious leaders overseeing the implementation of *Sharia*. As Mehdi Shadmehr observes:

Shia political ideology underwent a significant transformation in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Khomeini, who later became the leader of the Islamic Revolution, reinterpreted the Shia political thought and proposed a novel Islamic theory of state: The Guardianship of the Jurist. Khomeini argued that Islamic law outlines an Islamic state in which the clergy supervise the execution of Islamic laws. He explicitly declared that the institution of monarchy was inconsistent with Islam and emphasized the necessity of establishing an Islamic state as a religious duty.<sup>70</sup>

Through his book "*Islamic Government: Governance of the Jurist (Hokumat-e Islami: Velayat-e faqih)*" Ayatollah Khomeini introduced a novel idea which resonated with the reformist yearnings of Islamists. It started a wave of revolution that led to the formation of Islamic states in the Middle East and Africa.<sup>71</sup> It was Khomeini's rejection of monarchy that set him against all Sunni monarchies of his day, foremost of which was the Sunni Wahhabi kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It was his rejection of secularism and secular governments that made Iran an enemy of the Sunni-led Iraqi government and other secular governments in the Islamic world.

It was the rise of Iran as an Islamic state that revived the Islamist zeal for an Islamic utopia spanning the world. It made the dream achievable of one united Islamic State stretching across

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<sup>70</sup> Shadmehr M: Khomeini's Theory of Islamic State and the Making of the Iranian Revolution, Institute on Advanced Studies – Princeton (undated), available at: <http://moya.bus.miami.edu/~mshadmehr/Ideology.pdf>, last accessed in August 2018.

<sup>71</sup> Others have also rightly observed that it was the prevailing situation that led Khomeini down the revolutionary path: "The Iranian Revolution was linked to religion, which is a cultural institution, a complex of symbols, articles of faith, and practices adhered to by a group of believers that are related to, and commonly invoke the aid of, superhuman powers and provide answers to questions of ultimate meaning. The ideological vacuum of pre-revolutionary Iran left a certain air of susceptibility in the religious- political mindset of the Iranian people. Shi'ism has a long history of struggling against oppression, persecution, and political corruption, three of the most prominent ills plaguing prerevolutionary Iran. This Shi'a ideology was not a novel creation by the mastermind of the revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, but rather a unique synthesis of previously developed ideologies that were cleverly manipulated to instill the masses with a religiously based revolutionary zeal." See: Rahmati F: The Consequences of Iran's Islamic Revolution on Saudi Shiites Socio - Political Situation, available at [http://ijps.azad.ac.ir/article\\_533087\\_ec27df3497cf539b49fe3e0d1273f833.pdf](http://ijps.azad.ac.ir/article_533087_ec27df3497cf539b49fe3e0d1273f833.pdf), last accessed in August 2018.

Asia, Middle East, Africa and Europe. It is the Iranian rejection of both Saudi Arabian Wahhabi doctrine and the House of Saud's legitimacy that brought the age-old rivalry between Sunnis and Shiites back to life. The Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88 further cemented sectarian distrust and the Saudi Arabian denunciation of Iran as heretic also worsened the situation. The two regimes have since embarked on a global race to expand their spheres of influence. One arena for this has been Africa.

## 4. The growth of intolerance and the emergence of jihadist groups in Africa

The resurgence of jihadist groups in Africa is connected to the global revivalist movements in the Muslim world. As Lapidus aptly puts it:

The contemporary wave of Islamic revival movements has its origin in the 1920s and 1930s with the founding of the Society of Muslim Brothers in Egypt by Hasan al-Banna, and the Jama'at-i Islami in India founded by Mawlana Abu 'Ala Mawdudi. With the creation of independent states after World War II and the suppression of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt in the 1950s, these movements were eclipsed by the secular and socialist tendencies of the national states. By the 1970s, however, a new generation again advanced the program of Islamic West African set out in the 1930s. The Muslim Brothers and the Jama'at in Egypt, AlNahda in Tunisia, FIS in Algeria, the Jama'at-i Islami in Pakistan and elsewhere in South and Southeast Asia, and Shi'i movements in Lebanon such as Amal and Hizbullah, represent the new generation. The defeat of the Arab states in the 1967 war with Israel, the manifest failure of many development programs, and the revolution in Iran, strengthened the demand for Islamization in Muslim countries.<sup>72</sup>

Wahhabism, Sufism and other revival groups before them all claim that the saving hope for "Islamic societies lies in a return by each and every individual to the morality taught in the Quran and the Sunna, the teachings of the Prophet; a return to the Shari'a, or Islamic law ... by a stripping away of many of the traditional practices and beliefs of Muslims as a false historical accretion to the pure Islam."<sup>73</sup> As a result, the call goes out for "a renewed commitment to Islam in the hearts and minds of individuals as the basis of communal solidarity, social justice, and the fair treatment of the poor; [for] women to return to family roles; [for the] removal of corrupt regimes; and [for the] creation of Islamic states as the protectors and enforcers of Islamic morality in Islamized societies."<sup>74</sup> Militant Islamic groups therefore call for the overthrow of secular governments, the reorganization of Muslim societies into their understanding of what existed in Salafist times and the punishment of those deemed enemies of Islam.

African and global jihadist movements often have common interests:

African jihadist movements share some distinctive ideological views that can be summarised in three major points. First, Islam is at war with the West and its local

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<sup>72</sup> Lapidus, Islamic revival, 1997.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

allies in Muslim societies, and militarily confronting the enemies of Islam is a religious duty. Second, the nation-state system, state institutions, and democracy are un-Islamic and need to be replaced with the system based on the Caliphate and Sharia law. Third, Muslims can be declared “apostates” or “unbelievers” if they commit major sins, and in which case they can be legitimately targeted with violence. These three ideas are the quintessence of jihadism, a global ideology that has motivated and justified jihadist insurgencies around the world.<sup>75</sup>

Most of these common interests derive from Iranian revolution ideology and its effect both in the Islamic world and across the globe.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, jihadist attacks in Africa have had varied targets. There are instances when they have targeted American, Israeli and Western interests in Africa. There are also instances when they have attacked African government interests in an effort to topple secular governments. Finally, there have also been attacks aimed at i) Christian groups and individuals considered a threat to the Islamist agenda; ii) those considered apostate; and iii) non-Muslim communities in order to instill fear and force the general public to accept the Islamist agenda. The next section of this paper focusses on the attacks across different regions in Africa and how Christians have been particularly affected.

## 5. Overview of selected major attacks in East Africa and the Horn

The earlier propagators of Islamist ideology in modern Africa were the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt: “Created in 1928 by Hassan al Banna, the Brotherhood initially focused on education and charitable work, but soon became regarded as a political organization because of its blending of Islamic, nationalist, anti-colonial, and social programs - Its viewpoint was that in order to improve society and adapt it to modern times one needed to look back to the example of early Islam.”<sup>77</sup> The Brotherhood demanded the reintroduction of Sharia in Muslim countries as the basis for all government affairs. The influence of the Muslim Brotherhood was extensive and led to the creation of an Islamic state in Sudan and in other North African countries. The aspirations of the Muslim Brotherhood reverberated throughout the East and Horn of Africa and led to the formation of affiliate groups from the 1950s onwards, reaching Somalia in the 1970s. There were also Ethiopian sympathizers in the 1970s and East African affiliates in the 1980s. With Sudan’s Muslim Brotherhood affiliate taking power in 1991, Sudan became the East and Horn of Africa’s center for the incubation of jihadist groups. This was after the regime provided a home for Osama Bin Laden.<sup>78</sup> Exploring the chaos and lack of government in Somalia, Osama Bin Laden

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<sup>75</sup> Choksy/Choksy: The Saudi Connection, 2015, pp. 23–34.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. “Muslim activists in West Africa inspire and draw from Islamic ideologies that are developed and promoted at global level. Thus, it is important to underline that *there is no African exceptionalism when it comes to the emergence of jihadist insurgency*. The processes that have led to the wave of jihadist insurgency in West Africa are not any different from the process that led to the rise of the phenomenon elsewhere in the world. The wave of jihadist insurgency in West Africa comes as a result of the intersection of favourable conditions at the global, local, and individual level.”

<sup>77</sup> Berger M and Sonneveld N: Sharia and national law in Egypt, in: Otto J M, Sharia incorporated, 2010.

<sup>78</sup> “From 1991, when Osama bin Laden was based in Sudan, al-Qaeda has been building a network of Islamist groups in both the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia) and East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda)”. Dagne believes that, as in South Asia - especially Afghanistan and Pakistan - al-Qaeda was able to exploit extant

and his associates exploited the porous borders of Somalia to smuggle jihadists into Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Thus it was not long before the cells became strong enough to stage attacks.

## 5.1. Attacks in Kenya – 1980 onwards

The attack that was most widely reported in Kenya and East Africa was the 1998 twin attack on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania:

“On 7 August 1998 al-Qaeda operatives used truck bombs against the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The explosions killed 240 Kenyans, 12 Tanzanians and 11 Americans, and injured over 5000 people, mostly Kenyans. Four years later, on 28 November 2002, two simultaneous attacks were conducted against Israeli targets in Mombasa, Kenya. Suicide bombers drove a truck into an Israeli-owned hotel, killing 10 Kenyans and three Israelis, and injuring over 20 Kenyans. Around the same time terrorists tried to shoot down an Israeli aircraft using surface-to-air missiles; had they succeeded they would have killed more than 200 passengers on board.”<sup>79</sup>

While these attacks introduced the East African states to the global jihadist aggression that culminated in the 9/11 attacks in the USA, they were not the first acts of Islamic terrorism that had taken place in the East African region. On 27 June 1976, an Air France Airbus was hijacked as it left the Athens airport for Paris.<sup>80</sup> Two Germans had teamed up with two members of a breakaway faction of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) hijacked the plane first to Algiers and then on to Entebbe, with express permission from Idi Amin, Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU now the African Union). Because of the Israeli war with Egypt in 1973, the African states had severed diplomatic relations with Israel in solidarity with Egypt. One week later, Israel staged a daring raid on the Entebbe airport rescuing all the hostages except one who had fallen sick and had been taken to hospital. The Israelis had stopped to refuel in Nairobi. Three years later on 31 December 1980, a bomb exploded at the Norfolk Hotel in Nairobi killing 20 people and wounding 80 others. At the time of the attack, a “Jewish firm known as Block Hotels owned and operated the Norfolk Hotel”.<sup>81</sup> The Kenyan investigations revealed that the man responsible was Qaddura Mohammed Abdel al-Hamid, a 34-year-old Moroccan man travelling on a Maltese passport and a member of the PFLP. He was never apprehended since the bomb exploded after he had already left the country for Saudi Arabia.<sup>82</sup>

Kenya’s participation in counter-terrorism measures with other countries helped to stem the terrorist attacks for a while. However, in October 2011 Kenya invaded Somalia in response to a

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circumstances of widespread poverty, ethnic and religious competition and conflict, poorly policed state borders, and often corrupt and inefficient government officials to create a regional 'terror centre' in East Africa.” See: Haynes J: Islamic Militancy in East Africa, *Third World Quarterly* 26, No. 8, 2005, pp.1321–39.

<sup>79</sup> Haynes: Islamic militancy, 2005, p.1322.

<sup>80</sup> Freedland J: ‘We thought this would be the end of us’ - the raid on Entebbe 40 years on, *The Guardian*, 25 June 2016, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/25/entebbe-raid-40-years-on-israel-palestine-binyamin-netanyahu-jonathan-freedland>, last accessed August 2018.

<sup>81</sup> Kiruga M: 20 killed in bomb attack on Norfolk, *Daily Nation*, available at: <https://mobile.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/1950774-1993444-format-xhtml-tt6skxz/index.html>, last accessed August 2018.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

number of cross-border kidnappings of tourists and aid workers by al-Shabaab;<sup>83</sup> this opened the floodgates for jihadist attacks, from which Kenya has not yet fully recovered. While the propagators of these attacks may claim that they were carried out in retaliation for the Kenya Defence Force's involvement in the war against al-Shabaab, the targets have been Christians and groups connected to the State of Israel. They are attacks calculated to shatter the many years of peace between Christians and Muslims in the country. "Between 2008 and 2015, the group (*al-Shabaab*) executed a total of 272 attacks in Kenya".<sup>84</sup> There is neither space nor time to list and explain all the over 400 attacks reported within the years 2008–2018 in Kenya.<sup>85</sup> While the Kenyan government has worked towards reducing the risk of such attacks, the country is still under high alert because al-Shabaab militants could attack anytime.

### 5.1.1 The Garissa church attacks in July 2012

On 1 July 2012, hooded gunmen launched simultaneous attacks on the African Inland Church (AIC) and Catholic churches in Garissa town. At the end of the attacks 20 Christians had died. No one took responsibility for the attacks, but it followed the patterns of other al-Shabaab attacks following Kenyan invasion of Somalia.

There have since been numerous other attacks targeting Christians and the Kenyan army in Garissa and along the Kenyan-Somali border.

### 5.1.2 The attack on Westgate Mall in September 2013

Shortly after midday on 21 September 2013, a group of heavily armed gunmen attacked an Israeli shopping center in Nairobi's Westlands area called Westgate Mall. What followed was a massacre that left 71 people dead and hundreds injured. "After firing several rounds they [the gunmen] called out in English: 'Muslims, get out of here!' Summoning his (Joshua Hakim) courage, Hakim approached one of the men, who was wielding an assault rifle in each hand, ...and showed the man his voter card, holding a thumb over his Christian name; [t]he gunman, who was wearing a black bandana embellished with Arabic script, shouted at him to leave."<sup>86</sup> However, "when an older man, of Indian origin, approached and was asked to name the mother of the prophet, when he hesitated, he was shot."<sup>87</sup> Whenever it was not possible to offer an exit for Muslims, the gunmen fired indiscriminately.

Due to a poorly coordinated security response from the Kenyan government, the gunmen had the opportunity to regroup and systematically hunt down anyone hidden in the mall. What

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<sup>83</sup> Branch D: Why Kenya Invaded Somalia, *Foreign Affairs*, 15 November 2011, available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/africa/2011-11-15/why-kenya-invaded-somalia>, last accessed August 2018.

<sup>84</sup> Cannon B J and Pkalya D R: Why al-Shabaab Attacks Kenya: Questioning the Narrative Paradigm, Terrorism and Political Violence, 2017, available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314482184\\_Why\\_al-Shabaab\\_Attacks\\_Kenya\\_Questioning\\_the\\_Narrative\\_Paradigm](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314482184_Why_al-Shabaab_Attacks_Kenya_Questioning_the_Narrative_Paradigm), last accessed October 2018.

<sup>85</sup> Global Terrorism Database, Kenya Incidents, available at: [https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?expanded=no&casualties\\_type=&casualties\\_max=&success=yes&country=104&ob=GTID&od=desc&page=1&count=100#results-table](https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?expanded=no&casualties_type=&casualties_max=&success=yes&country=104&ob=GTID&od=desc&page=1&count=100#results-table), last accessed October 2018.

<sup>86</sup> Howden D: Terror in Nairobi: the full story behind al-Shabaab's mall attack, *The Guardian*, 3 October 2013, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/04/westgate-mall-attacks-kenya>, last accessed in August 2018.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

followed was an 80-hour siege, during which al-Shabaab broadcast their communication with the attackers at the Mall. They had claimed responsibility for the attack as soon as it started. The attack served its purpose of inciting fear and mistrust between Christians and Muslims and its 'success' emboldened al-Shabaab to plan further attacks throughout Kenyan territory.

### 5.1.3 The Mpeketoni attacks in 2014

In the night of 16-17 June 2014, al-Shabaab gunmen attacked Mpeketoni villages in Lamu County, killing 65 people and damaging many properties. As has been their custom, victims would be called upon to recite passages of the Quran and if they failed they would be shot dead. The victims were mostly non-Muslim men. Muslims held at different mosques were also forced to listen to al-Shabaab propaganda. Several others were injured in the attack. The Kenyan government tried to play politics with this attack claiming that it was the work of opposition politicians keen to destabilize the region for political gain. However, about eight months later, al-Shabaab backed their claim with chilling videos that documented what happened in that night. They also explained that their attack was motivated by the Christian occupation of the Coastal region and the Kenya Defense Force's presence in Somalia.<sup>88</sup>

### 5.1.4 The bus attacks in 2014

There have been at least five systematic attacks on buses in the North Eastern region of Kenya in recent years. Each time, gunmen forced the buses to stop and would then separate Somalis from non-Somalis. Christians were forced to lie on the ground, while those claiming to be Muslims were tested in reciting the Quran<sup>89</sup>; if they failed, they too were lined up on the ground and shot dead. One of the bloodiest of these incidents was the attack on a Nairobi-bound bus in the night of 22 November 2014. There were 60 people on board. The 28 people killed either self-identified as Christians or failed the Muslim test. There were instances where Muslims did much to protect their fellow Christian passengers, such as the heroic act of a Muslim bus driver who was injured trying to drive his bus away from the attackers who had intended to kill all the Christians on board.<sup>90</sup> Despite such acts, the attacks have strained the relationship between Christians and (mostly Somali) Muslims.

### 5.1.5 The attack on Garissa University in April 2015

At dawn on 2 April 2015, Garissa University became the target of an al-Shabaab attack.<sup>91</sup> Four heavily armed gunmen arrived at 05:00hrs, killed the two security officers at the gate and started the day-long ordeal that left 148 people dead, 142 of them the university students who had been their target. The attackers arrived at the time when student members of the Christian

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<sup>88</sup> The apparently heavily edited 34 minute video shows at least three execution scenes in Mpeketoni and Poromoko where men were pulled from rooms. See: <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000154118/al-shabaab-releases-chilling-video-about-mpeketoni-attack>, last accessed in August 2018.

<sup>89</sup> The most common test in these instances has been where victims are asked to recite the *Shahada* ("There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah").

<sup>90</sup> Stoyan Zaimov S: Muslims Risk Their Lives to Save Christians in Kenyan Bus Attack, *Christian Post*, 21 December 2015, available at: <https://www.christianpost.com/news/muslims-save-christians-kenyan-bus-attack-al-shabaab-radical-islamic-terrorists-153066/>, last accessed in August 2018.

<sup>91</sup> Laing A and Pflanz M: Kenya university attack - 'They were lined up and executed', *The Telegraph*, 3 April 2015, available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/kenya/11514500/Kenya-university-attack-They-were-lined-up-and-executed.html>, last accessed October 2018.

Union were holding morning prayers and so they went to the hall, attracted by the singing. “It was about 5.30am and they had just joined hands to say the Lord’s Prayer when two wild-eyed men wielding AK-47 assault rifles stormed the classroom where they were gathered and opened fire.”<sup>92</sup> They then sprayed the room with bullets and after everyone had dropped to the floor, they went through the bodies to see if all were dead. This was the account of one of the students, Racheal Munjiri, who was in this room and is now bound to a wheelchair for the rest of her life. There were about 30 students in the hall at the time; eight survived but with injuries that have permanently disabled almost all them.

Moving on from the hall, the gunmen shot everyone who was trying to escape and then cornered the students in their living quarters. They ordered the students to come out, making the Muslims stand on one side and the Christians on the other. “They separated the ladies from the gentlemen and started asking for Muslims,” the student Daisy Onyango recalled. “If you claimed to be a Muslim, you are asked some few questions. If you pass the test, you are allowed to go. If you failed, you were shot dead.”<sup>93</sup> The gunmen lured the ladies out of their hiding places by shouting to them that the Quran prohibited them from killing women. When the women appeared, they were also subjected to the ‘Muslim test’ and those who failed or chose to identify as Christians were then mercilessly executed. Most of these students were made to call their parents and tell them that they were going to die because the government had sent the army to Somalia. Most were shot while making these calls. When it was clear that security officers were getting the better of the attackers, three of the four attackers detonated their vests killing some of the hostages with them. The security officers shot the fourth attacker. It was the end of one of Kenya’s bloodiest days since the attack on the US Embassy in Nairobi on 7 August 1998.

## 5.2 Attacks in Tanzania

Unlike Kenya, Tanzania has not experienced many attacks by Islamic militants. While there are jihadist elements in the country, most of them are homegrown and focus on grievances with the central government. Some of them are based on Zanzibar Island and are often secessionist in nature. Except for the bombing of the American Embassy in Dar Es Salaam on 7 August 1998, there has not been a major terrorist attack in Tanzania. However, the Global Terrorism Database lists 17 attacks since that date.<sup>94</sup> The fatalities have been less than 100 and the motivation is mostly grounded in Muslim nationalism whose aspirations are separate from the global terrorist enterprise.

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<sup>92</sup> Some K: ‘I’m at peace with what fate has served me since Shabaab raid’, Daily Nation, 31 March 2018, available at: <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/Garissa-university-attack/1056-4366842-dxh1b5/index.html>, last accessed in August 2018. This is a report by Rachael Munjiri, one of the students who was in the Christian Union prayer-meeting at Garissa University when al-Shabaab attacked. She was shot eleven times and it is a miracle that she survived to tell her story.

<sup>93</sup> McNeish H: An eyewitness recalls the horror of Al Shabaab’s attack on Kenya’s Garissa university, GlobalPost, 5 April 2015, available at: <https://www.pri.org/stories/eyewitness-recalls-horror-al-shabaabs-attack-kenyas-garissa-university>, last accessed in August 2018. The account is by Daisy Onyango, one of the students trapped in one of the hostels by al-Shabaab gunmen at the Garissa University.

<sup>94</sup> Global Terrorism Database, Tanzania Reported Incidences, available at: <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?country=203>, last accessed in August 2018.

### 5.3 Attacks in Uganda

Uganda has not known much peace since its independence from Britain in 1962. There have been coups and counter-coups which finally ended with the military victory of Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army in 1985 when it deposed Milton Obote. The first major jihadist attack happened in the night of 11 July 2010. At least 74 people were killed in the twin bombings in Kampala that targeted an Ethiopian restaurant and a rugby club, where members were watching the finals of the FIFA World Cup. Al-Shabaab were quick to claim responsibility, with Sheikh Ali Mohamud Rage, al-Shabaab's spokesman, telling reporters in the Somali capital: "We thank the mujahideens that carried out the attack. ... We are sending a message to Uganda and Burundi, if they do not take out their AMISOM (*African Union Mission in Somalia*) troops from Somalia, blasts will continue and it will happen in Bujumbura [Burundi's capital] too."<sup>95</sup> Since that time there have been a few minor attacks targeting moderate Muslim clerics, an attack that killed the lead prosecutor in the July 2010 bombings trials, and an attack on the police by the Islamist Allied Democratic Forces, reportedly allied to the Islamic State group (IS) and al-Shabaab.

### 5.4 Islamic militants in Sudan, Darfur and South Sudan

Since the Islamist take-over in the 1989 coup, Sudan became the headquarters of al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden's base. The Islamists in Sudan quickly moved to establish themselves as the champions of political Islam and of the radicalization of Islam begun by President Gaafar Nimeiry through his September Laws.<sup>96</sup> "Sudan was designated as a State Sponsor of Terrorism in 1993 due to concerns about support to international terrorist groups, including the Abu Nidal Organization, Palestine Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and Hizballah".<sup>97</sup>

From Sudan, militant cells moved into countries of East and North Africa and the Horn of Africa. It also was from Khartoum that radical Islamic groups supported the Khartoum government's suppression of the largely Christian South, insisting on implementing Sharia rule in this region and throughout the whole country. This imposition of Sharia and the marginalization of the South led to the emergence of the Sudan People's Liberation Army in the South and to the outbreak of civil war. Hassan 'Abd Allah al-Turabi, leader of the Sudanese branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, executed plans for Khartoum during this war.<sup>98</sup> He oversaw untold atrocities against South Sudanese Christian civilians which eventually led to the secession of the South.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Rice X: Uganda bomb blasts kill at least 74, The Guardian, 12 July 2010, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jul/12/uganda-kampala-bombs-explosions-attacks>, last accessed in August 2018.

<sup>96</sup> These were the Presidential Decrees that President Gaafar Muhammad an-Nimeiry issued in September 1983, establishing Sharia rule in Sudan. See: Köndgen O: Shari'a and national law in the Sudan, in Otto J M (Ed.), *Sharia incorporated*, 2010.

<sup>97</sup> United States Government, *State Sponsors of Terrorism Report 2016*. Available on <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2016/272235.htm#SUDAN> last accessed on 08/24/2018.

<sup>98</sup> Wallis W: Hassan al-Turabi, Islamist theologian, 1932-2016, *Financial Times*, March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Available at <https://www.ft.com/content/cc008310-e47e-11e5-bc31-138df2ae9ee6> last accessed on 08/23/2018.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

Khartoum's Islamist policies also led to the outbreak of the Darfur war which has resulted in Central African countries neighboring Sudan becoming destabilized.

## 6. Overview of selected attacks in West and North Africa

The emerging wave of militant Islamic groups in North and West Africa must be understood within the context of global jihadist ideologies, which have been appropriated by groups and individuals to fit their local situations and grievances.<sup>100</sup> While most Islamic militant groups in the region sprung up after the 9/11 attack and the resulting US 'war on terror', other jihadist set-ups were once armed groups fighting in country-specific armed conflicts but have since been transformed by identifying with the goals and rhetoric of the global jihadist groups such as al-Qaeda and IS.<sup>101</sup> "AQIM emerged out of the Algerian Civil War, which started in 1991 following the Islamists' victory in the first democratic elections and the subsequent military coup that denied them power; waging a violent campaign against the junta aimed essentially at reclaiming their electoral victory."<sup>102</sup> The conflict persisted "from 1991 to 2002 when a radical branch of the Islamist insurgents, called the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC in the French acronym), adopted al-Qaeda's jihadist ideology and shifted the focus of the insurgency from regime change in Algeria to waging jihad throughout the Sahelo-Saharan region."<sup>103</sup>

The script is the same throughout North and West Africa. The emergence of these Islamic militants defies the long tradition of the Maliki school and its practice of tolerance and peaceful coexistence with other religious traditions. In the following subsections, those countries most affected by Islamic militancy will be discussed.

### 6.1 Attacks in Nigeria

Islam had reached the Borno region, in what is now north-eastern Nigeria, beginning as early as the eleventh century, from north and east across Sahara and Sahel. It came to Hausaland somewhat later, not only from north and east but from the west, from the empires of Mali and Songhay, where for several centuries Timbuktu was West Africa's most famous center of Islamic learning. By the fifteenth century, Islam was established in the Hausa city-states – Kano and Katsina perhaps most famous among them. By 1750 it was the nominal, if only loosely observed, religion of the ruling and merchant classes in all those parts of the country.<sup>104</sup>

As the quote above makes clear, African Muslim heritage contained many strands. This plurality received a shock in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century when the preaching of the Fulani revivalist and reformer, Shehu Uthman dan Fodio,<sup>105</sup> led to Fulani-led jihadist wars (1802 – 1810) culminating

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<sup>100</sup> Ibrahim I Y: *The Wave of Jihadist Insurgency in West Africa: Global Ideology, Local Context, Individual Motivations*, West African Papers, No. 07, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2017.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ostien P and Dekker A, *Sharia and national law in Nigeria*, in: Otto J M (Ed.), *Sharia incorporated*, 2010, p.556.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

in the formation of the Sokoto Caliphate.<sup>106</sup> For the most part, this caliphate was inspired “by the desire to purify society of un-Islamic practices and to live solely according to sharia; to enforce Islamic law exclusively, and to outlaw customary and administrative law”.<sup>107</sup> The Sokoto Caliphate and the Borno Caliphate covered most of northern Nigeria by the time the British began their colonial project.<sup>108</sup> While the North kept its Islamic identity throughout the British colonial administration, the application of Sharia was limited to personal law, i.e. to marriage, probate and succession.<sup>109</sup>

When Nigeria became independent in October 1960, the Federal Constitution established a secular government that confined Sharia to personal law. However, different groups in the North competed in trying to establish rule by Sharia. Except for sectarian violence between different Islamic groups that clashed over their different interpretation of Sharia, nothing came of these efforts until Alhaji Ahmad Sani was elected governor of Zamfara State. He had promised religious reforms that would make Zamfara State and its people ‘acceptable to Allah’:

By this, Governor Sani did not mean reforms of the religion of Islam. He meant reforms of the laws and institutions of Zamfara State, to bring them more into conformity with Islam – in particular with Islamic law. ‘Sharia implementation’, as the reforms quickly came to be called, has been effected primarily by legislation at the state and local government levels, aimed at making the legislating jurisdictions, in various ways, more ‘sharia compliant’ than they had formerly been. After Zamfara showed the way, eleven other states – Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto and Yobe – followed with similar legislative programmes.<sup>110</sup>

It is these programs of Islamization that have since subjected Christians and non-Muslims to persecution in the northern Sharia states. The programs caused the emergence of such radical Islamic groups as Boko Haram who have unleashed a wave of violent attacks throughout Nigeria and the neighboring regions. They have been responsible for more than 1000 attacks in the years 2015-2017.<sup>111</sup> There follows a small selection:

On 14 April 2014, Boko Haram abducted 276 girls from Chibok Girls Secondary school in Chibok, Borno State in Northern Nigeria. Most of these Christian girls were forcefully converted to Islam and married off to members of the Islamist group. Four years on, less than half of these girls have been able to return.<sup>112</sup> There are fears that some of these girls were radicalized and used in the various suicide attacks that rocked Nigeria following their kidnapping. Others were also radicalized and reportedly chose a life supporting Boko Haram. Nearly four years later, Boko Haram carried out a similar mass abduction, kidnapping 110 girls from their Secondary Boarding

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ostien/Dekker (2010), p.557.

<sup>109</sup> Mahmud, S S: Nigeria. African Studies Review, 47(2), 2004, pp.83–95.

<sup>110</sup> Ostien/Dekker (2010), p.575.

<sup>111</sup> Global Terrorism Database, Nigeria, available at

[https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?page=1&casualties\\_type=&casualties\\_max=&country=147&count=100&expanded=no&charttype=line&chart=overtime&ob=GTDID&od=desc#results-table](https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?page=1&casualties_type=&casualties_max=&country=147&count=100&expanded=no&charttype=line&chart=overtime&ob=GTDID&od=desc#results-table), last accessed in August 2018.

<sup>112</sup> News24, A timeline of Nigeria's abducted Chibok schoolgirl, available at:

<https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/a-timeline-of-nigerias-abducted-chibok-schoolgirls-20180227>, last accessed in August 2018.

School in Dapchi, Borno State.<sup>113</sup> Five of the girls died in the course of that ordeal. Those who were not Muslims were made to convert and following the talks between the government and Boko Haram, 104 of the girls were returned. However it is reported that one girl was held back because she had refused to convert to Islam.<sup>114</sup>

According to a BBC News report in January 2018: “At least 967 people were reportedly killed by Boko Haram attacks in 2017, an increase on the previous year when 910 deaths were reported.”<sup>115</sup> At the end of 2017, it was estimated that the Boko Haram insurgency in Northern Nigeria and its neighboring states had killed 20,000 people and displaced two million. There follows a list of attacks recorded in December 2017 alone.

**TABLE 1 – Attacks by Islamic militants in Nigeria in December 2017** <sup>116</sup>

	DATE	CITY	PERPETRATOR GROUP	FATALITIES	INJURED	ATTACK TYPE
1.	2017-12-30	Konduga district	Boko Haram	Unknown	Unknown	Facility/Infrastructure attack
2.	2017-12-30	Maiwa	Boko Haram	25	Unknown	Armed assault, Facility/Infrastructure attack
3.	2017-12-30	Kanamma	Boko Haram	5	Unknown	Armed assault
4.	2017-12-30	Mafa	Boko Haram	50	Unknown	Unknown
5.	2017-12-24	Odonto	Unknown	2	2	Armed assault
6.	2017-12-28	Amarwa	Boko Haram	4	13	Bombing
7.	2017-12-27	Bugda	Muslim extremists	2	0	Armed assault
8.	2017-12-25	Kamale	Boko Haram, Fulani extremists (suspected)	4	Unknown	Armed assault
9.	2017-12-25	Molai	Boko Haram	4	5	Abduction (Kidnapping), Bombing/Armed assault

<sup>113</sup> Busari S and Adebayo B: Most of kidnapped schoolgirls freed - Nigeria says, CNN, 21 March 2018, available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/03/21/africa/nigeria-kidnapped-girls-boko-haram-intl/index.html>, last accessed in August 2018.

<sup>114</sup> Nigeria Dapchi abductions: Schoolgirls finally home, BBC News, 25 March 2018, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-43535872>, last accessed on 26/08/2017.

<sup>115</sup> Wilson M: Nigeria's Boko Haram attacks in numbers - as lethal as ever, *BBC News*, 25 January 2018, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-42735414>, last accessed in August 2018.

<sup>116</sup> Source: Global Terrorism Database, Nigeria.

	DATE	CITY	PERPETRATOR GROUP	FATALITIES	INJURED	ATTACK TYPE
10.	2017-12-24	Anguwan Mailafiya	Fulani extremists (suspected)	6	Unknown	Armed assault
11.	2017-12-23	Makandari	Boko Haram	0	0	Facility/Infrastructure attack
12.	2017-12-22	Nindem	Boko Haram (suspected), Fulani extremists	4	8	Armed assault
13.	2017-12-20	Wulgo	Boko Haram	10	0	Armed assault
14.	2017-12-16	Musuni	Boko Haram	10	Unknown	Abduction (Kidnapping), Armed assault, Facility/Infrastructure attack
15.	2017-12-15	Gwoza	Boko Haram	1	3	Bombing
16.	2017-12-13	Mainok	Boko Haram	11	2	Armed assault, Facility/Infrastructure attack
17.	2017-12-11	Pulka	Boko Haram	4	2	Bombing
18.	2017-12-10	Dambo	Boko Haram	4	12	Bombing, Armed assault
19.	2017-12-09	Bulabulin	Boko Haram	2	0	Unknown
20.	2017-12-08	Omi	Fulani extremists (suspected)	0	0	Armed assault, Facility/Infrastructure attack
21.	2017-12-08	Agbenema	Fulani extremists (suspected)	10	0	Armed assault, Facility/Infrastructure attack
22.	2017-12-04	Numan district	Fulani extremists	1	0	Armed assault, Facility/Infrastructure attack
23.	2017-12-04	Dowaya	Fulani extremists	6	0	Armed assault
24.	2017-12-04	Kiken	Fulani extremists	Unknown	Unknown	Armed assault, Facility/Infrastructure attack
25.	2017-12-04	Dong	Fulani extremists	Unknown	Unknown	Armed assault, Facility/Infrastructure attack

	DATE	CITY	PERPETRATOR GROUP	FATALITIES	INJURED	ATTACK TYPE
26.	2017-12-04	Lawaru	Fulani extremists	Unknown	Unknown	Armed assault, Facility/Infrastructure attack
27.	2017-12-02	Biu	Boko Haram	7	27	Bombing
28.	2017-12-02	Biu	Boko Haram	8	26	Bombing

Altogether since 1999 there have been over two thousand attacks by Islamic militants in Nigeria reported, which have caused the deaths of thousands of (mostly) Christians in Nigeria and its Western neighbors.<sup>117</sup>

## 6.2 Attacks in North Africa

As explained above, the resurgence of modern Islamist groups in North Africa can be traced to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Their articulation of a state ruled by Sharia found expression and a following throughout most of Africa. In Algeria it found a home in the political ideology of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). When FIS won the 1991 general elections election, the ruling elite nullified the election results; as a result the country was plunged into the 1991-2002 armed conflict that left 150,000 people dead.<sup>118</sup> After the war, the military wing of FIS, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA,) morphed into al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).<sup>119</sup> After pledging their allegiance to al-Qaeda, AQIM expanded their focus to include not just Algeria but the region. They had bought into the al-Qaeda ideology of creating Islamic state and opposing Western secularism and interests.

It is this jihadist aspiration that caused AQIM to start getting involved in the conflicts in surrounding countries. In 2013, under the umbrella of Ansar al-Dine, AQIM was party to the Islamist takeover of northern Mali and the near toppling of the Malian government. Ansar al-Dine worked with the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), another Malian Islamist group. While MNLA seeks the independence of Northern Mali, Ansar fights for a unified Mali, governed by strict Sharia.

Throughout the North African countries of Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Burkina Faso and Egypt, global jihadist groups such as al-Qaeda and IS have found local affiliates to assist in progressing the jihadist agenda. The next section supplies profiles of 27 such groups.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Middle East Policy Council, A History of Islamist Movements in Algeria, available at: <http://teachmideast.org/articles/a-history-of-islamist-movements-in-algeria/>, last accessed in August 2018.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

## 7. Overview of Islamic militant groups operating in Africa today

The profiles of each of the 27 groups listed below are structured as follows:

- Background
- Ideology
- Activities and major attacks
- Regional presence, leadership and affiliates
- How Christians are affected
- Future outlook.

There is no significance attached to the order of the listing below.

### 7.1 Al-Qaeda

#### 7.1.1 Background

According to Christopher Henzel writing in 2005: “The guerilla war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989 was the incubator for the contemporary stage in the development of revolutionary Salafist doctrine and strategy.”<sup>120</sup> “Many Arab volunteers in Afghanistan coalesced around revolutionary Salafists”, one of which was “the Egyptian physician Ayman al-Zawahiri, a prolific writer whom many found persuasive, but who, like all the revolutionary Salafists, was condemned by the Al-Azhar clerical establishment.”<sup>121</sup> Osama Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri joined forces: Osama Bin Laden offered the organizational and financial resources and al-Zawahiri - being the ideologue behind the movement - sought to unite all the mujahedeen who had successfully repulsed the Soviet Union’s efforts at occupying Afghanistan. Bin Laden trained fighters from over sixty countries and sent them back to their respective homelands to champion the Islamist cause.

#### 7.1.2 Ideology

Al-Qaeda aims to establish a true Muslim state at the heart of the Arab world. It fights Western secularism and wages war against enemies of Islam such as the United States of America, Israel, and secular governments in the Muslim world, together with their allies.

#### 7.1.3 Activities and major attacks

The earliest al-Qaeda operations outside Afghanistan were in East Africa and the Horn of Africa. Bin Laden supported al-Bashir’s Islamist government in Sudan that had offered him a home.

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<sup>120</sup> Henzel C: The Origins of al Qaeda’s Ideology: Implications for US Strategy, United States National War College, 2005, available at [https://www.cia.gov/library/abbottabad-compound/AC/AC109E252F2BC6B9C7D32EB31C211AA9\\_henzel.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/abbottabad-compound/AC/AC109E252F2BC6B9C7D32EB31C211AA9_henzel.pdf), last accessed in August 2018.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

From 1991 on, al-Qaida began to form “links with other Islamist groups in the region, including the Islamic Jihad Movement of Eritrea and *al-Itihaad al-Islamiya*, a Somali group.”<sup>122</sup> In 1993, al-Qaeda began going after United States interests including offering support and training to Islamist groups that had frustrated the US Blackhawk Down operation in 1993 that resulted in the death of 25 US troops and 1000 Somalis.<sup>123</sup> The first al-Qaeda attack on US soil took place in 1993 when a bomb was detonated in an underground parking lot belonging to the World Trade Centre in New York, killing 7 people and injuring 1000 people.<sup>124</sup> This was followed by the twin bombings of US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam In August 1998, one the most grisly attacks on US interests in Africa. Three years later in 2001, al-Qaeda masterminded the 9/11 attacks on the US World Trade Center twin towers and on the Pentagon, leading i) to a complete change in US foreign policy; ii) the launching of the so-called “war on terror”; and iii) the opening of a floodgate of global Islamist activity.

#### 7.1.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

Al-Qaeda is currently led by the Egyptian, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri. The senior leadership is believed to be holed up in the Pakistan/Afghanistan mountain region. There is no clear al-Qaeda leader in Africa.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) and al-Shabaab are all well-known affiliates.<sup>125</sup> Others include al-Murabitoun (The Sentinels), Ansar al-Dine (Supporters of Religion), Macina Liberation Front (MLF), al-Mulathamun (The Masked Ones), and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (known as MUJAO).<sup>126</sup>

#### 7.1.5 How Christians have been affected

Al-Qaeda and its affiliates have caused untold suffering to Christians throughout the continent of Africa. Many Christians have lost their lives, many have been displaced from their homes, others have been forced to convert to Islam, and yet others have been forced to live their faith in secrecy.

#### 7.1.6 Future outlook

Through affiliates and other al-Qaeda-inspired groups, al-Qaeda remains active in the continent of Africa. Following the recent losses experienced by Islamic militants in Iraq and Syria, it is likely that al-Qaeda and other Islamist groups will look for safe havens: Africa - the East and Horn of

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<sup>122</sup> Timeline: Al-Qaeda, *The Guardian*, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/alqaida/page/0,12643,852377,00.html> last accessed in August 2018.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Thomas C: Al Qaeda and U.S. Policy: Middle East and Africa, *Congressional Research Service*, 5 February 2018, available at: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R43756.pdf>, last accessed in August 2018.

<sup>126</sup> Arieff A: Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Related Groups, *Congressional Research Service*, 20 March 2017, available at: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/IF10172.pdf>, last accessed in August 2018.

Africa, in particular - will be the most preferred choice for many.<sup>127</sup> Al-Qaeda continues to promote Islamist ideology and attracts a seemingly inexhaustible number of fighters and followers across the whole African continent. It is therefore foreseeable that in the coming years the group will continue to carry out violent attacks in the East and Horn of Africa, in the Maghreb, the Sahel and other parts of Africa.

## 7.2 Al-Hijra (a.k.a. Muslim Youth Center)

### 7.2.1 Background

Al-Hijra emerged from the Muslim Youth Center (MYC), a community-based organization that was established in 2008 in Kenya. MYC claimed to articulate the social, economic and religious grievances of impoverished and disaffected young Muslims in the Majengo slums who felt discriminated against as Muslim minorities in Kenya.<sup>128</sup> On 10 January 2012, the Somali militant group, al-Shabaab, announced a merger with the MYC which then renamed itself al-Hijra. The name is a reference to Muhammed's move from Mecca to Medina to set up the first Islamic state in 622 AD. According to the United Nations, the MYC chose to change their name to avoid the scrutiny of the authorities who had taken action against MYC affiliated names and bank accounts.<sup>129</sup>

Al-Hijra consists primarily of Kenyan and Somali followers of al-Shabaab and is closely connected to al-Shabaab both organizationally and operationally. The group's geographic center of support is in the Muslim Swahili coast of Kenya and Tanzania and its headquarters is located in the Majengo area of Nairobi.<sup>130</sup>

### 7.2.2 Ideology

Al-Hijra shares the same ideology as al-Shabaab which is typically described as a brand of Salafism and Wahhabism that supports *takfir* (the excommunication of apostates or unbelievers). The group wages jihad against Kenya because of its operations against al-Shabaab in Somalia.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Wirtschafter J and Gadiaga K J: Africa becomes the new battleground for ISIS and al-Qaeda as they lose ground in Mideast, USA Today, 26 October 2017, available at: <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2017/10/25/africa-becomes-new-battleground-isis-and-al-qaeda-they-lose-ground-mideast/796148001/>, last accessed in August 2018.

<sup>128</sup> Nzes F., Al-Hijra: Al-Shabab's Affiliate in Kenya, CTC Sentinel, May 2014, available at: <https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2014/05/CTCSentinel-Vol7Iss5.pdf>, last accessed in August 2018.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Canadian Security Intelligence Service: The Future Of Al Qaeda, 2013, available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/security-intelligence-service/corporate/publications/the-future-of-al-qaeda.html#d3>, last accessed 30 August 2018.

### 7.2.3 Activities and major attacks

Al-Hijra recruits fighters and provides training in the Kenyan towns of Nairobi, Garissa, Mombasa and Eldoret. The recruits then move on to Somalia where they fight for al-Shabaab.<sup>132</sup> The group is also accused of supplying finances to al-Shabaab and of facilitating its external operations in Kenya.

Al-Hijra has been blamed for a long series of small-scale attacks in Kenya's main cities of Nairobi and Mombasa, including grenade attacks, attacks with improvised explosive devices (IED), targeted killings of moderate Muslim preachers and security personnel, and attacks on churches and sporting events. It is likely that members of al-Hijra played a significant role in al-Shabaab's Westgate Mall massacre in 2013 and the attack on Garissa University in 2015.<sup>133</sup>

### 7.2.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

Unlike al-Shabaab, al-Hijra does not have a regional presence and only operates in Kenya. Although it has links to militant cells in Tanzania,<sup>134</sup> it serves more as a domestic network for al-Shabaab, focusing on planning and carrying out operational activities on behalf of the group in Kenya. Al-Hijra is led by Sheikh Ahmad Iman Ali. He was the founder of the MYC and a prominent al-Shabaab commander.<sup>135</sup>

### 7.2.6 How Christians have been affected

Together with al-Shabaab, al-Hijra has conducted and masterminded attacks against Christians in Kenya. Its members routinely seek to identify and isolate Christians for attacking. This was the case in the 2015 Garissa University attacks and many others. Al-Hijra militants have also been accused of specifically targeting churches in the areas where they operate. When the group's main ideological leader, Aboud Rogo, was killed in August 2012, they immediately reacted by burning churches and killing Christian leaders. Death threats such as "Be prepared, we are coming to get you" were also issued to Christian church leaders at that time.<sup>136</sup>

As a result of the activities of al-Hijra, Christians in the areas where they operate live in fear and many have been forced to flee for their safety.

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<sup>132</sup> Nzes (May 2014).

<sup>133</sup> Findlay S: Kenya Faces Homegrown Threat From Al-Shabab, Time, 1 July 2014, available at: <http://time.com/2941402/kenya-faces-homegrown-threat-from-al-shabab/>, last accessed 30 August 2018.

<sup>134</sup> Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD): Al-Shabaab as a Transnational Security Threat, March 2016, available at: <https://igadssp.org/index.php/documentation/4-igad-report-al-shabaab-as-a-transnational-security-threat/file>, last accessed 30 August 2018.

<sup>135</sup> Nzes (May 2014).

<sup>136</sup> Abwao K: Special Security: Kenyan terror cell Al Hijra tries to gain followers, *Panapress*, 13 January 2014, available at: [http://www.panapress.com/Special-Security--Kenyan-terror-cell-Al-Hijra-tries-to-gain-followers-\(News-Analysis-by-Kennedy-Abwao,-PANA-Correspondent\)--13-893152-0-lang4-index.html](http://www.panapress.com/Special-Security--Kenyan-terror-cell-Al-Hijra-tries-to-gain-followers-(News-Analysis-by-Kennedy-Abwao,-PANA-Correspondent)--13-893152-0-lang4-index.html), last accessed 30 August 2018.

### 7.2.7 Future outlook

As long as Kenyan government forces continue to engage in the fight against al-Shabaab in Somalia, al-Hijra is expected to continue targeting Kenya. With continued pressure being applied by the African Union Mission in Somalia, al-Shabaab will most likely utilize its al-Hijra network increasingly to strengthen its capacities both financially and operationally (including the provision of recruits). If al-Shabaab is defeated in Somalia, it is most likely that the group will fall back on its al-Hijra network as its new stronghold since it is currently the strongest affiliate of al-Shabaab in the region. In the event of this happening, al-Hijra will receive a boost in its capacity and the repercussions for security and stability in Kenya will be dire.<sup>137</sup> It is also important to mention that al-Hijra is also losing clout as it is not as inspirational as other jihadists.

## 7.3 Al-Muhajiroun (a.k.a. Emigrants of East Africa)

### 7.3.1 Background

The al-Muhajiroun group was established to support al-Shabaab's attempts at expanding into Kenya and East Africa. It was created in January 2015 by people close to Muhamed Kuno (a.k.a. Dulyadeen-Gamadheere), the commander of al-Shabaab in the Juba region and Kenya.<sup>138</sup>

The group which is based in Kenya, is predominantly made up of converts to Islam and Swahilis. The group has affirmed its openness to recruits from Western countries, including Australia, Canada and France.<sup>139</sup>

### 7.3.2 Ideology

Al-Muhajiroun is a Salafist militant group that shares the same ideology as al-Shabaab. This is typically described as a brand of Salafism and Wahhabism that supports *takfir* (the excommunication of apostates or unbelievers).<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Coffey: Despite insurgent attacks, good prospects for development in Kenya, November 2014, available at: <http://www.coffey.com/assets/Uploads/At-a-Glance-Template-insurgency-in-kenya.pdf>, last accessed 30 August 2018).

<sup>138</sup> Goldman D: Al-Muhajiroun an Affiliate of Al-Shabaab Conducted Garissa Campus Attack, 3 April 2015, available at: <https://intelligencebriefs.com/al-muhajiroun-an-affiliate-of-al-shabaab-conducted-garissa-campus-attack/>, last accessed 6 September 2018.

<sup>139</sup> Gvozdeva E: Tanzania/Kenya - New Al-Qaeda-linked terrorist group "Al-Muhajiroun in East Africa" issues threat against western targets, ESISC Analysis, 8 May 2015, available at: <http://www.esisc.org/upload/publications/analyses/tanzaniakenya-new-al-qaeda-linked-terrorist-group-al-muhajiroun-in-east-africa-issues-threat-against-western-targets/Tanzania-Kenya%202015.pdf>, last accessed 6 September 2018.

<sup>140</sup> Canadian Security Intelligence Service: The Future Of Al Qaeda, 1 April 2013, available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/security-intelligence-service/corporate/publications/the-future-of-al-qaeda.html#d3>, last accessed on 30 August 2018.

### 7.3.3 Activities and major attacks

Al-Muhajiroun is responsible for supporting al-Shabaab activities throughout Kenya and Uganda. They assist al-Shabaab in the coordination of attacks in Kenya as well as recruit personnel to join the group in Somalia. Al-Muhajiroun has also threatened to attack western interests in Tanzania, Uganda as well as in Kenya.<sup>141</sup>

### 7.3.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

Al-Muhajiroun forms part of al-Shabaab's network within East Africa and the Horn of Africa. The group, which is led by Emir Abou Khalid Abou Izz al-Din, acts as a channel for al-Shabaab to expand its regional and operational reach deeper into East Africa.<sup>142</sup> It has its main stronghold in Kenya, but also coordinates al-Shabaab's activities in Uganda and Tanzania.

Al-Muhajiroun is affiliated to al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab. The members have pledged an oath of allegiance to the emir of al-Shabaab, Sheikh Ahmad Umar Abu Ubaidah, as well as to Ayman al Zawahiri, the leader of al-Qaeda, whom they recognize as the overall leader of all Islamic militants in East Africa.<sup>143</sup> Al-Muhajiroun has no official links to the banned Islamist group of the same name founded by Anjem Choudary in the United Kingdom.

### 7.3.5 How Christians have been affected

There have been no reports of al-Muhajiroun attacking Christians. However, as an affiliate of al-Shabaab, a group which purposely perpetrates attacks against Christians, it is highly likely that members of al-Muhajiroun may be working together with al-Shabaab to engage in activities that affect the lives of Christians negatively.

### 7.3.6 Future outlook

The al-Muhajiroun group has so far not claimed responsibility for any violent attack. Nevertheless, it has direct links to al-Shabaab and al-Qaeda and has issued clear intentions to attack Western targets in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. This fuels concerns that this group will become a threat for the whole region.<sup>144</sup> As indicated above, with the continued pressure being applied by the African Union Mission in Somalia, al-Shabaab will most likely increasingly utilize its Kenyan networks to strengthen its capacities both financially and operationally. If al-Shabaab is defeated in Somalia, it is most likely that they will use al-Muhajiroun for carrying out attacks in the region.<sup>145</sup> Other observers suggest that al-Hijra may be considered the fall-back option for

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Goldman (April 2015).

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Gvozdeva (May 2015).

<sup>145</sup> Coffey: "Despite insurgent attacks, good prospects for development in Kenya", November 2014, available at: <http://www.coffey.com/assets/Uploads/At-a-Glance-Template-insurgency-in-kenya.pdf>, last accessed 31 August 2018.

al-Shabaab, but since the al-Hijra group has been losing clouts as jihadists as it has become less inspirational and effective, the onus will most likely fall on al-Muhajiroun.<sup>146</sup>

## 7.4 Al-Shabaab

### 7.4.1 Background

Al-Shabaab emerged in the years leading up to 2006 as the surviving faction of the *al Itihaad at Islamiya* (AIAI), which was a group of Somalis educated in the Middle East and followers of Wahhabi doctrine. According to experts Brendon Cannonn and Dominic Pkalya: “Al-Shabaab, also known as *Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahidin*, was the largely autonomous, militant wing of the Somali Council of Islamic Courts (CIC or *known as the Islamic Courts Union – ICU*) that took over most of southern Somalia in the second half of 2006”.<sup>147</sup> The CIC suffered military defeat and “splintered into smaller factions of which al-Shabaab emerged as the most visible offshoot, intent on ostensibly establishing a regional theocracy.”<sup>148</sup> The founding leadership pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda and are known to have fought in Afghanistan in the Second Gulf War and in the war against the Soviets.<sup>149</sup> They then rallied support from the Somali population and went on an international recruitment drive for volunteers.

### 7.4.2 Ideology

The main aim is the expulsion of the US-backed forces of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). These are regarded as foreign infidels fighting against the Islamist cause. Attacking these forces (and the interests of countries contributing to AMISOM) is regarded as a religious duty which is necessary for the realization of an Islamic state in Somalia and the East African countries.

### 7.4.3 Activities and major attacks

Originally, al-Shabaab engaged in conventional armed confrontation with Ethiopian troops that had moved into Somalia to attempt to defeat Islamic Courts Union. However, when they were roundly defeated by the Ethiopian troops, they resorted to guerilla warfare and suicide bombings of both military and civilian targets. Al-Shabaab has conducted thousands of attacks in Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Uganda, some of which have been highlighted in [Section 5](#) above (“Overview of recent major attacks in East Africa and the Horn”). These attacks have left thousands of people dead, and more injured and displaced.

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<sup>146</sup> Goldman, *supra* note 2.

<sup>147</sup> Cannon B J and Pkalya D R: Why al-Shabaab Attacks Kenya: Questioning the Narrative Paradigm, Terrorism and Political Violence, 9 March 2017, available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09546553.2017.1290607>, last accessed October 2018.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

#### 7.4.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

Currently, al-Shabaab has active cells in Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Eritrea. At its formation in the early 2000s, al-Shabaab's leader was Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys. He was succeeded by Aden Hashi Ayro. When Ayro died in 2008, he was succeeded by Sheikh Ahmad Abdi Godane (Abu Zubair). Godane was killed in a US drone strike in 2014 and was replaced by Ahmad Umar (Abu Ubaidah). Al-Shabaab has continued its psychological war via internet and by carrying out soft attacks across the East African region, particularly in Kenya and Somalia.

The al-Shabaab group has repeatedly pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda, which has also frequently broadcast its support for the Somali group. Indeed, al-Qaeda has repeatedly mobilized financial resources and sent volunteers and commanders to aid in the training and execution of al-Shabaab activities. The leadership did momentarily toy with the idea of shifting its allegiance to the Islamic State group (IS), but this idea was short-lived.

#### 7.4.5 How Christians have been affected

Both directly and through its affiliation with al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab has caused untold sufferings to Christians throughout the East and Horn of Africa. Many Christians have lost their lives, many have been displaced from their homes, others have been forced to convert to Islam, and yet others have been forced to live their faith in secrecy. It has also made some regions no-go zones or, at least, areas in which it is highly risky for Christians to live.

#### 7.4.6 Future outlook

Though currently contained in the mostly southern and rural parts of Somalia, al-Shabaab still has the organizational and military power to conduct operations throughout the East and Horn of Africa. Its affiliation with al-Qaeda has continued to make the supply of volunteers and financial support possible that has enabled it to sustain its activities in Somalia and throughout the East African region. The group has attracted many East African youths who are trained and then sent back as radicalized elements to their home countries. Most of the attacks in Kenya have been executed by Kenyan Somalis trained and radicalized in this way. It is likely that al-Shabaab will continue its Islamist efforts in Somalia and throughout the East African Region in the coming years.

### 7.5 Boko Haram

#### 7.5.1 Background

In March 2015, Boko Haram leadership pledged alliance to the Islamic State group (IS) and began to identify itself as the Islamic State in West Africa (see profile below in [Section 7.19](#)), thus aligning its interests with the interests of global jihadists.<sup>150</sup> However, it was originally set up in 2002 in Maiduguri by Mohammed Ali and Mohammed Yusuf, whose main focus was the corrupt

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<sup>150</sup> See: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/boko-haram-renames-itself-islamic-states-west-africa-province-iswap-as-militants-launch-new-10204918.html>, accessed April 2019.

nature of Nigerian Muslim North.<sup>151</sup> Officially, Boko Haram is known as *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad* (JAS), which means “People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad”.<sup>152</sup> Most of the initial group (including Mohammed Ali) died when government security forces overran the mosque in Kanama, Yobe State, which the militants had occupied in an attempt to create a Muslim community governed by Sharia.<sup>153</sup> Those who survived the shoot-out returned to Maiduguri under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf, whose teaching attracted more young Muslim followers. They built their own mosque and then expanded their influence to other states, such as Bauchi, Yobe, and Niger states.<sup>154</sup> Yusuf went twice on the Hajj pilgrimage where it is believed that he embraced Wahhabi doctrine and established links for financial support from other Saudi-based militant groups.

### 7.5.2 Ideology

Boko Haram holds “that Western-style education (in the Hausa language, *boko*) was legally prohibited by Islam (in Arabic and Hausa, *haram*); ... that Western-style education belonged to a larger, evil system, including multiparty democracy, secular government, constitutionalism, and man-made laws; ... and that these institutions are not just un-Islamic but anti-Islamic.”<sup>155</sup> While it has not consistently targeted Western interests, its decision in March 2015 to identify itself as the Islamic State in West Africa aligns its interests to the global jihadist interests.

### 7.5.3 Activities and major attacks

Boko Haram has conducted very many attacks targeting government interests, churches and Christians throughout Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon. A number of Boko Haram attacks have been listed in Table 1 (“Attacks by Islamic militants in Nigeria, December 2017”) in [Section 6.1](#) above.

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<sup>151</sup> Walker A: What is Boko Haram?, *United States Institute of Peace*, Special Report No. 308, June 2012, available at: <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR308.pdf>. Page 3: “Boko Haram’s origins lie in a group of radical Islamist youth who worshipped at the Alhaji Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri a decade ago. In 2002, an offshoot of this youth group (not yet known as Boko Haram) declared the city and the Islamic establishment to be intolerably corrupt and irredeemable. The group declared it was embarking on *hijra* (a withdrawal along the lines of the Prophet Muhammad’s withdrawal from Mecca to Medina). It moved from Maiduguri to a village called Kanama, Yobe state, near the border with Niger, to set up a separatist community run on hard-line Islamic principles. Its leader, Mohammed Ali, espoused antistate ideology and called on other Muslims to join the group and return to a life under ‘true’ Islamic law, with the aim of making a more perfect society away from the corrupt establishment.”

<sup>152</sup> Vincent Efebeh Eseoghene and Harriet Omokiniowo Efanodor, Boko haram insurgency and its impact on Nigeria’s external image, *R&D Research and Discussion 2016 Vol. 9 No. 1-3*. Available at <https://www.dlib.si/stream/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-RZG3P5SR/48d44add-e73c-47dc-b215-33a269765d86/PDF> last accessed on 08/26/2018.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. See also page 7: “Boko Haram is, however, against those in northern Nigeria known as “*yan boko*.” Yan boko is literally translated as “child of the book.” It refers to the elite created by the policy of indirect rule used by the British to colonize Nigeria—the people who have had their heads turned away from Allah by easy money and corrupting Western values. To be yan boko is to be spiritually and morally corrupt, lacking in religious piety, and guilty of criminally enriching oneself rather than dedicating oneself to the Muslim *umma* (community).”

#### 7.5.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

Boko Haram has a strong regional presence in Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger. It has also offered inspiration and support to emergent Islamist groups in West and North Africa. The original leader, Mohammed Yusuf, was executed after his arrest following the 2009 uprising in Maiduguri. Abu Mohammed Abubakar bin Mohammad al-Sheikawi (Abu Shekau) then took over leadership of the group.

While Boko Haram has received support and training from al-Qaeda and AQIM, today its main branch is firmly affiliated with the Islamic State group (IS) and in March 2015 it even changed its official name to Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA/ISWAP). It has also worked with other radical Islamic groups across the region to further the Islamist agenda.

#### 7.5.5 How Christians have been affected

Through its affiliation with IS and its ability to cooperate with other jihadist groups, Boko Haram has caused untold sufferings to Christians throughout Nigeria and in neighboring countries. Many Christians have lost their lives, many have been displaced from their homes, others have been forced to convert to Islam, and yet others have been forced to live their faith in secrecy. It has also made some places no-go zones for Christians. Young girls in the region live in fear of abduction as Boko Haram continues to issue threats to their schools.

Boko Haram's phase of attacks on Christians can be divided into several target categories: 1) attacks against local Christians in Boko Haram's core operating area of Borno and Yobe states, and the adjacent state of Bauchi; 2) major suicide operations or bombing attacks of high-profile churches in Jos in Plateau State and the capital of Abuja; and 3) minor operations against church or para-church personnel throughout the north and "middle belt" regions of Nigeria.<sup>156</sup>

Since 2009, Boko Haram has inflicted mass terror on Christians; They have destroyed countless churches killed and harmed people for being "nonbelievers," including prominent religious leaders or forcibly tried to convert them; They have threatened Southerners and Christians to relocate from the North; They have bombed and killed members of churches and prevented conventional worshipping by Christians, among other things. Over nine hundred churches have been lost to Boko haram terrorism in the Northern part of Nigeria. The activities of the group have had a negative impact on the Christian liturgy celebration or worship in Nigeria, particularly in the North. The number of members of the church community/ Christians has reduced drastically as many have left Northern Nigeria all together and have integrated into communities in Middle Belt states or migrated (back) to Southern Nigeria.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Cook D, 'Boko Haram Escalates Attacks on Christians in Northern Nigeria' (2012) available at: <https://ctc.usma.edu/boko-haram-escalates-attacks-on-christians-in-northern-nigeria/> (accessed 30 August 2018).

<sup>157</sup> Victor I and Asue D, 'Assessing The Impact Of Boko Haram Attacks On Christians In Nigeria'(2016) International Journal of Arts & Sciences 229,239.

The rise and spread of Boko Haram into Cameroon has also had an effect on Christians. Churches, church leaders and ordinary Christians have suffered at the hands of insurgents. They have been targeted through suicide bombings, gun attacks, kidnappings, rape and the like.<sup>158</sup>

#### 7.5.6 Future outlook

Since 2016 there are reportedly two factions of Boko Haram, one led by Abubakar Shekau, and the other by Abu Musab al-Barnawi. In July 2018, Shekau publicly denounced IS's decision to support Abu Musab al-Barnawi as Boko Haram's leader in West Africa, indicating that the division seems to be a personality/leadership conflict rather than strategic.<sup>159</sup> Both branches have continued to launch attacks in Nigeria and neighboring states.<sup>160</sup> Although it is likely that the leadership conflict will be resolved, some observers believe the issue points to a more fundamental shift: "At its core, the divergence between the two groups revolves around ISIS-WA's strategic decision to engage, rather than target, Muslim civilians. This suggests that winning the support or at least the acquiescence of civilians is central to its struggle. In contrast, JAS continues to view the local populace as enemy combatants, predicated on a perception that they don't support the movement."<sup>161</sup>

While Nigerian government forces and their neighboring counterparts have made progress in their fight against Boko Haram militants, the group's methods of guerrilla warfare and continued use of suicide bombers have meant that it was able to execute over 1000 attacks in the 2016-2017 period alone. In the future, Boko Haram is likely to continue its kidnappings, suicide bombings and small arms attacks in Nigeria and throughout the region. Even if West African government forces succeed in crushing the group's military capacity, the Islamist influence will remain active and a threat to peaceful inter-religious coexistence in Nigeria and in the region.

Furthermore, as pressure has mounted on IS's previous strongholds in Iraq, Syria and Libya, the Sahara-Sahel region of Africa is an attractive destination for fleeing foreign fighters who could join up with any of the Boko Haram factions in the future.<sup>162</sup> In such a scenario, the presumed decline in Boko Haram capabilities may prove to be transient rather than terminal. To prevent any resurgence of Boko Haram power, the Nigerian government needs to invest heavily in human development, especially in the northeast, to address the key drivers of the insurgency such as poverty, marginalization and other vulnerabilities that militant ideologues have exploited in their pursuit of recruitment and radicalization.

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<sup>158</sup> Lang M K: 'Christian Churches and the Boko Haram Insurgency in Cameroon: Dilemmas and Responses'(2017)8 *Religions*,143,145.

<sup>159</sup> See: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-36973354>, last accessed May 2019.

<sup>160</sup> See: <https://www.voanews.com/africa/boko-haram-split-creates-two-deadly-forces>, last accessed May 2019.

<sup>161</sup> See: <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/potentially-more-sinister-threat-boko-haram-s-split>, last accessed May 2019.

<sup>162</sup> See: <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2019/05/02/the-west-s-new-front-against-jihadism-in-the-sahel>, last accessed May 2019.

## 7.6 Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

### 7.6.1 Background

AQIM “was created in Algeria in 1998 by Hassan Hattab as the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC); it was a splinter entity of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA)”<sup>163</sup> After the 1991-2002 Algerian civil war, the military wing of FIS Armed Islamic Group (GIA) morphed into al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). After pledging their allegiance to al-Qaeda,<sup>164</sup> AQIM refocused their operational scope beyond the borders of Algeria. They had bought into the al-Qaeda ideology of an Islamic State and opposition to Western secularism and interests.

### 7.6.2 Ideology

The organization aims to establish a truly Muslim state throughout the Arab world. It seeks to fulfill this goal by fighting Western secularism and waging war against all enemies of Islam, including the United States of America, Israel, secular governments in the Muslim world and their allies. It works together with other militant groups to further the jihadist cause in Maghreb and the Sahel.

### 7.6.3 Activities and major attacks

The activities of AQIM have been numerous: They have included attacks aimed at overthrowing the Algerian government and establishing an Islamic caliphate, killings and the abduction of Western tourists.<sup>165</sup> According to the UN Security Council: “Following its formal alliance with Al-Qaida, AQIM expanded its aims and declared its intention to attack Western targets. In late 2006 and early 2007, it conducted several attacks against convoys of foreign nationals in Algeria. In December 2007, AQIM attacked the United Nations office in Algiers, killing 17, at the same time as it attacked the Algerian Constitutional Council; GSPC, and then as AQIM, has abducted numerous foreigners for ransom, starting in February 2003 with 32 tourists in the south of Algeria, then others in Tunisia, Niger, Mali and Mauritania.”<sup>166</sup>

### 7.6.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

AQIM’s leader was for a long time Abdelmalek Droukdel.<sup>167</sup> “The group operates primarily in the northern coastal areas of Algeria and in parts of the desert regions of southern Algeria, northern Mali, eastern Mauritania and western Niger.”<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> UN Security Council/Subsidiary Organs: The Organization of Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghred, updated 18 January 2018, available at: [https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1267/aq\\_sanctions\\_list/summaries/entity/the-organization-of-al-qaida-in-the-islamic](https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1267/aq_sanctions_list/summaries/entity/the-organization-of-al-qaida-in-the-islamic), last accessed on 27 August 2018.

<sup>164</sup> The group’s formal alliance with al-Qaeda was officially announced by al-Qaeda leader Aiman Muhammed Rabi al-Zawahiri on 11 September 2006.

<sup>165</sup> UN Security Council (Al-Qaida, January 2018 update).

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

The group formally became a part of al-Qaeda in September 2006. Its affiliates include Mouvement pour l'Unification et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO), Ansar al-Dine, Armed Islamic Group, Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group, Tunisian Combatant Group, Muhammad Jamal Network (MJN), al-Mouakaoune Biddam, al-Moulathamoun, al-Mourabitoun Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis-Sudan (Ansaru), Ansar al-Shari'a in Tunisia (AAS-T), Ansar al-Charia Derna and Ansar al-Charia Benghazi.<sup>169</sup> On 2 March 2017, AQIM merged with local Salafist groups Ansar al-Dine and al-Mourabitoun to form Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), led by Iyad Ag Ghali, Ansar al-Dine's former emir.<sup>170</sup> See section on JNIM below.

#### 7.6.5 Effects on Christians and Christianity

AQIM has engaged in deliberate acts of persecution against Christians: The group has targeted and killed Christians and taken Christian missionaries hostage. AQIM publicly claimed responsibility for killing US citizen Christopher Leggett in Mauritania because of his involvement in what they described as 'Christianizing activities'.<sup>171</sup> They also accepted responsibility for the kidnap of Swiss missionary, Beatrice Stockly, who they claim declared war against Islam in her attempt to "Christianize Muslims".<sup>172</sup> Undoubtedly, the activities of AQIM undermine the religious freedom of Christians, many of whom are unable to openly practice their faith for fear of being targeted by militants. Thus, it can be said that through its affiliation with al-Qaeda and affiliates, AQIM has caused untold sufferings to Christians in Algeria and the surrounding region. Christians and others in this region fear that Islamic militants could topple the current governments and establish a brutal reign under Sharia.

#### 7.6.6 Future outlook

AQIM and its affiliates are most active in Algeria, northern Mali, eastern Mauritania and western Niger. They have the capacity to not only attack, but also to control large expanses of territory. In the future, it is likely that AQIM will continue to be active in Maghreb and Sahel, conducting devastating attacks across the region. AQIM is now more of a regional franchise and it is the center of gravity for a number of local groups. The group represents a regional counterbalance to the Islamic State (IS), and the rivalry between these two groups has been a significant feature of the regional geostrategic environment. As IS declines, it is possible that many IS fighters will move closer to al-Qaeda-linked groups; many of them anyway previously belonged to such groups. In Africa in particular, it is highly likely that as the influence of IS in northern Africa weakens, AQIM will return to these places, among them Libya.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> See: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/al-qaeda-islamic-maghreb-aqim> (accessed March 2019).

<sup>171</sup> Koch J: Al-Qaida claims it killed missionary from Cleveland, Times Free Press, 26 June 2009, available at: <https://www.timesfreepress.com/news/news/story/2009/jun/26/al-qaeda-claims-it-killed-missionary-from/224850/>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>172</sup> World Watch Monitor: Rising Islamist militancy across Sahel belt threatens African Christianity, 8 September 2016, available at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/09/rising-islamist-militancy-across-sahel-belt-threatens-african-christianity/>, last accessed 2 September 2018.

<sup>173</sup> Cristiani D: Ten Years of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Evolution and Prospects, The Jamestown Foundation, 5 May 2017, available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/ten-years-al-qaeda-islamic-maghreb-evolution-prospects/>, last accessed 2 September 2018.

With no stability in sight for northern Mali, coupled with AQIM's ability to raise funds through smuggling and kidnapping operations and the large quantities of weapons still available for sale in Libya, AQIM looks set to gain momentum in the foreseeable future. Also, the organizational reforms that AQIM has taken - apparently aimed at centralizing the group's decision-making processes - will likely contribute to making it a significant threat in coming years.<sup>174</sup>

## 7.7 The Islamic State group (IS)

### 7.7.1 Background

The Islamic State group (IS), previously known as the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant/Syria (ISIL or ISIS), is a Salafist organization whose goal is the establishment and expansion of an Islamic caliphate.<sup>175</sup> The group started up in early 2000 when Abu Musab al-Zarqawi began training Islamic militants and fought against the US occupation of Iraq, first under the name *Jama'at al-Tawhid wa'al-Jihad* and later as al-Qaeda in Iraq.<sup>176</sup> When it became involved in the civil war in Syria, it changed its name in 2013 to Islamic State in Iraq and Levant/Syria.

### 7.7.2 Ideology

IS aims to establish a truly Muslim state throughout the Arab world where the extreme application of Sharia would be applicable. It seeks to fulfil this goal by fighting Western secularism and waging war against all enemies of Islam, including the United States of America, Israel, secular governments in the Muslim world and their allies.<sup>177</sup>

### 7.7.3 Activities and major attacks

As stated by the UN Security Council: IS "has claimed many terrorist attacks inside Iraq including the high-profile attacks in Baghdad in August, October and December 2009, which, combined, killed over 480 people. The group also claimed responsibility for the 2005 attack on three hotels in Amman, Jordan, which killed at least 60 people."<sup>178</sup> Attacks linked to IS have been carried out worldwide, for instance in November 2015 in Paris, when 129 people were killed in suicide bomb attacks.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Waszkewitz H: Jihadism's staying power in North Africa, Global Risk Insights, 20 March 2018, available at: <https://globalriskinsights.com/2018/03/aqim-staying-power-north-africa-al-qaeda/>, last accessed 5 September 2018.

<sup>175</sup> Stanford University, Mapping Militant Organizations – Islamic State, updated 23 October 2017, available at: <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/1>, last accessed 27 August 2018.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> United Nations Security Council/Subsidiary Organs: Al Qaeda in Iraq, updated 18 January 2018, available at: [https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1267/aq\\_sanctions\\_list/summaries/entity/al-qaida-in-iraq](https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1267/aq_sanctions_list/summaries/entity/al-qaida-in-iraq), last accessed on 27 August 2018.

<sup>179</sup> <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/11/14/world/paris-attacks/index.html>, last accessed May 2019.

#### 7.7.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

IS was originally led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi who was killed in June 2006. After his death, Abu Ayyub al-Masri assumed leadership until his own death in April 2010.<sup>180</sup> At this point Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi assumed control of the group and renamed it Islamic State in Iraq. It was responsible for the August 2003 bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad that killed at least 23 people, including UN Special Envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello.<sup>181</sup> “The group has claimed many terrorist attacks inside Iraq and in Jordan,<sup>182</sup> and due to its involvement in the civil war in Syria, it cut links with al-Qaeda and declared a caliphate under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as Caliph.<sup>183</sup> At the height of its power, it controlled a large swathe of territory in Iraq and Syria and demanded that all jihadist groups swear allegiance to Abu al-Baghdadi and IS. IS has had a strong presence in Iraq, Egypt, Syria and Libya where it has also carried out high profile attacks. IS-trained and/or IS-inspired fighters have also carried out attacks in Belgium, France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

Affiliates are al-Qaeda, al-Nusrah Front for the People of the Levant, Ansar al-Sharia (Libya), the Army of Emigrants and Supporters (also known as Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar – abbreviated to JMA or JAMWA) and Boko Haram.

#### 7.7.5 How Christians have been affected

Through its affiliation with al-Qaeda and others, IS has caused untold sufferings to Christians in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Libya, Belgium, France, the USA and globally. During its control of Syria and Iraqi territories, minority communities (both Christian and Yazidi) were targeted. They were compelled to either convert to Islam or be killed, which the UN has deemed to be classed as genocide.<sup>184</sup> Many Christians were also displaced from their homes and some were sold into slavery.

#### 7.7.6 Future outlook

While IS has lost most of its territories in Syria and Iraq, [many fighters moved](#) to Libya, from where they carried out attacks in Tripoli, Tunisia and Egypt. They have also exploited strategic alliances with North African affiliates to further the Islamist agenda. It is likely that IS will continue to be active globally.

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<sup>180</sup> United Nations Security Council/Subsidiary Organs: Al Qaeda in Iraq, updated 18 January 2018.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Stanford University, Mapping/Islamic State (October 2017).

<sup>184</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Thirty-second session, Agenda item 4, 15 June 2016, available at: [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoISyria/A\\_HRC\\_32\\_CRP.2\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoISyria/A_HRC_32_CRP.2_en.pdf), last accessed October 2018.

## 7.8 Allied Democratic Forces

### 7.8.1 Background

According to Stanford University research: “The Allied Democratic Forces, known as Forces Démocratiques Alliées (ADF), formed in 1996 from an alliance of several armed groups, mainly the National Army for the Liberation of Rwanda (Armée Nationale de Libération de l’Ouganda or NALU), opposed to the Ugandan government of President Yoweri Museveni and his marginalization of the Ugandan Muslim community.”<sup>185</sup> The group emerged from the *Tabliq* movement started by Saudi-trained Ugandan clerics who “advocated ‘a stricter form of Islam, and started to challenge the traditional [Ugandan] Muslim scholars’ understanding of Islam”.<sup>186</sup> The confrontation between this group and the government led to the imprisonment of about 400 *Tabliqs*, including a leader named Jamil Mukulu, who later formed the ADF after serving his sentence. The group was first based in Western Uganda and its activities targeted Museveni’s government. However, it later moved its focus and activities to the Northern Kivu region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This group incorporates rebels from a formerly active western Ugandan group known as the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda; guerrillas who had previously fought for the reinstatement of the ‘Rwenzururu Kingdom’; former Idi Amin fighters and other disgruntled soldiers from previous Ugandan regimes.<sup>187</sup>

The group was initially set up because it felt that Islamic interests were being sidelined by President Museveni’s policies and it wanted to establish an Islamic state in accordance with Sharia law in Uganda.<sup>188</sup> After a period of relative dormancy from 2007 to 2013, ADF resurfaced and has since then increasingly been in the spotlight and stands accused of carrying out numerous attacks mostly in and around the city of Beni in the north-eastern province of North Kivu in DRC.<sup>189</sup>

In 2013, the ADF had an estimated strength of 1200-1500 armed fighters located in the North Kivu, close to the border with Uganda. Due to military operations carried out by the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) and the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), ADF has dispersed its fighters to numerous smaller bases.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Stanford University, Mapping Militant Organizations – Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), available at: <http://www.start.umd.edu/baad/narratives/allied-democratic-forces-adf>, last accessed 20 September 2018.

<sup>186</sup> Titeca K and Fahey D: “The many faces of a rebel group: the Allied Democratic Forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo”, *International Affairs* 92: 5, September 2016, pp.1189–1206, available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307553179\\_The\\_many\\_faces\\_of\\_a\\_rebel\\_group\\_the\\_Allied\\_Democratic\\_Forces\\_in\\_the\\_Democratic\\_Republic\\_of\\_Congo](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307553179_The_many_faces_of_a_rebel_group_the_Allied_Democratic_Forces_in_the_Democratic_Republic_of_Congo), last accessed 30 October 2018.

<sup>187</sup> Scorgie L: The Allied Democratic Forces: Moving beyond popular narratives, *Al Jazeera*, 27 July 2013, available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/07/201372215812878743.html>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>188</sup> Muhumuza R: Ugandan Rebel Group Is ‘Biggest Threat Since Kony,’ *News Portal*, *Huffington Post*, 16 March 2012, available at: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/16/rebels-regroup-in-uganda\\_n\\_1353306.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/16/rebels-regroup-in-uganda_n_1353306.html), last accessed 2 September 2018.

<sup>189</sup> Weeraratne S, *Jihadists, Rebels or Bandits: The Threat Of The Allied Democratic Forces*, 27 June 2017, available at <https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/Blog/jihadists-rebels-or-bandits-the-threat-of-the-allied-democratic-forces>, last accessed 5 September 2018.

<sup>190</sup> UN Security Council/Subsidiary Organs: Committee Established Pursuant To Resolution 1533 (2004) Concerning The Democratic Republic Of The Congo, updated 5 December 2016, available at <https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1533/materials/summaries/entity/allied-democratic-forces-%28adf%29>, last accessed 3 September 2018.

## 7.8.2 Ideology

The establishment of a Muslim state in Uganda where extreme application of Sharia would be applicable. Even though ADF has not always held to this goal over the years, it is still the ideal they use to unite its forces.<sup>191</sup>

## 7.8.3 Activities and major attacks

“ADF/NALU launched their first joint attack in November 1996 on the border post at Mpondwe, Uganda, during the First Congo War. The ADF and UPDF fought a series of battles in eastern DRC and western Uganda during 1997 and 1998. At the same time, the ADF carried out several attacks in Uganda, including one in June 1998 on a school, in which the rebels killed at least 70 young people and captured 80 more.”<sup>192</sup> Other major attacks carried out by ADF include:

- December 2017: ADF militants allegedly attacked and killed at least fifteen UN peacekeepers and five soldiers in the DRC in one of the worst attacks on UN personnel in recent memory.<sup>193</sup>
- 8 October 2017: ADF militants attacked two military bases in north-eastern DRC, killing two UN peacekeepers and injuring several others.<sup>194</sup>
- 13 November 1996: ADF perpetrated its first large scale attack on the towns of Bwera and Mpondwe-Lhubiriha in Kasese district, Uganda. Approximately fifty people were killed in the attack.<sup>195</sup>

## 7.8.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

ADF’s supreme leader is Steven Alirabaki a.k.a. Jamil Mukulu (a former Catholic converted to Islam) and its military commander is Rashid/Hood Lukwago.<sup>196</sup> According to Ugandan officials and UN sources, ADF’s total membership — including women and children — is estimated to be between 1,600 and 2,500. Due to military operations by the Congolese and UN forces conducted in 2013 and 2014, “ADF dispersed its fighters to numerous smaller bases, and moved women and children to areas west of Beni, and along the Ituri-North Kivu border.”<sup>197</sup> The group conducts its activities across Western Uganda and North Kivu region of the DRC. The ADF have committed “numerous violations of international human rights and women and children, including killing,

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<sup>191</sup> Titeca/Fahey: International Affairs (2016).

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Burke J: Islamist attack kills at least 15 UN peacekeepers and five soldiers in DRC, *The Guardian*, 8 December 2017, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/08/peacekeepers-killed-in-attack-on-un-base-in-dr-congo>, last accessed 5 September 2018.

<sup>194</sup> Mahamba F: 3-Militants attack east Congo bases, killing two U.N. peacekeepers, *Reuters, Update* 9 October 2017, available at: <https://af.reuters.com/article/congoNews/idAFL8N1MK1VU>, last accessed 5 September 2018.

<sup>195</sup> Titeca K and Vlassenroot K: Rebels without borders in the Rwenzori borderland? A biography of the Allied Democratic Forces, 1 January 2012, <https://www.gov.uk/dfid-research-outputs/rebels-without-borders-in-the-rwenzori-borderland-a-biography-of-the-allied-democratic-forces>, last accessed 5 November 2018.

<sup>196</sup> United Nations Security Council Subsidiary Organs, Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), 5 December 2016, available at: <https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1533/materials/summaries/entity/allied-democratic-forces-%28adf%29>, last accessed 20 September 2018.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

maiming, and sexual violence, attacks on civilians in numerous villages, which prompted more than 66,000 people to flee into Uganda; further they would abduct or kill people who return to their villages; they have also decapitated people in the region, shot several others and kidnapped many more – acts of terror aimed at the local population which is predominantly Christian.<sup>198</sup>

The leadership has claimed affiliation to al-Qaeda and has also worked closely with al-Shabaab. The Ugandan government has linked the organization to attacks by al-Shabaab in Uganda.

### 7.8.5 How Christians have been affected

ADF has succeeded in destabilizing the mostly Christian Western Region of Uganda and the Northern Kivu region of DRC. It has conducted attacks on the mostly Christian communities and there are reports that those they abduct are compelled to either convert to Islam or face death. Many victims, especially children and young adults, opt for conversion and recruitment into the group. Many Christians have also been displaced from their homes. Members of radical Islamic ADF have caused chaos and destruction in the DRC in an attempt to create an Islamic caliphate. The group has targeted Christians in the north-east of the DRC for several years after their attempt to overthrow the Ugandan government failed. As a result of the violence that the ADF perpetrates, several churches have been forced to close down and even for those that remain open, membership has drastically reduced as many people have fled for their safety.<sup>199</sup>

### 7.8.6 Future outlook

While ADF has lost most of its bases in Western Uganda, it remains very active in DRC. It continues to carry out cross-border attacks into Uganda. Following the DRC's army offensive against the group in 2016, they broke up into small groups and continue to carry out periodic attacks on civilians, the DRC army and the UN peacekeeping force in DRC. One such attack was the December 2017 attack in North Kivu that left 15 UN peacekeepers and 5 Congolese troops dead. Due to reports indicating that foreign al-Shabaab fighters are joining ADF, it is expected that the ADF threat to the region will remain for a long time. It is likely that their style of attacks will morph into al-Shabaab-type suicide bombings and outright attacks on Christians and their communities and churches.

While repeated military offensives have severely affected it from time to time, the ADF has managed to remain active for two decades; the group has always been able to regenerate because its recruitment and financial networks have remained intact.<sup>200</sup> Given that the violence that plagues the Democratic Republic of Congo continues to persist and the fact that the conditions are conducive for militant groups to thrive, the ADF will most likely continue to pose

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Christians on the Run in Congo as Terrorist Attacks Worsen, *CBN News*, 16 August 2016, available at: <http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/cwn/2016/august/christians-on-the-run-in-congo-as-terrorist-attacks-worsen>, last accessed 5 September 2018.

<sup>200</sup> Frykberg M: DRC military captures largest Allied Democratic Forces stronghold, *African Independent*, 13 February 2018, available at: <https://www.africanindy.com/news/drc-military-captures-largest-allied-democratic-forces-stronghold-13257005>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

a great security threat to DRC, Uganda and other countries in eastern and central Africa in the foreseeable future. This threat is further exacerbated now that they have close connections with al-Shabaab, an affiliate of the global al-Qaeda network.<sup>201</sup>

## 7.9 Al-Sunnah wa Jama'ah (Mozambique's al-Shabaab)

### 7.9.1 Background

The group's name translates as "People of the Sunnah community", although locally this group is sometimes referred to as Swahili Sunnah. According to a report in March 2018, their attack on several police stations, government officials and residents in the town of Mocímboa da Praia in Cabo Delgado Province of Mozambique on 5 October 2017 shocked the world and announced the emergence of their new jihadist group.<sup>202</sup> At the end of the attack seven people were dead. The government of Mozambique responded by "arresting members of the group in Quissanga and Macomia Districts – 470 individuals and prosecuted 370, of which 314 were Mozambican, 52 Tanzanian, 1 Somali, and 3 Ugandan."<sup>203</sup> Between mid-May and mid-June 2018, attacks by the group cost the lives of 35 people.<sup>204</sup>

### 7.9.2 Ideology

Though the ideology is not yet totally clear, the group appears to share in the global jihadist ideology and seeks to establish a genuinely Muslim state in Mozambique where extreme application of Sharia would be possible. The "fundamentalist interpretations of Islam espoused by the militant group reinforce an ideology introduced in the region in recent years by youth who have received scholarships to study in Sudan, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States."<sup>205</sup> It is also possible that the group is seeking to establish an Islamic state in the Swahili speaking northern region of Mozambique, similar to the Omani Sultanate of Zanzibar that the region was once part of.

### 7.9.3 Activities and major attacks

5 October 2017: Attacks targetting police stations, government officials and residents in the town of Mocímboa da Praia on 5 October 2017.

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<sup>201</sup> Bluwstein R: Uganda's Allied Democratic Forces Poses Threat to East and Central Africa, 8 September 2015, available at: <https://intelligencebriefs.com/ugandas-allied-democratic-forces-poses-threat-to-east-and-central-africa/>, last accessed 6 September 2018.

<sup>202</sup> Pirio G, Pittelli R, Adam Y: The Emergence of Violent Extremism in Northern Mozambique, Africa Center for Strategic Studies, March 2018, available at: <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/the-emergence-of-violent-extremism-in-northern-mozambique/>, last accessed 20 September 2018.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Goldberg, Mozambique's Al Shabaab, Al Sunnah Wa Jama'ah Requires Swift Anti-Terror Campaign To Prevent Full-Blown War, 13 June 2018, available at: <https://intelligencebriefs.com/mozambiques-al-shabaab-al-sunnah-wa-jamaah-requires-swift-anti-terror-campaign-to-prevent-full-blown-war/>, last accessed 5 November 2018.

<sup>205</sup> Pirio/Pittelli/Adam (March 2018).

May/June 2018: Machete attacks in several villages in Cabo Delgado province on the border with Tanzania. Ten people were beheaded in one attack and others were hacked to death. Vehicles and homes were set on fire.<sup>206</sup>

#### 7.9.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

“According to mainstream imams in Mocímboa da Praia and Montepuez Districts, one of the leaders is a Gambian named Musa. The other, a Mozambican, goes by the name Nuro Adremane. The latter reportedly received a scholarship to train in Somalia, traveling by road through Tanzania and Kenya to reach Somalia, as did a number of other members of the group.”<sup>207</sup> It is hard to profile the group because they have as yet made no public statement or claimed any of the acts attributed to it. “The group’s leadership had been influenced by the Mombasa-based Kenyan radical imam, Sheikh Aboud Rogo Mohammed (*now deceased*), who preached in Swahili and whose videos were distributed throughout the East Africa region. Sheikh Rogo had been placed on U.S. and United Nations sanctions lists for allegedly supporting Somalia’s al-Shabaab militants.”<sup>208</sup> He was killed by what is believed to have been Kenyan security operatives in 2012.

Going by the informal name and regional nature of those arrested in operations against the group, it is reasonable to infer affiliation with the Somali al-Shabaab group. It is still not certain how the group is organized.

#### 7.9.5 How Christians have been affected

The group has instilled fear on residents of the areas of Mozambique where attacks have taken place. Christians in these regions live in mortal fear of the jihadists forcing secession from Mozambique or of turning Mozambique into an Islamic state. This would definitely lead to the persecution of Christians and restrictions on Christian activities in the region.

#### 7.9.6 Future outlook

This radical Islamic group is still in its formation stage. “For the last several years, the group operated two mosques in Mocímboa da Praia where they taught their version of Islam. Children who have been studying at these and other fundamentalist mosques introduced in recent years, have reached the age of participation in militias.”<sup>209</sup> Even though the government has since closed down these mosques, it will be a while before their influence fully countered. The militias they have spawned are expected to become more active in destabilizing the region.

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<sup>206</sup> Associated Press, Deadly attacks by shadowy band of young Muslims leave Mozambique shaken, 2018-06-11. Available at <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/deadly-attacks-by-shadowy-band-of-young-muslims-leave-mozambique-shaken-20180611> last accessed on 24 September 2018.

<sup>207</sup> Pirio/Pittelli/Adam (March 2017).

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

## 7.10 Ansar al-Sharia Libya – Benghazi (ASB)

### 7.10.1 Background

Ansar al-Sharia Libya - Benghazi (ASB) was created by Muhammad al-Zahawi in Benghazi after the fall of Gadhafi in 2011. In the ensuing security vacuum in Libya, it was possible for local militias to thrive and Ansar al-Sharia Libya (ASL) arose out of cooperation between two groups, the Ansar al-Sharia Brigade in Benghazi (ASB) and Ansar al-Sharia in Derna (ASD).<sup>210</sup> Despite the union, the groups operated separately under the ASL title.

ASL officially announced its own dissolution on 28 May 2017 after suffering heavy losses among both its leadership and fighters during the three-year battle for Benghazi. However, it appears that the group's Derna branch (ASD) is still active, judging by reports of clashes between the organization, the Libyan National Army, and the Derna Mujahideen Shura Council on 23 April 2018.<sup>211</sup> (See below).

### 7.10.2 Ideology

ASB followed a strict interpretation of Islam and its primary goal is to establish an Islamic state in Libya with Sharia as the sole source of legislation.<sup>212</sup>

### 7.10.3 Activities and major attacks

ASB has been involved in terrorist attacks against civilian targets, in particular involving the assassination and attempted assassination of security officials and political actors in eastern Libya. In order to rehabilitate itself in the eyes of the public following the attack on the US Consulate in Benghazi in 2012, the group began to portray itself as a positive force in society through its *dawa* campaigns. These included the provision of aid to the poor, the cleaning of roads and public places and providing security to local hospitals.<sup>213</sup>

ASB ran several training camps for militants in Libya, including members of other radical Islamic organizations, some of whom went on to operate in Syria, Iraq and Mali. In January 2013 for example, some of its former trainees were involved in the al-Mulathamun Battalion (a.k.a. al-Murabitoun) attack led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar against the Tiguentourine gas facility near In Amenas.<sup>214</sup>

Major attacks by the group include the following:

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<sup>210</sup> Gråtrud H and Skretting V B: Ansar al-Sharia in Libya: An Enduring Threat, Perspectives on Terrorism Vol. 11/1, 2017, available at <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/576/html>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>211</sup> Counter Extremism Project, 'Ansar al-Sharia in Libya (ASL)', available at [https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/threat\\_pdf/Ansar%20alSharia%20in%20Libya%20%28ASL%29-06142018.pdf](https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/threat_pdf/Ansar%20alSharia%20in%20Libya%20%28ASL%29-06142018.pdf), last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>212</sup> Gråtrud/Skretting (2017).

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> United States Department of State, Country Reports on Terrorism 2015 - Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Ansar al-Shari'a in Benghazi, 2 June 2016, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57518d6613.html>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

- Between 2013 and 2014: ASB is believed to have cooperated with ASD in multiple attacks and suicide bombings targeting Libyan security forces in Benghazi.<sup>215</sup>
- 11 September 2012: The group gained prominence for its alleged role in the Benghazi attacks against the US Consulate, although it denied having any involvement. The attacks led to the burning of the US Consulate and the killing of the US ambassador to Libya, Christopher Stevens, along with three other diplomats.<sup>216</sup>

#### 7.10.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

The group has operated primarily in Libya but poses a threat to security in the region since some of its activities have assisted regional militants in using Libyan territory as a safe haven for training and for smuggling weapons and fighters. Most of those attending the training camps have been linked to militant groups in the North African region such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).<sup>217</sup>

ASB was founded and led by Muhammad al-Zahawi. He was also widely recognized as Ansar al-Sharia Libya's (ASL) official emir and spiritual leader when ASB and ASD formed their union. In January 2015, it was confirmed by ASL that he had died as a result of injuries sustained while fighting government forces in Benghazi.<sup>218</sup> Abu Khalid al-Madani replaced him as emir of ASL.

There is evidence of cooperation between al-Qaeda, especially its regional affiliate AQIM, although the group denies this affiliation. It is also reported that ASL shared some operational, financial and logistical links (including a support network) with Ansar al-Sharia Tunisia.<sup>219</sup>

#### 7.10.5 How Christians have been affected

As part of ASL, ASB has engaged in activities detrimental to the lives of Christians. In January 2015 for example, ASL kidnapped and held twenty Coptic Christians hostage. These were subsequently killed by militants affiliated to IS. In February 2016, it was alleged that members of ASL and IS had kidnapped thirty-five Coptic Egyptian Christians.<sup>220</sup> As a result of the activities of militant groups such as ASB in Libya, the number of Christians in the Libya has significantly decreased.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Steven S: US consulate attack in Benghazi - a challenge to official version of events, The Guardian, 9 September 2013, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/09/us-consulate-benghazi-attack-challenge>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>217</sup> Gråtrud/Skretting (2017).

<sup>218</sup> Mackenzie Institute: Ansar al-Sharia Libya, 29 December 2015, available at: <http://mackenzieinstitute.com/ansar-al-sharia-libya-asl/>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>219</sup> Stanford University: Mapping Militant Organisations- Ansar al-Shariah (Libya), 24 August 2016, available at: <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/545#note25>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> United States Commission on International Religious Freedom: Libya 2017, available at: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/281240.pdf> (accessed 1 September 2018).

### 7.10.6 Future outlook

ASL comprising ASB and ASD has formally dissolved itself due to heavy losses that wiped out its leadership and decimated its fighters.<sup>222</sup> Unless ASB is able to regroup, it does not seem likely that this branch will continue to be a threat in the foreseeable future. However, it appears that ASL's semi-autonomous ASD branch still remains active and has shown that it has the ability to carry out attacks even though its main group has disbanded. Thus, it is possible that the ASD is in the position to assist the ASB branch in regrouping.

## 7.11 Ansar al-Sharia Libya - Derna

### 7.11.1 Background

Ansar al-Sharia Derna (ASD) was formed after Gadhafi's fall in 2011 by Abu Sufian bin Qumu, a former Guantanamo inmate, in Derna.<sup>223</sup> As mentioned above, ASD is one of two groups that constitutes Ansar al-Sharia Libya (ASL). Despite this union, the two branches of ASL have operated independently. Despite ASL announcing its dissolution on 28 May 2017, it appears that the Derna branch (ASD) has remained active in the clashes between the Libyan National Army and the Mujahideen Shura Council of Derna on 23 April 2018.<sup>224</sup>

### 7.11.2 Ideology

Like Ansar al Sharia - Benghazi, ASD follows a strict interpretation of Islam and its primary goal is to establish an Islamic state in Libya with Sharia as the sole source of legislation.<sup>225</sup>

### 7.11.3 Activities and major attacks

ASD has been involved in attacks targeting civilians, security officials and political actors in eastern Libya. The group also maintained several training camps in Derna and Jebel Akhdar, Libya, and has trained members of other radical Islamic organizations operating in Syria and Iraq.<sup>226</sup>

Major attacks which ASD has engaged in include:

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<sup>222</sup> Reuters: Libyan Islamist group Ansar al-Sharia saying its dissolving, 27 May 2013, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security/libyan-islamist-group-ansar-al-sharia-says-it-is-dissolving-idUSKBN18NOYR>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>223</sup> United States Department of State: Country Reports on Terrorism 2015 - Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Ansar al-Shari'a in Benghazi, 2 June 2016, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57518d6613.html>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>224</sup> Counter Extremism Project: Ansar al-Sharia in Libya (ASL), available at: [https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/threat\\_pdf/Ansar%20alSharia%20in%20Libya%20%28ASL%29-06142018.pdf](https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/threat_pdf/Ansar%20alSharia%20in%20Libya%20%28ASL%29-06142018.pdf), last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>225</sup> Gråtrud/Skretting (2017)

<sup>226</sup> US Department of State (Country Reports on Terrorism 2015).

- *Between 2013 and 2014*: Cooperation with ASB in multiple attacks and suicide bombings targeting Libyan security forces in Benghazi.<sup>227</sup>
- *11 September 2012*: The group was allegedly involved in the attack against the US Consulate in Benghazi and the killing of the US ambassador to Libya and three other diplomats.<sup>228</sup>

#### 7.11.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

The group primarily operates in Libya but its activities may have a regional effect owing to the fact that it has maintained several training camps whose purpose is to train fighters for other militant groups in the North Africa region.

The group was led by Abu Sufian bin Qumu until its cooperation with Ansar al Sharia- Benghazi. As Ansar al Sharia Libya (ASL), the group was headed by Muhammad al-Zahawi who was widely recognized as ASL's emir and spiritual leader. In January 2015, it was confirmed by ASL that he had died as a result of injuries sustained while fighting government forces in Benghazi. Abu Khalid al Madani replaced him as emir of ASL.<sup>229</sup>

As with ASB, there is evidence of contact and cooperation with al-Qaeda, especially its regional affiliate al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). It is also reported that the group (as ASL) shares some operational, financial and logistical links with Ansar al Sharia Tunisia.<sup>230</sup> ASL forces in Derna also helped to form the Mujahideen Shura Council of Derna (MSCD), which opposes Libyan government forces and Islamic State affiliates and its allies.

#### 7.11.5 How Christians have been affected

As part of ASL, ASD has engaged in activities detrimental to the lives of Christians. In January 2015 for example, they kidnapped and held twenty Coptic Christians hostage. These were subsequently killed by militants affiliated to IS. In February 2016, it was alleged that members of ASL and IS had kidnapped thirty-five Coptic Egyptian Christians.<sup>231</sup> As a result of ASD's activities, the number of Christians in Libya has significantly decreased.<sup>232</sup>

#### 7.11.6 Future outlook

ASL (comprised of ASB and ASD) has formally dissolved itself because of heavy losses.<sup>233</sup> However, it appears that ASL's semi-autonomous branch ASD still remains active and has the capabilities to carry out attacks even though its main group has disbanded. Depending on how

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Steven, US consulate attack, September 2013.

<sup>229</sup> Mackenzie Institute, December 2015.

<sup>230</sup> Stanford University: Mapping Militant Organisations- Ansar al-Shariah (Libya), 2016.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> United States Commission on International Religious Freedom: Libya 2017, available at: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/281240.pdf>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>233</sup> Reuters, Libyan Islamist group Ansar al-Sharia saying its dissolving, May 2013.

well ASD can deal with counterterrorism measures, it may or may not continue to be a threat to stability in Libya and the region.

## 7.12 Shabab al-Tawhid (a.k.a. Ansar al-Sharia Tunisia - AST)

### 7.12.1 Background

Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia (AST) is a Salafist militant group which was founded in Tunisia in April 2011 by Seifallah Ben Hassine, a.k.a. Abu Ayyad al-Tunisi. It operates in Tunisia and has been linked to both al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Islamic State group. Following its designation as a terrorist group by USA in 2014, AST began to operate additionally under the name of Shabab al-Tawhid (however, it is still largely referred to as AST in the media) and has kept a low-profile.<sup>234</sup>

AST claims to have recruited as many as 70,000 Tunisian members between April 2011 and January 2014 and currently claims to have up to 100,000 members.<sup>235</sup> Individuals may become members by joining military operations, teaching, religious lecturing or promoting Salafi ideology in their communities. It is believed that recruits are attracted to AST because of its charity work, proselytizing campaign and aid distribution to poor areas.<sup>236</sup> The group has close ties to Shaikh Khattab Idris, one of the most influential Salafi clerics in Tunisia.

### 7.12.2 Ideology

AST is a Salafist militant organization aiming to establish Sharia law in Tunisia. While its leaders accept al-Qaeda's broader goal of creating a state governed by a pure form of Islam, they employ both violent and non-violent approaches to achieving their goal. The group focuses on *dawa* (proselytizing, including both religious education and the provision of social services) domestically to increase its base of support for future violent jihad, enforcing strict modesty laws under the banner of *hisbah* (the duty to command moral acts and prohibit immoral ones, in accord with Sharia), and carrying out jihad by instigating and executing violent attacks.<sup>237</sup>

### 7.12.3 Activities and major attacks

AST typically organizes lectures to which it invites prominent Salafi clerics and hands out mainstream Salafi literature. It also passes out information and news relating to the global jihad, does charitable work, provides food and medical services for the poor, as well as organizes and runs classes for children.<sup>238</sup> Furthermore, AST engages in acts of violence. Although it usually

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<sup>234</sup> Stanford University, Ansar al-Shariah (Tunisia), 2011, available at:

<http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/547>, last accessed 2 September 2018.

<sup>235</sup> Zelin A: Meeting Tunisia's Ansar al-Sharia, *Foreign Policy*, 8 March 2013, available at:

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/03/08/meeting-tunisias-ansar-al-sharia/>, last accessed 2 September 2018.

<sup>236</sup> Yasm: Tunisia - Al-Qaeda Funds Ansar Al-Sharia, Tunisia Reveals, *All Africa*, 29 August 2013, available at:

<https://allafrica.com/stories/201308300788.html>, last accessed 2 September 2018.

<sup>237</sup> Counter Extremism Project: Ansar al-Shariah in Tunisia (AST), available at:

<https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/ansar-al-sharia-tunisia-ast>, last accessed 2 September 2018.

<sup>238</sup> Zelin, Meeting, 2013.

does not claim responsibility for any of these attacks, the Tunisian government places the responsibility for armed attacks on the group.

Major attacks by the AST include the following:

- February and July 2013: The group was implicated in the assassinations of prominent politicians Chokri Belaid and Mohamed Brahmi which occurred in February and July 2013 respectively.<sup>239</sup> The group was subsequently designated by the Tunisian government as a terrorist group.
- 14 September 2012: The Tunisian government claimed that Abu Ayyad al-Tunisi, leader of AST, orchestrated the rioting and attacks on the US embassy in Tunis. The attacks resulted in the death of two people and left about twenty-nine persons wounded.<sup>240</sup>

#### 7.12.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

AST is mainly based in Tunisia; while it has ties with al-Qaeda and IS, it is not known to have expanded its operations or presence to other states in the region. AST is separate from the Ansar al-Sharia organization in Libya although they may have similar goals and methods.

The group's first leader, Seifallah Ben Hussein, planned the creation of the organization with other Islamists whilst in prison and when he was released in 2011 (after the Tunisian revolution), he began to build the group that would become AST. He led the group until 2015 when he was reportedly killed in a US airstrike in Libya.<sup>241</sup> Kamel Zarrouk has been identified as the probable second-in-command in the ranks of AST. It is reported that he left Tunisia and travelled to Syria to fight alongside IS in 2014.<sup>242</sup>

There is a long history of documented cooperation between AST and al-Qaeda. Also, the leaders of AST, AQIM and Ansar al Sharia in Libya are connected; according to the US government, this is mainly a financial relationship with AQIM providing funding for AST. A number of AST leaders have also pledged allegiance to IS. AST's spokesman, Seifeddine Rais, for example, swore loyalty to IS after which a number of AST leaders left to fight with IS in Syria.<sup>243</sup> It is also alleged that the group supports the Okba ibn Nafaa Brigade.

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<sup>239</sup> Al-Jazeera: Ansar al-Sharia blamed for Tunisia killings, 27 August 2013, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/08/2013827131811488516.html>.

<sup>240</sup> Amara T: Two dead as protesters attack U.S. embassy in Tunisia, Reuters, 14 September 2012, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-protests-tunisia-school/two-dead-as-protesters-attack-u-s-embassy-in-tunisia-idUSBRE88D18020120914>, last accessed 2 September 2018.

<sup>241</sup> Spencer R: Senior Tunisian jihadist and Osama bin Laden associate 'killed by US strike in Libya', The Telegraph, 3 July 2015, available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/tunisia/11715933/Senior-Tunisian-jihadist-and-Osama-bin-Laden-associate-killed-by-US-strike-in-Libya.html>, accessed 2 September 2018.

<sup>242</sup> McKenzie Institute: Anar al-Sharia Tunisia, 12 April 2015, available at: <http://mackenzieinstitute.com/ansar-al-sharia-tunisia-ast-2/>, last accessed 2 September 2018.

<sup>243</sup> Wolf A: Tunisia - Signs of Domestic Radicalization Post-Revolution, CTC Sentinel Vol 6/1, January 2013, available at: <https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2013/01/CTCSentinel-Vol6Iss11.pdf>, last accessed 2 September 2018.

### 7.12.5 How Christians have been affected

There are no reports on attacks by AST on Christians or the effects of their activities on Christianity. However, since AST seeks to create a state which is governed by a pure form of Islam, it is most likely that they oppose Christianity (and all other religions).

### 7.12.6 Future outlook

The international designation of the group as a terrorist organization forced AST to give up its open presence of charitable activities and preaching and meant that those members primarily interested in these activities could no longer be accommodated. As a result, this left a core of members with a more long-term vision and possibly more radical agenda to either continue organizing activities underground or leave Tunisia for Libya or Syria. AST encouraged followers to go overseas, especially to Syria to fight President Bashar al-Assad. This influence is likely to have contributed to the large number of Tunisian militants fighting in Syria. As long as AST remains a designated terrorist organization by the Tunisian state, it is unlikely to be able to return to the popularity it enjoyed shortly after the Arab Spring revolution unless a new leadership emerges giving the group a new focus.<sup>244</sup> However, with so many of its members joining IS and other militant groups in combat, there is the potential for the group to become even more dangerous when these battle-hardened fighters return, bringing serious consequences to the security and stability of Tunisia and the region.

## 7.13 Ansar al-Sunna

### 7.13.1 Background

Ansar al-Sunna is an Islamic militant group active in the Cabo Delgado Province of Mozambique. The group was formed in 2015 as a religious organization which followed the teachings of the radical Kenyan cleric, Aboud Rogo, who was killed in 2012. His supporters settled in the town of Kibiti in southern Tanzania, before spreading across the border into northern Mozambique.<sup>245</sup> Members of Ansar al-Sunna are mostly Mozambicans from Mocimboa da Praia, Palma and Macomia districts, but also include foreign nationals from Tanzania and Somalia. Estimates of the size of the group vary from around 350 to as many as 1500 members, operating in small cells along the northern coast of Mozambique.

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<sup>244</sup> Petré C: Tunisian Salafism - The Rise And Fall Of Ansar Al-Sharia – Analysis, 9 October 2015, available at: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/09102015-tunisian-salafism-the-rise-and-fall-of-ansar-al-sharia-analysis/>, last accessed 2 September 2018.

<sup>245</sup> Standard digital: Mozambique Al Shabab behead 10 villagers, 29 May 2018, available at: <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001282236/mozambique-al-shabab-behead-10-villagers> , last accessed 1 September 2018.

### 7.13.2 Ideology

Like other radical Islamic groups, Ansar al-Sunna is demanding the creation of an Islamic state in northern Mozambique, along with the implementation of Sharia law and a rejection of “Western” education.<sup>246</sup>

### 7.13.3 Activities and major attacks

Ansar al-Sunna has focused its activities on Cabo Delgado, a hub for mining and petroleum exploration in northern Mozambique. It is alleged that the activities of the group has brought a halt to development in the area.<sup>247</sup> The group has taken control of mosques and, in some cases, has established its own where members preach anti-state ideology and a radical interpretation of Islam. There has also been a seismic shift in the Ansar al-Sunna’s preferred targets. Initial attacks were carried out against police stations and state health clinics, but recent attacks show that civilians are fast becoming the preferred target for the group.

Ansar al-Sunna is involved in the illicit trade in ivory and contraband goods, as well as trafficking timber and stolen minerals to international criminal networks. Its finances are generated through trafficking in illegal timber and rubies, another resource that is found in the province. By one estimate, the group generates at least \$3 million a year from trafficking in timber and \$30 million from rubies, although these figures are likely exaggerated.<sup>248</sup>

Violent attacks by the group include the following:

- 6 June 2018: Ansar al-Sunna militants attacked the village of Namaluco in the Quissanga district armed with knives and machetes. At least six people were killed and two seriously injured. The militants also burned down around 100 houses.<sup>249</sup>
- 27 May 2018: Ansar al-Sunna militants attacked two small remote villages in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, resulting in the death of ten people. The militants reportedly beheaded the victims, burnt homes and set vehicles ablaze.<sup>250</sup>

### 7.13.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

Ansar al-Sunna is primarily a local phenomenon and the group’s influence does not spread beyond Mozambique. It is however believed that the group’s leaders maintain religious, military and commercial links with other militant Islamic groups in Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and the

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<sup>246</sup> Opperman J: Is northern Mozambique faced with an emerging extremist threat?, *Daily Maverick*, 31 May 2018, available at: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2018-05-31-is-northern-mozambique-faced-with-an-emerging-extremist-threat/#.WxgqqiAuCUI>, last accessed 3 September 2018.

<sup>247</sup> West S: Ansar al-Sunna - A New Militant Islamist Group Emerges in Mozambique, *Jamestown Terrorism Monitor* Vol 16/12, 14 June 2018, available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/ansar-al-sunna-a-new-militant-islamist-group-emerges-in-mozambique/>, last accessed 5 November 2018.

<sup>248</sup> Opperman (2018).

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> West (2018).

African Great Lakes Region. All these groups have gained a foothold in East Africa and this has serious consequences for security and stability in the region.<sup>251</sup>

Since October 2017, Ansar al-Sunna has splintered into smaller cells, with no overarching leader or structure. The Mozambican police has identified six men as the leaders of the group namely Abdul Faizal, Abdul Raim, Abdul Remane, Ibn Omar, "Salimo", and Nuno Remane.<sup>252</sup>

Locals refer to Ansar al-Sunna as 'Shabaab' after Somalia's al-Shabaab. It is not clear if Ansar al-Sunna is an official affiliate but it has reportedly hired al-Shabaab trainers from Somalia, Tanzania and Kenya.<sup>253</sup>

#### 7.13.5 How Christians have been affected

Ansar al-Sunna is anti-Christian and anti-Western, and has tried to prevent people from attending hospitals or schools which it considers secular and anti-Islamic. While the group has not physically attacked Christians, its openly anti-Christian stance poses a major threat to the lives and security of Christians living in the area it operates in.

#### 7.13.6 Future outlook

It must be noted that Ansar al-Sunna is still a relatively young militant group. Thus, analyzing reasons for the group's popularity and addressing concerns such as unemployment, exclusion and underdevelopment particularly in the Cabo Delgado region may help prevent it from spreading further. While this needs the involvement of the local community and government, involvement at the international level will also determine how the group will evolve in the future: Kenya needs to control the penetration of Islamists into Tanzania, and Tanzania needs to eliminate the route into Mozambique.<sup>254</sup>

### 7.14 Ansar Beit al-Maqdis (ABM) (a.k.a. Wilayat Sinai)

#### 7.14.1 Background

Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM), Egypt's most active militant group, was created following the Arab Spring uprising that ousted Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 2011. It emerged from a number of indigenous Salafist groups in the Sinai Peninsula some of which had ties to militants in Gaza or leaders that had previously fought abroad, including with al-Qaeda.<sup>255</sup> On 10 November 2014, many members of ABM took an oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the

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<sup>251</sup> West (2018).

<sup>252</sup> Opperman (2018).

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> West (2018).

<sup>255</sup> Fahmy O and Bayoumy Y: Egypt strikes back at Islamic State militants after beheading video, killing dozens, *The Age*, 16 February 2015, available at: <https://www.theage.com.au/world/egypt-strikes-back-at-islamic-state-militants-after-beheading-video-killing-dozens-20150216-13ghv2.html>, last accessed 3 September 2018).

leader of IS and subsequently adopted the name Wilayat Sinai. The group has since carried out attacks, mostly in North Sinai, but also in other parts of Egypt.<sup>256</sup>

Given the group's heightened operational security, its exact size, membership composition, and organizational structure are subject to speculation. Some intelligence assessments have estimated that there are about one thousand members whilst others put the numbers at a few hundred.<sup>257</sup>

#### 7.14.2 Ideology

Since aligning themselves with IS and becoming Wilayat Sinai, the group has adopted IS's ideology. It aims to spread the IS caliphate by eliminating the Egyptian government, destroying Israel, and establishing an Islamic emirate in the Sinai.<sup>258</sup>

#### 7.14.3 Activities and major attacks

Wilayat Sinai increased its operations when President Morsi was removed from power in July 2013, shifting its main target from Israel to the Egyptian security forces, and declaring the Egyptian army and police as apostates that can be killed. Since then, the group has killed hundreds of Egyptian security personnel. The group has also been responsible for attacks on civilians and has carried out suicide bomb attacks and executions of Sufi Muslims, whose interpretation of Islam they consider heretical.

Ever since it became an IS affiliate, Wilayat Sinai has acquired enhanced capabilities and carried out high-profile attacks against the Egyptian regime. The group has also started targeting Westerners and adopted beheading as a tactic. Furthermore, Wilayat Sinai has developed a media production operation and has published a host of propaganda videos online. In one of its videos, the group urges citizens to avoid cooperating with the authorities or joining the army and police force.<sup>259</sup>

Wilayat Sinai has claimed responsibility for dozens of violent attacks. These include:

- 31 October 2015: Wilayat Sinai claimed it shot down the Russian passenger plane that crashed in the Sinai Peninsula. The plane with two hundred and fourteen Russian and three Ukrainian passengers, and seven crew, crashed in a mountainous part of Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, killing all the people on board.<sup>260</sup>
- 24 October 2014: Wilayat Sinai detonated a car bomb at a heavily guarded security checkpoint in Sheikh Zuweid and then ambushed the guards who came to investigate

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<sup>256</sup> BBC News: Sinai Province - Egypt's most dangerous group, 12 May 2016, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25882504>, last accessed 9 September 2018.

<sup>257</sup> The Tahir Institute for Middle East Policy: Wilayat Sinai, 23 July 2014, available at: <https://timep.org/esw/terror-groups/wilayat-sinai/>, last accessed 9 September 2018.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> BBC, Sinai Province 2016.

<sup>260</sup> Egypt Independent: IS group in Egypt claims it downed Russian airliner –AFP, 31 October 2015, available at: <https://www.egyptindependent.com/group-egypt-claims-it-downed-russian-airliner-afp/>, last accessed 9 September 2018.

the attack. Later the same day, they opened fire on a security checkpoint in Arish. The attacks killed at least 33 Egyptian security personnel and left many people wounded.<sup>261</sup>

- On 9 April 2017 (Palm Sunday), the group attacked churches in Tanta and Alexandria, killing around 45 people.<sup>262</sup>

#### 7.14.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

Wilayat Sinai is primarily active in Egypt's North Sinai Governorate, with its stronghold in the town of Jabal Halal. Its activities sometimes take place in the neighboring Gaza strip and it has also been known to cooperate with IS in Libya to undertake attacks. The group is led by Abu Osama al-Masri. He is an Egyptian scholar and became leader of the group in August 2016 after the previous leader, Abu Du'a al-Ansari, was killed in an airstrike.

Wilayat Sinai pledged allegiance to IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in November 2014. The group has emerged as one of the most effective and deadly IS affiliates given its relatively small fighting force and the large number of casualties it inflicts. Given the proximity of Wilayat Sinai's area of operations to Libya, and its involvement in smuggling to and from northern Africa, it is also likely that the group has links to IS's recognized affiliate in Libya. It is also alleged that Wilayat Sinai has low-level links to Hamas' military wing, Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, likely based on familial links and areas of mutual benefit, such as smuggling and training.<sup>263</sup>

#### 7.14.5 How Christians have been affected

Wilayat Sinai continually targets Christians in Egypt and has called upon followers to target Christians everywhere. In the group's own words, Egyptian Christians are their "favorite prey" and they claim to have orders from Allah to kill all prey. Wilayat Sinai has claimed responsibility for dozens of suicide bombings and attacks on churches.

Christians who live in North Sinai are among the most persecuted by Wilayat Sinai. Christian families there have reportedly received death threats and as a result many Coptic Christian families have fled Arish, the capital city of North Sinai. Others have decided to hide their identities out of fear. Women for instance, have started wearing veils and covering their hair, and have stopped wearing crosses or attending church services for fear of attack.<sup>264</sup>

#### 7.14.6 Future outlook

The Sinai region offers Wilayat Sinai a position of strategic significance with many territorial opportunities. The group is also relatively sheltered, contending at present only with the Egyptian State, rather than with external intervention or international airstrikes. The Egyptian

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/04/12/egypt-horrific-palm-sunday-bombings>, last accessed May 2019.

<sup>263</sup> Australian National Security: Islamic State Sinai Province, (undated), available at: <https://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Islamic-state-sinai-province-is-sinai.aspx>, last accessed 9 September 2018.

<sup>264</sup> Mikhail A: Christians Flee Violence in North Sinai, 7 March 2017, available at: <https://eshhad.org/analysisblog/2017/10/4/christians-flee-violence-in-north-sinai>, last accessed 9 September 2018.

government recently launched Operation Sinai-2018 with the aim of destroying the terrorist groups that have penetrated the area. Depending on how successful this campaign is, the operational capabilities of Wilayat Sinai may be reduced. Also, with the end of IS territorial control in Iraq and Syria, it is possible that they will divert their assets and fighters to other regional affiliates, including Libya and Egypt. For Wilayat Sinai, an increase in foreign fighters and resources would definitely enhance its operations in the country.<sup>265</sup>

## 7.15 Ansaroul Islam (Ansar ul Islam) <sup>266</sup>

### 7.15.1 Background

The origins of Ansaroul Islam can be traced to Malam Ibrahim Dicko, a prominent scholar from the northern town of Djibo in Burkina Faso, who rose to prominence through his radical Islamic teaching and through memorializing the ancient kingdom of Djeelgodji. The group was founded in 2016 and has emerged as the umbrella for all Islamist operations in northern Burkina Faso.<sup>267</sup> Ansaroul Islam contains around two hundred members and is largely based in Mali around the villages Boulkessi and N'Daki, which enables it to take part in operations in both Burkina Faso and Mali.<sup>268</sup>

Ansaroul Islam is primarily made up of recruits from the Fulani and Rimaibé ethnic groupings, with Rimaibé in the majority. It also includes members from the Mossi, Bellah (Black Tamasheq), Dogons, and Songhai communities.<sup>269</sup>

### 7.15.2 Ideology

Ansaroul Islam is a Salafist militant group which aims to end government control in parts of the north of Mali and enforce Sharia in the area once ruled by the ancient Fulani Empire of Djeelgodji.

### 7.15.3 Activities and major attacks

Ansaroul Islam primarily targets civilians and civilian infrastructure using means such as kidnappings and the assassination of local elders, mayors or other prominent civilians across the Sahel region. The group has also routinely targeted Burkinabe security forces. A large portion of

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<sup>265</sup> Shkolnik M, From Marriage Of Convenience To Bitter Divorce - The Unraveling Ties Between Hamas And Isil's Sinai Affiliate, 22 January 2018, available at: <https://warontherocks.com/2018/01/marriage-convenience-bitter-divorce-unraveling-ties-hamas-isils-sinai-affiliate/>, last accessed 9 September 2018.

<sup>266</sup> "Ansar" is a popular Arabic term used by Islamic militant groups and means "supporters/helpers". It refers back to the local inhabitants of Medina who took Muhammad and his followers into their homes when they emigrated from Mecca.

<sup>267</sup> BBC News: Burkina Faso's war against militant Islamists, 14 August 2017) available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-39279050>, last accessed 28 August 2018.

<sup>268</sup> Weiss C: State Department designates Burkinabe jihadist group Ansaroul Islam, 20 February 2018, available at: <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/02/state-department-adds-burkinabe-jihadist-group-to-terror-designation-list.php>, last accessed 29 September 2018.

<sup>269</sup> Nsaiba H and Weiss C: Ansaroul Islam and the Growing Terrorist Insurgency in Burkina Faso, CTC Sentinel March 2018, available at: <https://ctc.usma.edu/ansaroul-islam-growing-terrorist-insurgency-burkina-faso/>, last accessed 29 August 2018.

these attacks have been against fixed positions such as checkpoints and buildings.<sup>270</sup> Ansaroul Islam also acts as a self-defense group, protecting communities and their livestock in a region where banditry, cattle rustling and intercommunal violence is widespread.<sup>271</sup>

Ansaroul Islam has carried out at least seventy-eight attacks in northern Burkina Faso since December 2016 most of which have targeted defense and security forces and members of self-defense groups. Major attacks by the group include the following:

- 5 April 2017: Ansaroul Islam militants detonated an IED in Mali on the border to Burkina Faso, which wounded two French soldiers in their light armored vehicle. The group then ambushed a unit that arrived to secure the perimeter of the first attack, killing another French soldier.<sup>272</sup>
- 16 December 2016: Ansaroul Islam attacked an army outpost in Nassoumbou, Burkina Faso. The assault left at least twelve soldiers dead. It is alleged that Ansaroul Islam was aided by members of Katibat Macina and another Ansar Dine unit, Katibat Serma.<sup>273</sup>

#### 7.15.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

Although Ansaroul Islam is largely focused on Burkina Faso, its roots are deeply embedded in the conflict in Mali, exploiting the weak security near the Mali border to build up its operations. The group is allied to other jihadist movements in the Sahel region and its budding insurgency greatly threatens the security of Burkina Faso and neighboring countries.<sup>274</sup>

Abdoul Salam Dicko (also known as Jafar) is the current overall emir of Ansaroul Islam. He took over as leader of the group when his brother, the founder and first leader of Ansaroul Islam, Ibrahim Dicko, died in 2017.<sup>275</sup>

Ansaroul Islam has received considerable support and training from Katibat Macina as well as Katibat Serma. It is also alleged that Ansaroul Islam has close relations with the Jama Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM), a group working with al-Qaeda's network in Mali. There have been documented cases of JNIM sending operatives to train Ansaroul Islam in various tactics. Additionally, the fact that Ansaroul Islam has carried out attacks on the Mali side of the border is further evidence of the group's close ties with JNIM.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Sahel Memo, available at: <http://www.sahelmemo.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/June-October-2018-Chronology-Burkina-Faso-1.pdf>, last accessed 6 November 2018.

<sup>271</sup> Nsaibia/Weiss: CTC Sentinel March 2018.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Al-Jazeera: Deadly attack targets army base in Burkina Faso, 16 December 2016, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/deadly-attack-targets-army-base-burkina-faso-161216164208144.html>, last accessed 29 August 2018.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Weiss: State Department designates (20 February 2018).

<sup>276</sup> Nsaiba/Weiss: CTC Sentinel March 2018.

### 7.15.5 How have Christians been affected

There have been no reports that Ansaroul Islam has committed attacks against Christians. Even though its primary targets have been civilians and civilian infrastructure, it has not deliberately segregated Christians for targeted attacks. However, seeing as the group seeks to end government control in northern parts of Burkina Faso and enforce Sharia, Christian activities are unlikely to be tolerated.

### 7.15.6 Future outlook

Given that the group appears to be growing in its capabilities, there is concern that Ansaroul Islam's campaign of violence will spread from the northern-most province of Soum to the provinces of Yatenga, Loroum, Kossi, Oudalan, and Bam. Sporadic attacks have already taken place within all these provinces.<sup>277</sup> Also, Ansaroul Islam's network inside Burkina Faso will most likely enable al-Qaeda's regional networks to gain more operating space inside the country, allowing for greater recruitment and opportunities to conduct additional large-scale terrorist attacks. Burkina Faso's government heavy-handed response to insurgents such as Ansaroul Islam may even drive people to join the jihadi cause, enabling the group to expand.<sup>278</sup>

## 7.17 Islamic State in Somalia (ISS)

### 7.17.1 Background

The origins of Islamic State in Somalia (ISS) can be traced to Abdul Qadir Mumin, a former al-Shabaab member who was sent by the al-Shabaab leadership to its remote outpost in Puntland to attract recruits for its local branch there. Feeling physically and increasingly ideologically distanced from al-Shabaab, Mumin defected from the group and subsequently pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and the Islamic State group in October 2015.<sup>279</sup> His new group, ISS, remained generally inactive for the first year or so but its emergence as a real threat came in October 2016 when it briefly invaded and held the Somali port city of Qandala.<sup>280</sup>

In December 2017, two years after Mumin's group pledged allegiance to al Baghdadi, it was recognized by IS as an official Wilayat or province.<sup>281</sup> Currently, the group operates in the semi-autonomous Puntland region of Somalia and is estimated to have around three hundred active fighters, most of whom are Somali.

### 7.17.2 Ideology

ISS shares a similar ideology with the IS. It is a Salafist militant group which seeks to replace the Federal Government of Somalia with an Islamic state and implement IS's strict interpretation of

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Warner J: Sub-Saharan Africa's Three "New" Islamic State Affiliates, CTC Sentinel January 2017, available at: <https://ctc.usma.edu/sub-saharan-africas-three-new-islamic-state-affiliates/>, last accessed on 30 August 2018.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

Sharia. It also seeks to replace al-Shabaab as the dominant armed opposition to federal authority in Somalia.<sup>282</sup>

### 7.17.3 Activities and major attacks

ISS engages in activities such as kidnapping young boys aged ten to fifteen, indoctrinating them, and forcing them to take up militant activity. There have also been accounts that the group raids communities which do not support it in order to obtain food and other necessities. As it has no media wing of its own, ISS mostly relies on the existing IS-propaganda channels, for example the Amaq News Agency, to promote itself.<sup>283</sup>

ISS engages in violent attacks in Somalia. Examples of such attacks include the following:

- January 2018: ISS militants abducted 9 people, including some off duty soldiers, in the region around Qandala. They later tortured and decapitated at least three of them, leaving their bodies along a road.<sup>284</sup>
- 23 May 2017: ISS militants carried out a suicide bombing close to the Juba Hotel in Bosaso. The attacks resulted in the death of five people and twelve were left wounded.<sup>285</sup>

### 7.17.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

ISS remains largely concentrated in the northern Puntland Region. Although it does not have a presence beyond the borders of Somalia, its main affiliate, IS has a growing presence on the continent with militant groups and cells in Northern, Eastern and Western Africa. Nonetheless, ISS poses a considerable threat to the stability of the region.

ISS is led by Abdul Qadir Mumin, whose role for the continued existence of the group has been judged to be extremely important.<sup>286</sup>

The group is mainly affiliated to IS and had been receiving direct assistance from officials in Syria and Iraq. The group is also directly supported by IS-Yemen Province, which is known to have sent them experts, trainers, money, weapons and other materials. There are other less well known pro-IS cells in Somalia, but the exact nature of connections between them and ISS remains unclear.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Central Intelligence Agency: Terrorist groups-Home Based, undated, available at: [https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/print\\_2264.html](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/print_2264.html), last accessed 30 August 2018.

<sup>283</sup> Weiss C: Analysis - Islamic State ramps up attack claims in Somalia, Long War Journal, 24 May 2018, available at: <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/05/analysis-islamic-state-ramps-up-attack-claims-in-somalia.php>, last accessed 30 August 2018.

<sup>284</sup> Irish Examiner, Decapitated bodies found in Somalia days after 'Islamic State' abductions, 1 February 2017, available at: <https://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/world/decapitated-bodies-found-in-somalia-days-after-islamic-state-abductions-775120.html>, last accessed 30 August 2018.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Warner J and Weiss C: A Legitimate Challenger? Assessing the Rivalry between al-Shabaab and the Islamic State in Somalia, CTC Sentinel November 2017, available at: <https://ctc.usma.edu/a-legitimate-challenger-assessing-the-rivalry-between-al-shabaab-and-the-islamic-state-in-somalia/>, last accessed 30 August 2018.

#### 7.17.5 How Christians have been affected

There are no reports of incidents in which ISS has carried out attacks specifically against Christians. (Due to the threats posed by radical Islamic groups in the country, hardly anyone will show themselves to be Christian anyway.)<sup>288</sup> Nevertheless, considering the fact that ISS is an affiliate of IS and seeks to establish an Islamic caliphate, the group is most likely to be opposed to Christians and Christianity.

#### 7.17.6 Future outlook

ISS has been under attack from international counterterrorism airstrikes and from al-Shabaab, who have declared ISS to be an enemy. In the event that Mumin or other ISS leaders are killed, given the small size of the cells and waning fortunes of IS globally, there is a strong possibility that the cells might collapse entirely. If ISS collapsed, fighters from Mumin's faction could attempt to return to the al-Shabaab fold. Whether or not they would be received by al-Shabaab if this happens, is unclear.

It is also speculated that if IS decided to increase funding, ISS could improve its standing vis-à-vis al-Shabaab. In addition, if it begins to attract foreign fighters regionally (especially from Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda and Yemen) or globally (especially foreign fighters leaving the crumbling caliphate in the Levant) its growing numbers could make it possible for the group to challenge al-Shabaab for hegemony and control in Somalia.<sup>289</sup>

### 7.18 Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS)

#### 7.18.1 Background

The history of Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) can be traced back to the 2013 merger between the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and the Masked Men Brigade, thus forming al-Mourabitoun. In May 2015, two years after the merger, Adnan Abu Walid Sahrawi, then a senior leader within al-Mourabitoun, pledged allegiance to IS. However, the pledge was rejected by Mokhtar Belmokhtar, who emphasized that it was an individual pledge and not one on behalf of al-Mourabitoun as a group.<sup>290</sup> An internecine battle within al-Mourabitoun ensued between Belmokhtar's pro-al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) faction and Sahrawi's pro-IS faction. Sahrawi and other pro-IS members consequently left al-Mourabitoun and formed a group called the Islamic State in Mali, which has now become the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS).<sup>291</sup> In November 2017, IS recognized and accepted the pledge from this group.

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<sup>288</sup> World Watch Monitor: Somalia Christians 'killed by their children's children', 2 March 2018, available at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/somalia-christians-killed-childrens-children/>, last accessed 30 August 2018.

<sup>289</sup> World Watch Monitor (2 March 2018).

<sup>290</sup> Warner J: Sub-Saharan Africa's Three "New" Islamic State Affiliates, CTC Sentinel November 2017, available at: <https://ctc.usma.edu/sub-saharan-africas-three-new-islamic-state-affiliates/>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

### 7.18.2 Ideology

The group adheres to the Salafist militant ideology. They seek to replace regional governments with an Islamic state in the areas they operate in.<sup>292</sup>

### 7.18.3 Activities and major attacks

The modus operandi associated with ISGS is similar in nature to that of other IS factions. The most common methods involve explosives, bombings and armed assaults (using small arms, rocket propelled grenades, mortar fire etc.).<sup>293</sup> Although suicide bombings have probably been carried out by the group (they have often been attributed to ISGS but not confirmed), their attacks have largely been ambushes utilizing some type of improvised explosive device followed by small arms fire on the target.

Major attacks by the group include:

- 4 October 2017: ISGS militants ambushed a convoy of US-Nigerien joint forces in Tongo Tongo, Tillabéri Region, near the Malian border, killing 8 soldiers and an interpreter, and wounding others. The militants seized weapons and other military equipment.<sup>294</sup>
- 22 February 2017: ISGS militants ambushed a convoy of the Nigerien army near the village of Tirzawane close to the Malian border, killing sixteen soldiers and wounding eighteen others. The militants seized seven vehicles along with several weapons and ammunition.<sup>295</sup>

### 7.18.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

ISGS is active in eastern Mali and its network stretches across the Sahel region to Niger and in the south-east towards Burkina Faso. The group's ability to carry out cross-border attacks creates new security challenges for the Sahel region which has already been plagued by the presence of other radical Islamic militant groups.

The group is led by its founder, Abu Walid al Sahrawi, who was a commander within al-Qaeda affiliate, al-Murabitoun, until October 2016. He had already declared allegiance to IS in May 2015. An unknown number of fighters from al-Murabitoun broke off with Sahrawi and ISGS's oath of allegiance was accepted and recognized by IS in 2017.

### 7.18.5 How Christians have been affected

There are no reports of incidents in which ISGS has carried out attacks against Christians. However, considering the fact that ISGS is an affiliate of IS and seeks to establish an Islamic

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> University of Maryland: Overview - Terrorism in 2016, START background report, August 2017, available at: [https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START\\_GTD\\_OverviewTerrorism2016\\_August2017.pdf](https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_GTD_OverviewTerrorism2016_August2017.pdf), last accessed 6 November 2018.

<sup>294</sup> Mena Stream: Attacks Claimed By The Islamic State In The Greater Sahara (ISGS), 23 June 2018, available at: <http://menastream.com/attacks-islamic-state-greater-sahara/>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

caliphate, it may not be safe to openly profess one's faith as a Christian in the areas they operate in.

#### 7.18.6 Future outlook

The possibility of ISGS becoming a larger player in the world of jihad is uncertain. The real potential for ISGS will be realized if ISGS and Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA) are able to coordinate their efforts and connect their territory of control. (At the moment, the divided campaigns of both IS factions are limiting their regional potential.) This would create a massive regional security problem and would also likely influence groups in Somalia and Libya to attempt similar territorial connection operations, which regional forces would no longer be unable to combat effectively.<sup>296</sup>

It is most probable that IS's recognition will bolster ISGS's standing in region, likely enhancing recruitment capabilities. This would enable ISGS to carry out further attacks in an effort to build up regional status. Furthermore, while their capabilities remain to be seen, ISGS is likely to carry out more high-profile attacks in West Africa as a way to enhance its status in the region.<sup>297</sup>

### 7.19 Islamic State West Africa (a.k.a. Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyah)

#### 7.19.1 Background

Islamic State West Africa (ISWA) was formed when Boko Haram formally pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group in March 2015. An IS spokesman welcomed the pledge, urging followers to travel to West Africa to support Boko Haram and the group became the official IS province in West Africa. However, following an attempt to remove Abubakar Shekau as leader of the ISWA/Boko Haram in 2016 for disobeying Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's order to cease targeting Muslim civilians, ISWA/Boko Haram split into different factions. ISWA became a separate group in the aftermath of the split and is under the leadership of the IS-appointed Abu-Musab al-Barnawi.<sup>298</sup> Analysts estimate that ISWA has 3,000 – 5,000 fighters, roughly double Boko Haram's strength. It has managed to take control of huge swathes of territory and create a stronghold in the neglected Lake Chad region.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Warner: CTC Sentinel November 2017.

<sup>297</sup> Max Security: West Africa Analysis - Islamic State recognizes ISGS as West African affiliate following increased attacks in recent months - despite 17 month silence, undated, available at: <https://www.max-security.com/reports/west-africa-analysis-islamic-state-recognizes-isgs-as-west-african-affiliate-following-increased-attacks/>, last accessed 30 August 2018.

<sup>298</sup> Congressional Research Service: Boko Haram and the Islamic State's West Africa Province, 28 June 2018, available at <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IF10173.pdf>, last accessed 30 August 2018.

<sup>299</sup> Warfare Today: Rise of the Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA), 1 May 2018, available at: <http://www.warfare.today/2018/05/01/rise-of-the-islamic-state-in-west-africa-iswa/>, last accessed 30 August 2018.

### 7.19.2 Ideology

As an official IS province, the group shares IS's global jihadist ideology. They follow an extreme interpretation of Islam and Sharia which is anti-Western, promotes sectarian violence and targets those that do not agree with its interpretation as infidels and apostates.<sup>300</sup>

### 7.19.3 Activities and major reported attacks

Unlike Boko Haram which has won a reputation for savagery, ISWA focuses on a "winning hearts and minds mission". Digging wells, distributing seed and fertilizer and providing safe pasture for herders are among the enticements offered by ISWA to locals in the region. This has also created an economy for ISWA to tax. The group also offers security and its own brand of justice in areas that have fallen beyond the control of the state. Furthermore, ISWA requires men in its territory to wear long beards, restricts night-time movements, and makes Islamic prayer compulsory; offenders can get up to forty lashes.<sup>301</sup>

Major attacks by ISWA include:

- 1 September 2018: ISWA militants allegedly attacked a military base in Zari in northern Borno State resulting in the death of about thirty soldiers.<sup>302</sup>
- 19 February 2018: Militants linked to ISWA attacked and kidnapped over a hundred schoolgirls from a school in Dapchi, northern Nigeria. About a month later, all but one of the girls are returned. One girl was reportedly being kept by the militants because she refused to convert from Christianity to Islam.<sup>303</sup>

### 7.19.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

ISWA has taken advantage of the fact that the Lake Chad basin area is largely neglected and have created their stronghold there. It has established a form of administration in the area and it is expanding its operational reach into the surrounding countries. ISWA is led by Abu Musab al-Barnawi a former Boko Haram spokesman and son of Boko Haram's founder, Muhammed Yusuf, whose killing in 2009 sparked an Islamist insurgency in Nigeria. He was selected by IS to lead Boko Haram and remained leader of ISWA after the split.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Australian National Security: Islamic State in Libya (IS-Libya), available at: <https://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Islamic-state-in-libya-is-libya.aspx> last accessed 31 August 2018.

<sup>301</sup> Carsten P and Kingimi A: Islamic State ally stakes out territory around Lake Chad, Reuters, 29 April 2018, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-security/islamic-state-ally-stakes-out-territory-around-lake-chad-idUSKBN1I0063>, last accessed 3 September 2018.

<sup>302</sup> Lanre O and Kingimi A: 30 Nigerian soldiers killed in attack by ISIS-linked militants, Global News, 1 September 2018, available at: <https://globalnews.ca/news/4423268/nigerian-soldiers-killed-by-islamic-state-militants/>, last accessed 3 September 2018.

<sup>303</sup> BBC News: Kidnapped Dapchi schoolgirls freed in Nigeria, 22 March 2018, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-43484146>, last accessed 30 August 2018.

<sup>304</sup> Carsten/Kingimi: 29 April 2018.

ISWA is reportedly operating in Nigeria and Niger and is an IS affiliate. It is clear from ISWA primary source documents that the group has asked IS for theological guidance on who it is lawful to attack.<sup>305</sup>

#### 7.19.5 How Christians have been affected

Prior to the split in 2016, ISWA committed atrocities against Christians under the leadership of Shekau. They destroyed countless churches, killed and harmed people for being ‘nonbelievers’ (including prominent church leaders) or forcibly tried to convert them. The group also bombed and killed members of churches and prevented Christians from assembling for conventional Christian worship, among other things.<sup>306</sup> As a separate group, they have continued with such atrocities. Indeed, the group’s leader, Barnawi, pledged to shift the group’s focus to Western, Christian and secular targets. They have continued trying to forcibly convert Christians.<sup>307</sup> A case in point is that of Leah Sharibu, one of the girls abducted from Government Girls Science Technical College, Dapchi, Nigeria. Although the group returned the girls about a month after abducting them, they refused to release Leah since she reportedly refused to renounce her Christian faith.

The activities of ISWA and other militant groups in northern Nigeria and its environs has made it difficult for Christians in the area to openly profess and practice their faith.<sup>308</sup>

#### 7.19.6 Future outlook

IS’s collapse in Sirte, Libya, could be a blessing in disguise for ISWA, which has struggled to overcome internal and external challenges. ISWA has been weakened by infighting, which has splintered the group and left rival factions feuding over scarce resources. Further, the Nigerian army and other regional security forces have placed considerable pressure on ISWA since early 2015, forcing the militants to give up most of their territorial strongholds in north-eastern Nigeria. But as sub-Saharan African IS fighters flee Libya, they could reinforce ISWA, and serve as a bridge between ISWA militants in Nigeria and Niger and networks outside of the Lake Chad region. On the other hand, ISWA’s internal tensions may ultimately cripple the group, and sever its relationship with IS. It is also likely that the group may reunite with Boko Haram if Shekau is removed as leader. If this happens, the new group will be a force to reckon with in the sub-region owing to its increased capabilities and strength.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> Shimawua D, Victor I and Asue D: Assessing The Impact Of Boko Haram Attacks On Christians In Nigeria, *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, 2016, 229-239, available at: <http://universitypublications.net/ijas/0903/pdf/H6V1269.pdf>, last accessed 6 November 2018.

<sup>307</sup> Congressional Research Service: Boko Haram, 28 June 2018.

<sup>308</sup> BBC News: Kidnapped Dapchi schoolgirls freed in Nigeria, 22 March 2018, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-43484146>, last accessed 30 August 2018.

<sup>309</sup> Gartenstein-Ross D, Zenn J and Barr N: *Islamic State 2021 - Possible Futures in North and West Africa*, February 2017, available at: [https://s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/defenddemocracy/uploads/documents/022017\\_DGR\\_ISIL\\_Report.pdf](https://s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/defenddemocracy/uploads/documents/022017_DGR_ISIL_Report.pdf), last accessed 30 August 2018.

## 7.20 Jahba East Africa

### 7.20.1 Background

Jahba East Africa emerged when fighters previously loyal to al-Shabaab sought to realign with IS after accusing al-Shabaab of being a “physical and psychological prison”.<sup>310</sup> On 8 April 2016, the splinter-group pledged allegiance to IS recognizing Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the “rightful khalifa” (leader) of all Muslims. Jahba East Africa is made up of former al-Shabaab members and although its strength and military capabilities are still unknown, there are reports that the group has militants from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania among its ranks.<sup>311</sup>

### 7.20.2 Ideology

Jahba East Africa shares a similar ideology with the IS. It is a Salafist militant group which seeks to establish an Islamic caliphate and implement IS's strict interpretation of Sharia. It also seeks to wage jihad according to the Sunnah against the enemies of Allah.<sup>312</sup>

### 7.20.3 Activities and major attacks

Operationally, Jahba East Africa has proved to be more of an ideological than a physical threat. The group has claimed credit for few acts of violence but its most notable attack was on a convoy from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in April 2016. The group claims to have detonated an improvised Explosive Device (IED) on the outskirts of the capital, damaging an AMISOM vehicle. However, both AMISOM and the Somali government officials have refused to accept that Jahba East Africa was behind it.<sup>313</sup>

### 7.20.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

Jahba East Africa has sought to carve out an insurgency in the East African region. It is expanding its presence by building its network with fighters from Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.<sup>314</sup> Owing to the limited information available on the group, it is not known to what extent it has established itself in these other countries or who its leader is. The group has pledged allegiance to IS, however, IS has not yet accepted the pledge of allegiance so it appears that Jahba East Africa's proclaimed association remains symbolic.

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<sup>310</sup> Healy R: Jahba East Africa Jihadists Encroaching Upon al-Shabaab, 12 April 2016, available at <https://www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/2016/04/12/jahba-east-africa-jihadists-encroaching-upon-al-shabaab/>, last accessed 6 September 2018.

<sup>311</sup> West S: Jahba East Africa: Islamic State Alters the Dynamic of Somalia's Conflict, Jamestown Terrorism Monitor, 29 April 2016, available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/jahba-east-africa-islamic-state-alters-the-dynamic-of-somalias-conflict/>, last accessed 7 September 2018.

<sup>312</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Terrorist groups - Home Based (undated).

<sup>313</sup> West S: Jahba East Africa, 29 April 2016.

<sup>314</sup> Counter Extremism Project: Somalia - Extremism & Counter-Extremism, 2018, available at: <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/somalia>, last accessed 6 September 2018.

### 7.20.5 How Christians have been affected

There are no reports of incidents in which Jahba East Africa has carried out attacks against Christians, but it is dangerous to be overtly Christian in places where the group operates (e.g. Somalia).<sup>315</sup> Nevertheless, considering the fact that Jahba East Africa is an (unofficial) affiliate of IS and seeks to establish an Islamic caliphate, the group is likely to be opposed to Christians and Christianity.

### 7.20.6 Future outlook

Jahba East Africa is yet to be officially recognized by IS leadership. Once it has received such recognition, it is likely that it will give the group added legitimacy and capacity, particularly strengthening recruitment.

Also, IS's foreign fighters have the potential to supplement IS-affiliated groups, such as Jahba East Africa, which have not hitherto garnered much attention. The addition of IS fighters would increase the group's capabilities substantially. Tactically, the additional numbers could allow the group to conduct more attacks against civilians or the Somali government and enable it to expand its reach in the region.<sup>316</sup>

Given Jahba East Africa's currently weakened capacity compared to al-Shabaab, it is not likely that the group will be able to reduce al-Shabaab's control over East Africa and take over its leading role. However, with counterterrorism forces strongly targeting al-Shabaab's foreign operations (which are deeply associated with al-Qaeda and which enforces group cohesion), al-Shabaab may experience some setbacks which then allow Jahba East Africa to gain momentum.<sup>317</sup>

## 7.21 Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM)

### 7.21.1 Background

JNIM is a militant organization in the Maghreb and West Africa created in March 2017 following a merger between various radical Islamic groups. On 2 March 2017, the militant groups Ansar Dine, the Macina Liberation Front, al-Mourabitoun and the Sahara branch of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) announced a merger and the creation of JNIM. They also pledged their allegiance to al-Qaeda's emir (Ayman al-Zawahiri), AQIM's emir (Abdelmalek Droukdel) and Taliban's emir, Hibatullah Akhundzada. A few days later, Abdelmalek Droukdel released an audio message, approving the union between the groups. Al-Qaeda also issued a statement approving the new group and accepting their oath of allegiance.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> World Watch Monitor: 2 March 2018.

<sup>316</sup> Young R: Post-Caliphate - ISIL and the Dandelion Effect, 23 October 2017, available at: <https://chargedaffairs.org/dandelion-effect/>, last accessed 5 September 2018.

<sup>317</sup> Healy: 12 April 2016.

<sup>318</sup> Joscelyn T: Analysis: Al Qaeda groups reorganize in West Africa, Long War Journal, 13 March 2017, available at: <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/03/analysis-al-qaeda-groups-reorganize-in-west-africa.php>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

The group claims it united into one group operating under the named emirs, so they could “stand united against the occupier Crusader enemy”.<sup>319</sup> Since the alliance was formed, JNIM appears to have improved their operational capacity and expanded their area of operations resulting in an increase in the number of casualties owing to terrorist attacks.<sup>320</sup>

### 7.21.2 Ideology

JNIM’s ideology is very much aligned with that of al-Qaeda. The group adheres to the Salafi-jihadi tradition and claims to fight to unite Muslims from North and West Africa, rid the region of secular governments, and install puritan Islamic governments in their place.<sup>321</sup>

### 7.21.3 Activities and major attacks

Since it was formed, JNIM has adopted tactics such as suicide bombings, kidnappings for ransom, arms and drug trafficking, and indiscriminate killings. The group has also launched dozens of assaults on United Nations peacekeepers, local and foreign troops, and civilians in Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali.<sup>322</sup> It is also known to attack international interests in sub-Saharan Africa. These include attacks on peacekeepers, hotels popular with Western visitors in Sahel countries, kidnapping foreign tourists, aid workers and diplomats.

Major attacks by the group include:

- 3 March 2018: JNIM claimed responsibility for attacks in Burkina Faso that left sixteen people dead, including eight gunmen, at the army headquarters and French embassy. Eighty others were wounded in the coordinated attacks in the capital Ouagadougou.<sup>323</sup>
- 3 May 2017: JNIM attacked a United Nations peacekeeping camp in the city of Timbuktu with six mortar shells. The attacks resulted in the death of one Liberian peacekeeper, and more than nine people were left wounded.<sup>324</sup>

### 7.21.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

The merger in March 2017 brought together groups that operated primarily in West Africa and the Sahel Sahara region. As a result, JNIM commands a deep, regional network which is likely to increase even further with better coordination. This will potentially make it easier to plan operations against their common enemies. In addition, the emergence of JNIM is bad news for

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Offner F: Shifting relationships, growing threats - Who’s who of insurgent groups in the Sahel, 19 February 2018, available at: <https://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2018/02/19/shifting-relationships-growing-threats-who-s-who-insurgent-groups-sahel>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>321</sup> Bukarti A B: What Is Nusrat al-Islam?, 22 March 2018, available at: <https://institute.global/insight/co-existence/what-nusrat-al-islam>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> Ndiaga T: Al-Qaeda affiliate claims responsibility for Burkina Faso attacks, Reuters, 3 March 2018, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-burkina-security/al-qaeda-affiliate-claims-responsibility-for-burkina-faso-attacks-idUSKCN1GF0GS>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>324</sup> UN News: ‘Blue helmet’ killed in attack on UN Mission camp in Timbuktu, Mali, 4 May 2017, available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/05/556632#.WTt5RsYIHIV>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

the already unstable Sahel region as with the widened geographic scope of their operations, the threat from militant groups will increase even more.<sup>325</sup>

JNIM, which is led by Iyad Ag Ghaly, a veteran Tuareg jihadist and the longtime leader of Ansar Dine, operates in the Sahel region south of the Sahara desert in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. The majority of the group's attacks have been launched in Mali but there have also been attacks in Burkina Faso, Niger and the Ivory Coast.<sup>326</sup>

The main affiliate of JNIM is al-Qaeda to whom it swore allegiance in 2017. It also has ties with AQIM which endorsed its creation. JNIM is also heavily involved with Ansaroul Islam, a militant group operating in northern Burkina Faso. JNIM has trained Ansaroul Islam members and given the group weapons, including Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).<sup>327</sup>

#### 7.21.5 How Christians have been affected

JNIM has carry out targeted attacks against security forces, UN peacekeepers, civilians, and others they reportedly perceived as not adhering to their interpretation of Islam. One of its groups, Katiba Macina, has engaged in activities directly targeting Christians. Examples are incidents occurring between August and October 2017: The group chased Christians from the town of Bodwal and threatened to kill them if they prayed in the town's sole church.<sup>328</sup> In the town of Djanweli, the group threatened the local population and told them Christian music and prayers were banned. In Dobra as well, the group vandalized the church, burned all property and material inside the church and threatened to kill anyone who prayed there.<sup>329</sup>

JNIM militants have also engaged in kidnapping Christian missionaries. In 2017, they released a video showing six foreign hostages, three of whom were Christian missionaries from Colombia, Switzerland and Australia whom they had kidnapped on separate occasions.<sup>330</sup>

#### 7.21.6 Future outlook

With the formation of JNIM, this recent trajectory of terrorist activity in Mali can be expected to continue, with the potential for a further increase in attacks in the country and surrounding regions. It can also be anticipated that the tactics and complexity of JNIM operations may further develop, involving more of the ambitious and multi-phased assaults on Malian and UN security positions that has been increasingly seen since the merger.

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<sup>325</sup> Offner: Shifting relationships, 19 February 2018.

<sup>326</sup> Nsaibia H and Weiss C: Ansaroul Islam and the Growing Terrorist Insurgency in Burkina Faso, CTC Sentinel March 2018, available at: <https://ctc.usma.edu/ansaroul-islam-growing-terrorist-insurgency-burkina-faso/>, last accessed 6 November 2018.

<sup>327</sup> Joscelyn T and Weiss C: US designates al Qaeda's branch in Mali as terror organization, Long War Journal, 5 September 2018, available at: <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/09/us-designates-al-qaedas-branch-in-mali-as-terror-organization.php>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>328</sup> US State Department IRF Report 2017 Mali, 28 May 2018, available at: <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2017/af/280762.htm>, last accessed 6 November 2018.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> US State Department IRF Report 2017 Mali, 28 May 2018.

The merger could also bolster AQIM's long-term presence in Mali by widening its recruitment capability. Over the past decade, al-Qaeda's strategy across multiple regions has involved attempts to integrate into local communities and obtain favor with regional populations, with the aim of enabling the group's affiliates to become accepted as legitimate political actors. This is also likely to continue to be a key focus of JNIM, with al-Qaeda now having expanded its formal network in Mali<sup>331</sup>

It is also important to note that the four groups that form JNIM are collectively responsible for hundreds of attacks in the region over the past several years. With greater coordination of resources and manpower, JNIM will most likely remain strong and continue to perpetrate attacks in the region in spite of the activities of counterterrorist forces.<sup>332</sup>

## 7.22 Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO)

### 7.22.1 Background

The Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) is a splinter-group of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Analysts believe that the split with AQIM was motivated by the desire of some black African jihadists for independence, given the dominance of Algerians in the AQIM leadership. It was founded in 2011 by Hamad el Khairy and Ahmed el Tilemsi, in order to wage jihad in western Africa. MUJAO consists of fighters who are mostly Tuaregs, Mauritanian and Malian Arabs, as well as sympathizers from Nigeria and other Sahelian countries.<sup>333</sup>

### 7.22.2 Ideology

MUJAO follows the ideological roots of al-Qaeda and other Islamic militant traditions. The main objective of the group is to establish an Islamic state that follows Sharia law and spread the law further into areas of West Africa not within the scope of AQIM.<sup>334</sup>

### 7.22.3 Activities and major attacks

MUJAO's leaders are known to be involved in the drugs trade in the Sahel and southern Algeria as well as engaged in kidnapping for ransom. These activities are a major source of funding for MUJAO. The group has also carried out most of the attacks targeting French and African forces

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<sup>331</sup> Falconer A: The Al-Qaeda Affiliates Merger in Mali', Fair Observer, 28 March 2017, available at: <https://www.fairobserver.com/region/africa/al-qaeda-mali-algeria-maghreb-international-security-news-71098/>, last accessed 2 September 2018.

<sup>332</sup> Zimmerer M: A Powerful New Al-Qaeda Affiliate is Shaking West Africa, 24 August 2017, available at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/594b78142cba5e5e2be283bf/t/59a086d7893fc085dc89fa07/1503692553156/A+Powerful+New+Al-Qaeda+Affiliate+is+Shaking+West+Africa+%7C+Megan+Zimmerer.pdf>, last accessed 2 September 2018.

<sup>333</sup> Mackenzie Institute: ' Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA), 18 January 2016, available at: <http://mackenzieinstitute.com/movement-for-oneness-and-jihad-in-west-africa-mojwa/>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>334</sup> BBC News: Mali Crisis - Key players, 12 March 2013, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-17582909>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

in the vicinity of Gao and Kidal, using suicide bombings, vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices and landmines.<sup>335</sup>

Examples of major reported attacks include:

- 23 May 2013: MUJAO and Al-Muwaqi'un Bil Dima launched twin suicide attacks against a Nigerien army base and a French uranium mine in Niger, killing twenty-five people.<sup>336</sup>
- 22 October 2011: The group kidnapped three Western aid workers from the Sahrawi refugee camps in Tindouf, Algeria. The three hostages were freed in July 2012 in exchange for \$18 million and the release of three Islamists. This incident propelled MUJAO into the limelight.<sup>337</sup>

#### 7.22.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

MUJAO functions under a networked structure with sleeper cells all over the Sahel region and aims to spread its influence further into the West African region through violent attacks and kidnappings.<sup>338</sup> Algeria, Mali, Niger and Mauritania are its main areas of operation.

The group's leader is believed to have been Hamada Ould Mohamed Kheirou. He was allegedly killed by French security forces in March 2014.<sup>339</sup>

MUJAO praised prominent al-Qaeda leaders but the group has never been officially recognized by al-Qaeda as an affiliate. The group definitely had some links with AQIM originally, since the majority of MUJAO's original leaders (including Tilemsi, Khairy and Hamaha) served as fighters or commanders in AQIM.<sup>340</sup>

#### 7.22.5 Effects on Christians or Christianity

MUJAO enforces a strict interpretation of Sharia in the areas it operates in. Although there have been no reports of MUJAO attacking Christians, it is suspected that militants linked to MUJAO were responsible for kidnapping a US missionary in Niger who had been preaching to Muslims.<sup>341</sup> Many Christians, particularly those in northern Mali, have also been forced to flee for their safety because of the activities of militant groups such as MUJAO.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> Mackenzie Institute: MOJWA 2016.

<sup>336</sup> Al-Jazeera: Armed group claims Niger suicide attacks, 24 May 2013, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/05/201352394018909665.html>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>337</sup> Reuters: Italian, Spanish hostages freed in Mali, 18 July 2012, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mali-hostages-idUSBRE86H0ST20120718>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>338</sup> Mackenzie Institute: MOJWA 2016.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> Stanford University: Mouvement pour l'Unification et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO), 8 August 2016, available at: <http://stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/631>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>341</sup> Mansfield K: Christian missionary preaching to Muslims gets kidnapped by drug dealing Islamic jihadists, Daily Express, 18 October 2016, available at: <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/722701/Christian-missionary-Jeffery-Woodke-kidnapped-stripped-Islamic-jihadists-Muslims-Niger>, last accessed 5 September 2018.

<sup>342</sup> US State Department International Religious Freedom Report 2012/Mali, available at: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/208382.pdf>, last accessed 8 September 2018.

### 7.22.6 Future outlook

In 2013, MUJAO reportedly merged with al-Mulathamun Battalion (ABM) (known as “The Masked Men”) to form al-Murabitoun and therefore militants no longer operate under the name MUJAO.<sup>343</sup>

## 7.23 Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade

### 7.23.1 Background

The Okba ibn Nafaa Brigade is a Salafist militant group founded in Tunisia in 2012. It has bases in the Semmama and Chaambi mountain range along the Tunisian/Algerian border and has been described by the Tunisian government as “veterans of the Islamist rebellion in northern Mali with links to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)”.<sup>344</sup> The group has been responsible for the majority of Islamist attacks on the Tunisian army whom it has been fighting in the border region since 2012.

It was estimated in 2013 that there were about 80 - 100 Okba ibn Nafaa fighters, composed largely of recruits from Kasserine who were trained by veteran Algerian jihadists with links to al-Qaeda.<sup>345</sup>

### 7.23.2 Ideology

The Okba ibn Nafaa brigade subscribes to the ideology of militant Salafism which combines militarism with a hard-line interpretation of Islam. The group mounts confrontations against the Tunisian state and encourages other Salafists to do the same.<sup>346</sup>

### 7.23.3 Activities and major attacks

Operating in the western mountainous border regions, Okba ibn Nafaa primarily targets and attacks the Tunisian army and security forces using tactics that include ambushes. The group also play a roles in helping with the logistics on behalf of those requiring weapons on their way to fight in Mali.<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> Roggio B and Weiss C: French troops kill MUJAO founder during raid in Mali, Long War Journal, 14 December 2014, available at: [https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/12/us\\_wanted\\_malian\\_jih.php](https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/12/us_wanted_malian_jih.php), last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>344</sup> Counter Extremism Project: Tunisia: Extremism & Counter-Extremism, updated October 2018, available at: <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/tunisia>, last accessed 7 November 2018.

<sup>345</sup> Zelin A, Lebovich A and Gartenstein-Ross D: Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb’s Tunisia Strategy, CTC Sentinel July 2013, available at: <https://ctc.usma.edu/al-qaida-in-the-islamic-maghrebs-tunisia-strategy/>, last accessed 29 August 2018.

<sup>346</sup> Merone F: Explaining the jihadi threat in Tunisia, Open Democracy, 21 March 2015, available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/north-africa-west-asia/fabio-merone/explaining-jihadi-threat-in-tunisia>, last accessed 29 August 2018.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

Major attacks that Okba ibn Nafaa Brigade has carried out since its inception, include the following:

- 8 July 2018: Okba ibn Nafaa militants attacked and killed at least six members of the Tunisian security forces in a landmine ambush in the Ain Sultan area of the Jenduba border.<sup>348</sup>
- 16 July 2014: Okba ibn Nafaa militants attacked two checkpoints in the remote Chaambi mountains with rocket propelled grenades. The time chosen for the attack was when the soldiers were preparing to break their Ramadan fast. This resulted in the death of at least fourteen Tunisian soldiers and more than twenty persons were left with varying degrees of injury.<sup>349</sup> This incident was the deadliest attack on the country's armed forces to date.
- 29 July 2013: Okba ibn Nafaa militants ambushed and killed eight Tunisian soldiers who were on patrol in the Mount Chaambi area near the Algerian border. Five of them had their throats split and their bodies decimated.<sup>350</sup>

#### 7.23.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

Okba ibn Nafaa is linked with AQIM and although the group does not operate beyond Tunisia, it has been alleged that it provides initial training before sending fighters along to "real" AQIM camps in Algeria or Libya.<sup>351</sup> Thus the group, which operates in Tunisia from its base located along the Tunisian-Algerian border, would seem to have a growing presence in the Northern Africa sub region.

Since the time it was founded, Okba ibn Nafaa Brigade has had three leaders who were all Algerian. The overall leader, Mourad Chaieb, was killed in 2017 by Tunisian military operations. He was the brother of the former leader of the group, Khaled Chaieb.<sup>352</sup>

The group is an offshoot of AQIM and is supported by Ansar al-Shariah Tunisia (AST). It has been alleged, albeit without proof, that when the group was formed, the members were all active in AST.<sup>353</sup> In 2014, Okba ibn Nafaa joined other militant groups to offer backing and support to IS

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<sup>348</sup> France 24: Terrorist attack kills 6 Tunisia security forces, 9 July 2018, available at: <https://www.france24.com/en/20180709-terrorist-attack-kills-6-tunisia-security-forces>, last accessed 29 August 2018.

<sup>349</sup> Amara T: At least 14 Tunisian troops killed in mountain attack, Reuters, 17 July 2014, available at: <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-tunisia-violence/at-least-14-tunisian-troops-killed-in-mountain-attack-idUKKBN0FL2V420140717>, last accessed 29 August 2018.

<sup>350</sup> Bouazza B B: Official - 8 Tunisian soldiers killed in ambush, Associated Press, 29 July 2013, available at: <https://www.yahoo.com/news/official-8-tunisian-soldiers-killed-ambush-193348339.html>, last accessed 29 August 2018.

<sup>351</sup> Zelin/Lebovich/Gartenstein-Ross: CTC Sentinel July 2013.

<sup>352</sup> The Daily Star, Tunisian forces kill local Al-Qaeda leader, 22 January 2018, available at: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/ArticlePrint.aspx?id=434787&mode=print>, last accessed 29 August 2018.

<sup>353</sup> Meziou D M: Al Qaida - menace-t-elle vraiment la Tunisie?, Business News, 22 December 2012, available at: <http://www.businessnews.com.tn/article,519,35278,1>, last accessed 29 August 2018.

stating that they are “supporting, endorsing, and strongly sustaining the State of the Islamic Caliphate.”<sup>354</sup>

### 7.23.5 How Christians have been affected

Okba ibn Nafaa is mainly engaged in attacks against the state authorities and there has been no recorded attacks specifically targeting Christians. Christians may however constitute collateral damage in the attacks against the security forces.

### 7.23.6 Future outlook

The government of Tunisia has tried to flush out this militant group over the years but with little success. In 2017 and early 2018, Tunisian security services succeeded in killing the commander Abu Sufyan al-Soufi in an operation. However, this has not deterred the group from carrying out further attacks on the country’s military forces.<sup>355</sup> A case in point are the attacks in the Ain Sultan area on 8 July 2018. Seeing as efforts to eliminate the group have not seriously weakened its capabilities, it is likely that Tunisia will remain vulnerable to further attacks from Okba ibn Nafaa Brigade in the foreseeable future.

## 7.24 Soldiers of the Caliphate (a.k.a. Jund al-Khilafah)

### 7.24.1 Introduction

Jund al-Khilafah is a branch of IS active in Algeria and Tunisia. The group was formed in Tunisia in 2014 after it split off from Okba ibn Nafaa and pledged allegiance to IS and its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The group has a fairly small following and it is claimed that most members are motivated by financial inducements rather than ideology. They operate mainly in the governorates of Kasserine and Kef.<sup>356</sup>

### 7.24.2 Ideology

Similar to IS, Jund al-Khilafah seeks to establish an Islamic caliphate in Tunisia based on its radical interpretation of Islam and Sharia.

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<sup>354</sup> Al-Arabiya: Al-Qaeda Tunisia offshoot offers backing to ISIS, 20 September 2014, available at: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/09/20/Al-Qaeda-Tunisia-offshoot-offers-backing-to-ISIS.html>, last accessed 29 August 2018.

<sup>355</sup> Future for Advanced Research and Studies: Tunisian Case - Implications of Ongoing Security Operations for Oqba Ibn Nafaa Brigade, 24 December 2017, available at: <https://futureuae.com/m/Mainpage/Item/3543/tunisian-case-implications-of-ongoing-security-operations-for-oqba-ibn-nafaa-brigade>, last accessed 29 September 2018.

<sup>356</sup> Gartenstein-Ross D and Moreng B: Tunisian Jihadism after the Sousse Massacre, CTC Sentinel October 2015, available at: <https://ctc.usma.edu/tunisian-jihadism-after-the-sousse-massacre/>, last accessed 2 September 2018.

### 7.24.3 Activities and major attacks

Very little is known about the activities of Jund al-Khilafah in Tunisia but the group has claimed to have perpetrated a number of attacks in the country. They maintain a strategic approach that primarily targets security and defense forces and are also known to kill civilians as a way of intimidating the local population.<sup>357</sup>

Major attacks that Jund al-Khilafah have claimed include:

- 18 March 2015: Jund al-Khilafah claimed to have carried out the attack at the Bardo Museum in Tunis. Three militants took hostages and ultimately 21 were killed, mostly European tourists; around fifty others were injured. The Tunisian government claims it was the Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade that orchestrated the attack.<sup>358</sup>
- November 2015: Jund al-Khilafah claimed responsibility for killing a young Tunisian shepherd. He was accused of having informed the army about their movements in the central province of Sidi Bouzi and was beheaded.<sup>359</sup>
- 24 November 2015: Jund al-Khilafah Tunisia claimed responsibility for the suicide attack on a bus transporting Tunisian presidential guards in the Mohamed V Avenue area, in Tunis. In addition to the assailant, at least 12 presidential guards were killed and 17 other guards were injured in the blast.<sup>360</sup>

### 7.24.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

Jund al-Khilafah Tunisia is one of the many militant groups that have pledged allegiance to IS in Africa. But unlike other militant groups, this group does not have wide reach in the region, being active only in Tunisia. Nevertheless, it appears to have established some amount of cooperation with Jund al-Khilafah Algeria, a splinter-group of AQIM that has pledged loyalty to IS. It is not known who the leader of the group in Tunisia is.

### 7.24.5 How Christians have been affected

There have been no reports of Jund al-Khilafah's attacking Christians. However, given that the group wants to establish an Islamic caliphate based on IS's radical interpretation of Islam and Sharia, it is likely that areas in which they operate, are not safe for Christians.

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<sup>357</sup> Hebert M: The Insurgency in Tunisia's Western Borderlands, 28 June 2018, available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/06/28/insurgency-in-tunisia-s-western-borderlands-pub-76712>, last accessed 2 September 2018.

<sup>358</sup> Dearden L: Isis commander linked to Sousse and Bardo Museum attacks in Tunisia targeted by US air strikes on Libya camp, The Independent, 19 February 2016, available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/isis-commander-linked-to-sousse-and-bardo-museum-attacks-in-tunisia-targeted-by-us-air-strikes-on-a6883691.html>, last accessed 2 September 2018.

<sup>359</sup> News 24: Tunisia group claims beheading of teen shepherd for ISIS, 23 November 2015, available at: <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/tunisia-group-claims-beheading-of-teen-shepherd-for-isis-20151123>, last accessed 2 September 2018.

<sup>360</sup> Amara T: Tunisia says suicide bomber carried out bus attack claimed by Islamic State, Reuters, 25 November 2015, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tunisia-security/tunisia-says-suicide-bomber-carried-out-bus-attack-claimed-by-islamic-state-idUSKBN0TE0OF20151125>, last accessed 2 September 2018.

### 7.24.6 Future outlook

If the economic frustrations and political grievances continue in Tunisia, particularly in the northwest, more people will be enticed to join militant groups such as Jund al-Khilafah. In addition, the group is bound to be strengthened if the large number of Tunisians fighting for IS in Iraq, Syria and neighboring Libya keep their promise of returning to stage attacks in Tunisia. As IS fighters, they are most likely to join Jund al-Khilafah Tunisia upon their return and this would boost the capacity of the group and pose a significant threat to Tunisia's stability.<sup>361</sup>

## 7.25 Wilayat Barqa (IS-Cyrenaica Province)

### 7.25.1 Background

Wilayat Barqa is one of the three operatives of IS in Libya. It appears that members of Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam (MSSI), many of whom had fought as part of the IS-affiliated Battar Brigade, were the conduit for IS representatives to enter eastern Libya. In October 2014, members of MSSI and aligned militants came together and pledged allegiance to IS and its leader. In November 2014, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi officially recognized the pledge and went on to announce the creation of three "provinces" of the Islamic State in Libya: Cyrenaica, Fezzan, and Tarabulus.<sup>362</sup>

After its inception, the three Islamic State branches in Libya had a combined total of an estimated five hundred fighters. However, by June 2015, its ranks had nearly tripled, to three thousand fighters, according to one estimate and in early 2016, the group counted as many as six thousand fighters in its ranks.<sup>363</sup> According to some sources, Wilayat Barqa operates half a dozen camps around the city, where fighters from North Africa are trained.<sup>364</sup>

### 7.25.2 Ideology

Wilayat Barqa adheres to IS global jihadist ideology and follows a radical interpretation of Islam and Sharia which is anti-Western, promotes sectarian violence and targets those that do not agree with its interpretation as infidels and apostates.<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> Hebert M: The Insurgency, 28 June 2018.

<sup>362</sup> Warner J and Hulme C: The Islamic State in Africa: Estimating Fighter Numbers in Cells across the Continent, CTC Sentinel March 2016, available at: [https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2016/04/CTC-SENTINEL-Vol9Iss3\\_b2.pdf](https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2016/04/CTC-SENTINEL-Vol9Iss3_b2.pdf), last accessed 31 August 2018).

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> Pellegrino C: A Brief History of ISIS "Provinces", Oasis, 23 December 2015, available at: <https://www.oasiscenter.eu/en/brief-history-isis-provinces>, last accessed 31 August 2018.

<sup>365</sup> Australian National Security: Islamic State in Libya (IS-Libya), undated, available at: <https://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Islamic-state-in-libya-is-libya.aspx>, last accessed 31 August 2018.

### 7.25.3 Activities and major attacks

Wilayat Barqa has publicized *hisba*<sup>366</sup> activities such as burning cigarette cartons, destroying water pipes used for smoking, demolishing "polytheistic" statues and shrines and persuading Muslims in open-air markets to leave their commercial activities and join them at the mosque for prayer. Wilayat Barqa forces have also been engaged in a campaign targeting the Libyan oil infrastructure in Ras Lanuf and al Sidra.<sup>367</sup>

Major attacks by the group include:

- Wilayat Barqa claimed it had previously dispatched nine suicide bombers from Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia to carry out attacks against Libyan security forces in and around Benghazi. CNN reported that several of these attacks seemed to correspond to previously unclaimed suicide bombings, including a twin-attack on a Libyan special forces camp in Benghazi on 23 July 2014 and a 2 October 2014 attack on a military checkpoint near Benina airport.<sup>368</sup>
- 14 January 2016: Wilayat Barqa sabotaged an oil pipe several kilometers south of Ra's Lanuf. According to its claim, the attack targeted a roadblock set up by the oil installation guards on the road between Marada and Zillah, south of Ra's Lanuf.<sup>369</sup>

### 7.25.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

Wilayat Barqa is based in eastern Libya and operates mainly in the cities of Derna and Benghazi, although it has been known to work together with the other IS provinces, Wilayat Tarabulus and Wilayat Fezzan. Despite not having a presence beyond the borders of Libya, its main affiliate, IS has a growing presence on the continent with militant groups and cells in Northern, Eastern and Western Africa. IS in Libya poses a threat not only to Libya and nearby countries but also to global security given the potential for a failed state in Libya to offer IS a stronger platform for attacking targets beyond the Maghreb.<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> The Arabic term *hisba* is associated with the idea of "reckoning" or "accounting" and has come to refer to the activities of individuals who endeavor to enforce Sharia in both public and private spheres. See: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/hisba>, last accessed 7 November 2018.

<sup>367</sup> Engel A: The Islamic State's Expansion in Libya, Policy Watch 2371, 11 February 2015, available at: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-islamic-states-expansion-in-libya>, last accessed 31 August 2018.

<sup>368</sup> Cruickshank P, Robertson N, Lister T and Karadsheh J: ISIS comes to Libya, CNN, 18 November 2014, available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/11/18/world/isis-libya/index.html>, last accessed 31 August 2018.

<sup>369</sup> Elumami A and al-Warfalli A: Major oil pipeline hit by blast south of Libya's Ras Lanuf, NOC says, Reuters, 14 January 2012, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-idUSKCN0US27G20160114>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>370</sup> Cafiero G: Analysis - Why ISIS continues to be a dangerous force in Libya, Al-Arabiya English, 16 January 2018, available at: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/features/2018/01/16/Why-ISIS-continues-to-be-a-potent-force-in-Libya.html>, last accessed 30 August 2018.

The first leader of the group (also the leader of the two other IS provinces in Libya) was Abu Nabil, also known as Wissam Najm Abd Zayd al Zubaydi. He was killed by US airstrikes in 2015 and was succeeded by Abdul Qader al-Najdi.<sup>371</sup>

#### 7.25.5 How Christians are affected

The activities of Wilayat Barqa (and IS in Libya generally) has affected Christians in a negative way. It has been widely reported that IS restricts residents' freedom to worship in areas it controls or operates in, and publicly executes and flogs residents accused of violating Sharia. They have also warned that Christians must convert to Islam or pay a special tax prescribed by the Quran.<sup>372</sup>

As a result of their actions, some Christians have lost their lives following targeted attacks and others have been forced to deny their faith or flee faith in order to avoid execution by IS militants.<sup>373</sup> In April 2015, the group released a video showing a mass execution of Ethiopian Christians in Libya. It is purported that one group of the captives were beheaded on a beach in Eastern Libya by Wilayat Barqa whilst another group of captives held in the south, were shot dead by members of Wilayat Fezzan.<sup>374</sup>

Further, in October 2015, Islamic State's Wilayat Barqa released a video of the group beheading a Sudanese Christian man named Mohamed al-Ghaid in Libya. They claimed al-Ghaid was killed to avenge the deaths of Muslims who are suffering injustice, uprooting and slaughter at the hands of Christian aggressors in Sudan.<sup>375</sup>

#### 7.25.6 Future outlook

Many analysts suggest that, with the losses IS is suffering in Iraq and Syria, it could turn Libya into the next front in the fight to set up an Islamic caliphate, since IS has already established itself through the provinces, Wilayat Barqa and others. Should IS turn its attention to Libya and move its stronghold there - despite losing control of Sirte in 2016<sup>376</sup> - its provinces will most likely be strengthened and the threat to the region and Western interests intensified. Particularly Western Europe would be increasingly threatened owing to its proximity to the Libyan coast.<sup>377</sup> Conversely, others speculate that IS's losses in its strongholds like Derna (controlled by Wilayat

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<sup>371</sup> Paton C: New Isis leader in Libya – Abdel Qader al-Najdi threatens Daesh invasion of Rome through Africa, International Business Times, 10 March 2016, available at: <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/new-isis-leader-abdel-qader-al-najdi-threatens-daesh-invasion-rome-through-north-africa-1548697>, last accessed 31 August 2018.

<sup>372</sup> Fox News, ISIS releases video purportedly showing killing of Ethiopian Christians in Libya, 20 April 2015, available at: <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/04/19/isis-video-purports-to-show-killing-ethiopians-in-libya.html>, last accessed on 31 August 2018.

<sup>373</sup> Warner/Hulme: CTC Sentinel March 2016.

<sup>374</sup> Fox News: ISIS releases video, 20 April 2015.

<sup>375</sup> Funaro V: ISIS beheads Sudanese Christian man in latest video, Christian Post Reporter, 19 October 2015, available at: <https://www.christianpost.com/news/isis-video-beheading-sudanese-christian-man-148000/> last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>376</sup> See: <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/news/al-baghdadi-admits-isis-was-defeated-libyas-sirte>, last accessed 30 April 2019.

<sup>377</sup> Zayat I: ISIS tries to gain foothold in Libya, posing threat to Europe, The Arab Weekly, 7 January 2018, available at: <https://theArabweekly.com/isis-tries-gain-foothold-libya-posing-threat-europe>, last accessed 1 September 2018).

Barqa) and Sirte (controlled by Wilayat Tarabulus) are a serious blow to the group's prospects in Libya as a fallback. Thus, it may no longer be a viable option for IS after the major defeats in Syria and Iraq.

Another possibility is that IS's capacity and strength in Libya will be severely diminished by counterterrorism measures, causing the group to retreat from the territory. Currently, counterterrorism strikes targeting the group directly are making it hard for the IS to gain the numbers and momentum it once had. Wilayat Barqa, for instance, has been pushed out of its stronghold in Derna and it seems unlikely that it will be able to seize territory again. Despite these setbacks, IS continues to be active in Libya and retains the ability to conduct complex terrorist attacks. As regards losing its members, Libya's porous borders (coupled with the instability in the country) will give IS plenty of opportunity to recruit more fighters.<sup>378</sup> Additionally, the group is likely to try to raise the appeal of its brand through high-profile attacks that can help it attract supporters from other splintering jihadist movements in Libya. Wilayat Barqa may also increase its attacks on the country's oil resources in the hope that it can thereby induce further economic decline and bolster its ranks.<sup>379</sup>

## 7.26 Wilayat Fezzan (IS-Fezzan Province)

### 7.26.1 Background

Wilayat Fezzan was formed in November 2014 when Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announced the creation of three IS provinces in Libya following his acceptance of the pledge of allegiance by militant factions aligned with Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam (MSSI), a group made up of many fighters from the IS-affiliated Battar Brigade. After its inception, the three Islamic State branches in Libya had a combined total of an estimated 500 fighters. However, by June 2015 its ranks had nearly tripled to 3,000 fighters, according to one estimate, and in early 2016 the group allegedly counted as many as 6,000 fighters in its ranks.<sup>380</sup>

Wilayat Fezzan is located in southern Libya where it appears to have access to a smuggling hub outside the oasis city of Sabha. However, it neither controls nor governs any cities or towns in that area. IS presence there seems to be limited and is focused mainly on facilitating smuggling routes.<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> Zelin A, The others – foreign fighters in Libya, Policy Notes 45, available at:

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/PolicyNote45-Zelin.pdf>, last accessed April 2019.

<sup>379</sup> Wehrey F and Alrababa'h A: Rising Out of Chaos - The Islamic State in Libya, 5 March 2015, available at: <http://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/59268>, last accessed 4 September 2018.

<sup>380</sup> Warner/Hulme: CTC Sentinel March 2016.

<sup>381</sup> Porter G D: How Realistic is Libya as an Islamic State "Fallback", CTC Sentinel (2016)9(3) CTC Sentinel March 2016, available at: <https://ctc.usma.edu/how-realistic-is-libya-as-an-islamic-state-fallback/>, last accessed 31 August 2018.

### 7.26.2 Ideology

Wilayat Fezzan's ideology is in line with IS's global jihadist ideology. They follow a radical interpretation of Islam and Sharia which is anti-Western, promotes sectarian violence and targets those that do not agree with its interpretation as infidels and apostates.<sup>382</sup>

### 7.26.3 Activities and major attacks

Wilayat Fezzan has not been as active as the other wilayats in carrying out "soft" activities such as *hisba* (religious accountability) and *dawa* (proselytizing). It has however engaged in violent attacks on specific targets.<sup>383</sup>

Major attacks by Wilayat Fezzan include:

- April 2015: Militants from Wilayat Fezzan engaged in the mass execution of Ethiopian Christians.<sup>384</sup>
- 3 January 2015: Members of IS in Fezzan attacked a Libyan army checkpoint in Sokhna, killing 16 military personnel while they were sleeping.<sup>385</sup>

### 7.26.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

Wilayat Fezzan is based in the southern part of Libya. Although it does not have a presence beyond the borders of Libya, its main affiliate, IS, has a growing presence on the continent with militant groups and cells in Northern, Eastern and Western Africa. IS in Libya poses a threat also to global security given the potential for a failed state in Libya to offer IS a stronger platform for attacking targets beyond the Maghreb.<sup>386</sup>

The first leader of the group (also the leader of the two other IS provinces) was Abu Nabil, also known as Wissam Najm Abd Zayd al Zubaydi. He was killed by US airstrikes in 2015 and was succeeded by Abdul Qader al-Najdi.<sup>387</sup>

Wilayat Fezzan has been known to cooperate with the other IS provinces, Wilayat Tarabulus and Wilayat Barqa.<sup>388</sup> It has received support and guidance from Islamic State senior leadership.

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<sup>382</sup> Australian National Security: Islamic State in Libya, undated, available at: <https://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Islamic-state-in-libya-is-libya.aspx>, last accessed 18 September 2018.

<sup>383</sup> Engel A: Policy Watch 2371, 11 February 2015.

<sup>384</sup> Fox News: ISIS releases video, 20 April 2015.

<sup>385</sup> Kalam Institute for Network Science: Islamic State Activity in Libya, 2 February 2015, p.11, available at: [https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/files/live/sites/almonitor/files/documents/2015/IS\\_Activity\\_in\\_Libya.pdf](https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/files/live/sites/almonitor/files/documents/2015/IS_Activity_in_Libya.pdf), last accessed 10 September 2018.

<sup>386</sup> Cafiero: Analysis, 16 January 2018.

<sup>387</sup> Paton, New Isis leader in Libya, 10 March 2016.

<sup>388</sup> Australian National Security, Islamic State in Libya (undated).

### 7.26.5 How Christians have been affected

It has been widely reported that IS restricts residents' freedom to worship in areas it controls or operates in, and publicly executes and flogs residents accused of violating Sharia. In April 2015, IS released a video showing a mass execution of Ethiopian Christians in Libya. It is purported that one group of the captives were beheaded on a beach in Eastern Libya by Wilayat Barqa whilst another group of captives held in the south, were shot dead by members of Wilayat Fezzan.<sup>389</sup>

### 7.26.6 Future outlook

Wilayat Fezzan is somewhat dormant compared to the other IS Wilayat's in Libya. It had been likely that IS would turn its main focus to Libya if it lost territory in Iraq and Syria, hence strengthening Wilayat Fezzan's capacity to conduct more attacks. However, this option seems unlikely as IS's capabilities in Libya have also deteriorated dramatically following a military campaign to drive it out of its strongholds.

If IS is not defeated in Libya following the intense counterterrorism strikes, Wilayat Fezzan will most likely continue focusing on the smuggling routes as it is an avenue through which IS Libya generates revenue.<sup>390</sup>

## 7.27 Wilayat Tarabulus (IS-Tripoli Province)

### 7.27.1 Background

Wilayat Tarabulus was formed in November 2014 when Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announced the creation of three IS provinces in Libya following his acceptance of the pledge of allegiance of militant factions aligned with Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam (MSSI), a group made up of many who had fought as part of the IS-affiliated Battar Brigade. After its inception, the three Islamic State branches in Libya had a combined total of an estimated 500 fighters. However, by June 2015 its ranks had nearly tripled to 3,000 fighters, according to one estimate and in early 2016 the group counted as many as 6,000 fighters in its ranks.<sup>391</sup>

Wilayat Tarabulus is located in the west and contains the towns of Sirte, Sibrata, al-Ghams, Misrata, Zawaja and cities in the western desert. Sirte was IS's stronghold following its capture in June 2015, however, the group lost control of the city after an offensive by UN-backed fighters in December 2016.<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>389</sup> Fox News: ISIS releases video, 20 April 2015.

<sup>390</sup> Gartenstein-Ross D, Zenn J and Barr N: Islamic State 2021 - Possible Futures in North and West Africa, February 2017, p.9, available at: [https://s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/defenddemocracy/uploads/documents/022017\\_DGR\\_ISIL\\_Report.pdf](https://s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/defenddemocracy/uploads/documents/022017_DGR_ISIL_Report.pdf), last accessed 30 August 2018.

<sup>391</sup> Warner/Hulme: CTC Sentinel March 2016.

<sup>392</sup> BBC News: Libya conflict - IS 'ejected' from stronghold of Sirte, 6 December 2016, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-38227543>, last accessed on 31 August 2018.

### 7.27.2 Ideology

Wilayat Tarabulus' ideology is consistent with Islamic State's global jihadist ideology. They follow a radical interpretation of Islam and Sharia which is anti-Western, promotes sectarian violence and targets those that do not agree with its interpretation as infidels and apostates.<sup>393</sup>

### 7.27.3 Activities and major attacks

Wilayat Tarabulus has been active in broadcasting activities such as *hisba* (religious accountability) and *dawa* (including the distribution of cash and clothing).<sup>394</sup> It has also been involved in violent attacks.

Major attacks by Wilayat Tarabulus include:

- 5 April 2015: Wilayat Tarabulus conducted a suicide bombing attack in which four people were killed outside Libya's militia-controlled city, Misrata.<sup>395</sup>
- 27 January 2015: Militants from Wilayat Tarabulus attacked the Corinthia hotel in Tripoli using gunmen and a car bomb. The attacks resulted in the death of at least ten people, including five foreigners. The group claimed it was revenge for the death of Abu Anas al-Libi, a suspected al-Qaeda figure alleged to have carried out the 1998 bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, who died in American custody earlier in the month.<sup>396</sup>

### 7.27.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

Wilayat Tarabulus is based in the western part of Libya. Although it does not have a presence beyond the borders of Libya, it has been known to cooperate with the other IS provinces, Wilayat Fezzan and Wilayat Barqa.<sup>397</sup> Its main affiliate, IS, has a growing presence on the continent with militant groups and cells in Northern, Eastern and Western Africa and thus poses a threat not only to Libya and nearby countries but also to global security. A failed state in Libya offers IS a stronger platform for attacking targets beyond the Maghreb.<sup>398</sup>

The first leader of the group (also the leader of the two other IS provinces) was Abu Nabil, also known as Wissam Najm Abd Zayd al Zubaydi. He was killed by US airstrikes in 2015 and was succeeded by Abdul Qader al-Najdi.<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>393</sup> Australian National Security, Islamic State in Libya (undated).

<sup>394</sup> Engel: Policy Watch 2371, 11 February 2015.

<sup>395</sup> AFP: Four dead in Libya suicide bombing claimed by IS, 5 April 2015, available at: <https://www.yahoo.com/news/four-dead-libya-suicide-bombing-claimed-114411970.html>, last accessed 31 August 2018.

<sup>396</sup> Deutsche Welle, Islamic State attacks Libya hotel, 27 January 2015, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/islamic-state-attacks-libya-hotel/a-18217115>, last accessed 31 August 2018.

<sup>397</sup> Australian National Security, Islamic State in Libya, undated.

<sup>398</sup> Cafiero: Analysis, 16 January 2018.

<sup>399</sup> Paton: New Isis leader, 10 March 2016.

### 7.27.5 How Christians have been affected

The activities of the group have impacted the lives of Christians negatively. It has been widely reported that IS restricts residents' freedom to worship in areas it controls or operates in, and publicly executes and flogs residents accused of violating Sharia. As a result of their actions, some Christians have lost their lives (following targeted attacks) and others have been forced to deny their faith or flee faith in order to avoid execution by IS militants.<sup>400</sup> In February 2015 for example, the group released a video in which they beheaded twenty one Egyptian Coptic Christians. They made it clear that the men were targeted for their religion, referring to them as "Crusaders" and threatening further violence against Christians adding that IS and its allies will continue to fight the "Crusaders" until Jesus comes again.<sup>401</sup>

### 7.27.6 Future outlook

It had been likely that IS would turn its main focus to Libya if it lost territory in Iraq and Syria, hence strengthening Wilayat Tarabulus's capacity to conduct more attacks. However, this option seems unlikely as IS's capabilities in Libya have also deteriorated dramatically following a military campaign to drive it out from the city of Sirte (Wilayat Tarabulus' stronghold). Thus, it is likely that joining IS in Libya may no longer be a viable option.

Although IS no longer controls significant territory in Sirte, the group will continue to pose a challenge to Libya's security and will most likely maintain a residual force in the country. Though this force may end up being much diminished as a result of counterterrorism measures, it is also possible that poor coordination on the part of anti-IS forces may provide them the opportunity to regroup in the country at a relatively high level of strength.<sup>402</sup> For as long as there is continued political gridlock (and violent conflict) in Libya, efforts to crackdown on IS's remaining presence in the country will most likely be impeded, giving the group the opportunity needed to rebuild its networks.<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> Warner/Hulme: CTC Sentinel march 2016.

<sup>401</sup> Joscelyn T: 21 Egyptian Christians executed in Islamic State video, FDD's Long War Journal, 15 February 2015, available at: [https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/02/21\\_egyptian\\_christia.php](https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/02/21_egyptian_christia.php), last accessed 31 August 2018.

<sup>402</sup> Zayat I: ISIS tries to gain foothold in Libya - posing threat to Europe, The Arab Weekly, 7 January 2018, available at: <https://theArabweekly.com/isis-tries-gain-foothold-libya-posing-threat-europe>, last accessed 1 September 2018.

<sup>403</sup> Gartenstein-Ross/Zenn/Barr: Islamic State 2021, February 2017, p.9.

## 8. Non-conventional militant groups

The profiles of the following two non-conventional groups listed below are structured as follows:

- Background
- Ideology
- Activities and major attacks
- Regional presence, leadership and affiliates
- How Christians are affected
- Future outlook.

### 8.1 Seleka and ex-Seleka forces

#### 8.1.1 Background

Seleka was originally a coalition of several rebel groups that was formed in Central Africa Republic (CAR) in 2007 and became headline news in December 2012. The coalition groups included the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR), the Union of Republican Forces (UFR) and the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP).<sup>404</sup> A number of factors led to the formation of this coalition: Decades long grievances over political and economic marginalization and broken promises and peace deals. Reliable estimates of the number of Seleka troops are difficult to ascertain; the United Nations International Commission of Inquiry on CAR states that at the beginning of Seleka's December 2012 offensive, the group numbered about 1,600 fighters and rose to about 3,500 when they entered Bangui.<sup>405</sup> However, other sources report that Seleka's ranks rose to about 15, 000 due in part to the incorporation of foreign nationals, mainly from Chad and Sudan.<sup>406</sup>

After nearly a year of operations, Seleka was officially disbanded in September 2013 by its leader, Michel Djotodia, as a result of intense pressure from the international community.<sup>407</sup> Following the forced resignation of Michel Djotodia as president of CAR in January 2014, the Seleka coalition split into several rival groups and are now known as ex-Seleka or former Seleka.<sup>408</sup> Since 2014, most of the ex-Seleka groups have retreated from Bangui and consolidated their control over large areas of the north and east of the country, often in competition with one

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<sup>404</sup> 'Seleka/Republic of Logone / Dar El Kuti', *Global Security* (8 June 2017) available at: <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/seleka.htm> (accessed on 1 March 2019).

<sup>405</sup> Preliminary report of the International Commission of Inquiry on the Central African Republic, p. 13, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1471229.pdf> (accessed on 1 March 2019).

<sup>406</sup> 'Seleka / Republic of Logone / Dar El Kuti', *supra* note 1.

<sup>407</sup> Weyns Y, Hoex L, Hilgert F and Spittaels S: 'Mapping Conflict Motives: The Central African Republic', (2014) p.20, available at: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20141124\\_CAR.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20141124_CAR.pdf) (accessed on 1 March 2019)

<sup>408</sup> Since Djotodia disbanded the Seleka coalition, Seleka groups have often been referred to as ex-Seleka, 'new' Seleka or former Seleka.

another. Other ex-Seleka fighters have been unable to leave Bangui and remain confined in segregated neighborhoods or camps within the capital.<sup>409</sup>

### 8.1.2 Ideology

The main goal of Seleka, as Seleka leaders claimed, was to liberate CAR and bring peace and security to the people. However, since most Seleka fighters are Muslim, some sources claim that they aimed to set up an Islamic regime in CAR.<sup>410</sup> This theory is based on two main observations:

1. The fact that the group has targeted churches and Christians.
2. The fact that it incorporates fighters from Chad and Sudan.<sup>411</sup>

### 8.1.3 Activities and major attacks

As part of their activities, Seleka forces destroyed numerous rural villages, captured major towns and looted the homes of the civilian population. Those who tried to resist were threatened, injured or killed. In addition to killing civilians, they looted and burned down schools and churches.

Once they took control over the capital, Bangui, in March 2013, Seleka began targeting members of the national army, the Central African Armed Forces (FACA). There have been numerous reports of extrajudicial killings by Seleka of members of the FACA and men believed to be FACA members.<sup>412</sup> According to Human Rights Watch, Seleka is responsible for massive human rights abuses including massacres, rapes, executions, torture and the burning of hundreds of villages. As a direct result of Seleka's widespread abuses, nearly a fifth of the country's population fled their homes and live in dire humanitarian conditions in the bush or camps for displaced persons.<sup>413</sup>

Some major attacks by Seleka forces include the following:

- 29 January 2014: Seleka fighters captured nine men in the village of Pata, 60 kilometers north of Bangui. The fighters executed four of the men on the main road and then left with the other five whom they later executed and dumped in a banana grove.<sup>414</sup>
- 26 February 2014: Heavily armed Seleka fighters joined by Muslim Peuhl cattle herders carried out a deadly attack on the village of Bowai, northeast of Bossangoa. The attack killed eight people, and at least 10 others – mostly young children – were wounded by gunfire. After the civilian population fled, the attackers burned many

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<sup>409</sup> 'Seleka / Republic of Logone / Dar El Kuti', *supra* note 1.

<sup>410</sup> 'Seleka Coalition Central Africa Republic' *Tracking Terrorism* (undated) available at <https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/seleka-coalition-central-africa-republic> (accessed on 1 March 2019).

<sup>411</sup> Reuters reported in October 2013 the presence of Janjaweed Arab fighters from Darfur. See: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-centralafrica-summit/regions-leaders-look-to-push-foreign-fighters-from-central-african-republic-idUSBRE99K16420131021> (accessed 6 March 2019).

<sup>412</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'I Can Still Smell the Dead. The Forgotten Human Rights Crisis in the Central African Republic', 18 September 2013, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/09/18/i-can-still-smell-dead/forgotten-human-rights-crisis-central-african-republic#> (accessed on 1 March 2019).

<sup>413</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Central African Republic: Seleka Fighters Regroup in North', 5 February 2014, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/02/05/central-african-republic-seleka-fighters-regroup-north> (accessed on 1 March 2019).

<sup>414</sup> *Idem*.

buildings in the village, in some cases trapping people in their homes prior to setting them alight.<sup>415</sup>

#### 8.1.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

Seleka is basically a domestic network focused on carrying out attacks and operations in CAR. The leader of the group, Michel Djotodia, became the president of CAR in 2013 after Seleka forces staged a coup.<sup>416</sup> It is unclear whether Seleka forces have any affiliates. However, it has been alleged that money used to pay Seleka's fighters may have possibly originated from Chad or al-Qaeda.<sup>417</sup>

#### 8.1.5 How Christians are affected

Christians in CAR have faced intense pressure through being repeatedly attacked and through church buildings being burned and ransacked. It has been reported that the Seleka forces mainly attack Christians in order to gain influence and support from the Muslim community and to extend their brand of Islam through violence.<sup>418</sup> Christian leaders who denounce the violence have also been threatened. The conflict has resulted in the displacement of thousands of Christians who are forced to live in IDP camps because they have lost their homes and livelihoods. Although Seleka leaders claim to be fighting because of the unfair treatment of Muslims by the government, others argue that Seleka are aiming to increase Muslim domination and are attempting to set up a government under the 'house of Islam'.<sup>419</sup>

Some of the attacks by Seleka forces that have specifically targeted Christians include the following:

- May 2014: At least 30 people were killed at the Church of Fatima in the capital Bangui when Seleka forces attacked the premises, launching grenades and spraying civilians with gunfire.<sup>420</sup>
- July 2014: About 20 Christians were killed by members of Seleka at the St. Joseph's Cathedral in the city of Bambari. The church was serving as a refuge for over 4,000 Christians who had fled the devastation in their communities.<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>415</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Seleka Fighters Attack Village', 11 March 2014, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/seleka-fighters-attack-village> (accessed 2 March 2019).

<sup>416</sup> Seleka / Republic of Logone / Dar El Kuti', *supra* note 1.

<sup>417</sup> *Idem*

<sup>418</sup> Open Doors, 'Central African Republic', January 2019, available at: <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/countries/central-african-republic/> (accessed on 2 March 2019).

<sup>419</sup> Open Doors International / World Watch Research, 'Central Africa Republic: Country Dossier', January 2019, p.12, available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Central-African-Republic-WWR-COUNTRY-DOSSIER-January-2019-update.pdf> (password: freedom), accessed on 2 March 2019.

<sup>420</sup> BBC News, 'CAR Seleka rebels kill many in Bangui church attack', 28 May 2014, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27614401> (accessed on 2 March 2019).

<sup>421</sup> Ori K O, 'CAR: Seleka and anti-balaka stand off after Church attack', 8 July 2014, available at: <http://www.theafricareport.com/Central-Africa/car-seleka-and-anti-balaka-stand-off-after-church-attack.html> (accessed 2 March 2019).

### 8.1.6 Future outlook

Ever since Seleka was officially disbanded in 2013, ex-Seleka units continue to wreak havoc in CAR. If ex-Seleka forces (and other militia) do not commit to a ceasefire and disarmament agreement, Christians will most likely continue to suffer persecution especially as they are the main targets of ex-Seleka forces.

## 8.2 Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria

### 8.2.1 Background

Fulani herdsmen are a largely nomadic or semi-nomadic group whose primary occupation is raising livestock. They belong to the Fulani ethnic group and are widely dispersed across the Sahel and West African region in countries such as Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Guinea, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Cameroon.

In Nigeria, the herdsmen, who are predominantly Muslim, have traditionally pastured their cattle in the north of the country. However, factors such as increasing desertification, land scarcity, the over-use of resources and attacks by Boko Haram have combined to drive the Fulani and their herds further south into the fertile farmlands of the Middle Belt region where much of the population is Christian.<sup>422</sup> Consequently, there have been ongoing attacks by Fulani herdsmen on Middle Belt farmers. Although not a new phenomenon (antagonism between farmers and herders over the limited grazing ground for herds has been on-going for centuries), the clashes have intensified in recent years. It is estimated that since 2001, more than 60,000 people have died in pastoralist-related violence in Nigeria.<sup>423</sup>

### 8.2.2 Ideology

In the Global Terrorism Index, published in 2015, Fulani herdsmen were characterized as one of the five deadliest terrorist organizations in the world.<sup>424</sup> However, the Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria are not a centralized armed group operating under a specific agenda. Their goal is primarily to gain greater access to grazing land for their livestock.<sup>425</sup> Although the roots of the conflict are not primarily religious, since the herdsmen are largely Muslim and the farmers are mostly Christian, the religious aspect is there to be exploited.<sup>426</sup> It has been reported that “the atrocities perpetrated by the Fulani herdsmen include the destruction of houses and churches, as well as the seizure of land and properties belonging to Christians. Reports have also emerged

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<sup>422</sup> Institute for Economics and Peace, ‘Global Terrorism Index 2018’, p.56, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Global-Terrorism-Index-2018-1.pdf> (accessed 2 March 2019).

<sup>423</sup> These are figures at January 2018. See: Lindy Lowry, ‘7 Things To Know About Deadly Fulani Persecution In Northern Nigeria’, 3 April 2018, available at: <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/7-deadly-fulani-persecution-northern-nigeria/> (accessed 3 March 2019).

<sup>424</sup> Institute for Economics and Peace, ‘Global Terrorism Index 2015’, available at <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2015.pdf> (accessed 3 March 2019).

<sup>425</sup> World Watch Monitor, ‘Who are the Fulani ?’ (undated) available at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/who-are-the-fulani/> (accessed 3 March 2019).

<sup>426</sup> ‘Global Terrorism Index 2015’ *supra* note 21, p.12.

of Fulani herdsmen kidnapping Christian schoolgirls to marry them to Muslim men.”<sup>427</sup> Two reports commissioned by Open Doors in 2015 concluded the Fulani are engaged in a campaign that can be described as ethnic cleansing of the Middle Belt.<sup>428</sup> The reports show that in Taraba State, Fulani militants are waging “a massive campaign to displace indigenous Christian farmers”.

### 8.2.3 Activities and major attacks

Nigeria has been plagued by violence attributed to Fulani herdsmen, particularly in the Middle Belt and north-eastern part of the country. Most of the attacks have been observed in southern Kaduna, Plateau, Nasarawa, Benue and Taraba states. Armed with sophisticated weaponry, including AK47s (and in at least one case a rocket launcher) the Fulani militants have killed and injured thousands of people as well as caused many others to become internally displaced. In Benue State for example, about 180,000 people are living in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, and more than 500,000 displaced people are living in temporary accommodation.<sup>429</sup>

Fulani herdsmen have also destroyed countless homes and churches and seized large swathes of land and property. Some observers argue that the Fulani are being used as a tool by politicians to dominate Christian areas and eliminate the Christian physical and political presence.<sup>430</sup> Apart from clashes with farmers, there have been allegations that some Fulani herdsmen have been involved in armed robbery, rape and communal violence.

The Fulani herdsmen have reportedly become more deadly than Boko Haram with the number of killings committed by the group in 2018 estimated to be six times greater than the number committed by Boko Haram.<sup>431</sup>

Major attacks by Fulani herdsmen include the following:

- April 2014: Fulani herdsmen opened fire on community leaders and residents that were meeting in Galadima village in Zamfara State. The attacks resulted in the death of at least 200 people with an unknown number left injured.<sup>432</sup>
- February 2016: Between 22-29 February 2016, Fulani herdsmen attacked the predominantly Christian Agatu community in Benue, killing over 300 people and burning churches and mosques in the villages. The Fulani said the attacks were retaliation for the killing of 10,000 of their cattle.<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> See: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ewelinaochab/2018/05/04/trump-may-not-be-wrong-on-the-fulani-herdsmen-crisis-in-nigeria/#3eaf625855ef>, (accessed 3 March 2019).

<sup>428</sup> See: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/wp-content/uploads/0001/01/Violent-Conflict-in-Taraba-State-2013-2015-2.pdf> and <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2015/11/ethnic-cleansing-of-christians-in-central-nigeria-too/>, last accessed March 2019.

<sup>429</sup> These figures are as of mid-2018: ‘Nigeria killings echo abroad: Herdsmen, Boko Haram threaten Nigeria’s future — UK parliamentarians’ *Vanguard*, 1 July 2018, available at: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/07/nigeria-killings-echo-abroad-herdsmen-boko-haram-threaten-nigerias-future-uk-parliamentarians/> (accessed on 3 March 2019).

<sup>430</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>431</sup> ‘Global Terrorism Index 2018’ *supra* note 19, p.5.

<sup>432</sup> ‘Global Terrorism Index 2015’ *supra* note 21, p.12.

<sup>433</sup> United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, ‘Nigeria 2016 International Religious Freedom Report’ (2016) p.11, available at: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/268926.pdf> (accessed 2 March 2019).

- 8 September 2017: Fulani herdsmen attacked villages in Bassa, Plateau State, killing 19 ethnic Irigwe residents (mainly Christian) and injuring 5 others. The Plateau State commissioner of police said the attack was in retaliation for the killing of a Fulani boy on 3 August 2017.<sup>434</sup>

#### 8.2.4 Regional presence, leadership and affiliates

The activities of the Nigerian Fulani herdsmen are limited to the Middle Belt of Nigeria. There is no clear overall leader of the group. However, the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) represents the interest of about 100,000 semi-nomads and nomads in the country.<sup>435</sup> MACBAN has chapters in different parts of the country and each chapter has its leader. It is unclear whether the Fulani herdsmen have any affiliates. It has been alleged that there is a link between Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen, particularly involving smuggling and organized crime.<sup>436</sup>

#### 8.2.5 How Christians are affected

The activities of the Fulani herdsmen have had a profound effect on Nigeria's Christian communities particularly those in the Middle Belt states. Attacks perpetrated by Fulani herdsmen have led to the deaths of thousands of Christians, with hundreds of churches and properties targeted and destroyed. According to Catholic bishops in Kaduna, "the Fulani herdsmen want to subjugate Christians, disintegrate the country, weaken the gospel and destroy the social and economic life of the people."<sup>437</sup>

Christians in the Middle Belt of Nigeria are being driven out of their homes, and those who refuse and stay are being indiscriminately targeted.<sup>438</sup> In Benue State alone, over 500 churches were destroyed in the period 2011-2015. Many church congregations have seen a decline in membership and attendance as people fear for their lives.<sup>439</sup>

Some examples of attacks by Fulani men that have specifically targeted Christians are listed here below:

- February 2016: See above.
- September 2017: See above.

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<sup>434</sup> Ibid.

<sup>435</sup> Wikipedia, 'Miyetti Allah' (undated), available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miyetti\\_Allah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miyetti_Allah) (accessed 3 March 2019).

<sup>436</sup> Obaji P Jr., 'The Nigerian War That's Slaughtered More People than Boko Haram' *Daily Beast*, 3 November 2016, available at: <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-nigerian-war-thats-slaughtered-more-people-than-boko-haram> (accessed 3 March 2019).

<sup>437</sup> '7 Things to know about deadly Fulani Persecution in Northern Nigeria' *supra* note 20.

<sup>438</sup> World Watch Monitor, '5 Things to know about violence in Nigeria's Middle Belt' (11 September 2017) available at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/09/5-things-to-know-about-the-violence-in-nigerias-middle-belt/> (accessed on 3 March 2019).

<sup>439</sup> Open Doors, 'Crushed but not defeated. The impact of persistent violence on the church in northern Nigeria', February 2016, p.36, available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Crushed-but-not-defeated-Revision-Summary-Report.pdf> (accessed 3 March 2019).

- 24 April 2018: Fulani herdsmen attacked a Catholic church during a morning service, killing 2 priests and 17 parishioners in Benue State. After attacking the church, they destroyed over 60 houses in the neighborhood and robbed what people had stored in their barns.<sup>440</sup>
- 23 June 2018: About 120 Christians were killed by Fulani herdsmen in Plateau State as they returned from attending a funeral.

### 8.2.6 Future outlook

Attacks by Fulani herdsmen continue unabated with seemingly little government action. Apart from verbal condemnations, there has been no action to end the violence and no attacker has been brought to justice.<sup>441</sup> The continued inactivity on the part of the government is likely to embolden the herdsmen to commit more attacks. The fact that they have access to modern weaponry means they are becoming deadlier and more sophisticated.<sup>442</sup>

Another issue of concern is the rise of Christian armed vigilante groups in response to the Fulani attacks. If care is not taken, the conflicts between these Christian vigilante groups and the Fulani herdsmen will escalate and plunge the Middle Belt area into a religious war which has the potential to spread into other states in the country. For a country that is already affected by the activities of Boko Haram, the addition of a large-scale religious conflict would be tragic.

## 9 Is Islamist ideology on the decline?

As noted in previous chapters above, Salafist ideology divides the world into two categories: *Dar-al-Islam* (House of Islam) and *Dar-al-Harb* (House of war). There may be a third category that is regarded as temporary: *Dar-al-'Ahd* (House of truce) or *Dar-al-Sulh* (House of conciliation/treaty). For Salafist Islam therefore, there can be no peace until the whole world becomes the House of Islam. As long as jihadist groups follow this division, there will be attacks on Christianity and any other religion that is not Islam. Also, Muslims who do not practice Islam as deemed appropriate by Salafist influenced groups, are considered worse than infidels and are hence also worthy of attack.

Is this radical understanding of Islam on the decline in Africa? This is simply not the case. Military successes against al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, Ansar al-Dine, AQIM, and IS are not proper indicators of the defeat of the jihadist cause. This is because ideology can only be combated by ideology. The military successes are significant in that they help ensure that the state can protect the right of its citizens to practice religious freedom. However, if nothing is done to counter the Islamist ideology through an equally 'aggressive' spreading of tolerant religious ideology, then the suppressed ideologues and militants will simply remain subdued until such time as new

<sup>440</sup> Shellnutt K and World Watch Monitor, 'Nigerian Mass Becomes a Massacre: Herdsmen Kill 18 Worshipers, Adding to Hundreds of Victims', 25 April 2018, available at: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2018/april/nigeria-fulani-attack-catholic-church-benue-boko-haram.html> (accessed on 3 March 2019).

<sup>441</sup> 'Nigeria killings echo abroad: Herdsmen, Boko Haram threaten Nigeria's future — UK parliamentarians'.

<sup>442</sup> '7 Things to Know About deadly Fulani Persecution in Northern Nigeria' *supra* note 20.

opportunities arise. They then re-embark on their intolerant jihadist project to make the world the House of Islam.

The weak governments in the Sahel and Maghreb look set to continue supporting the jihadist cause in these regions. The lack of an effective central government in Somalia will continue to be a source of encouragement for militant groups in this country to be agents of instability in East Africa and the Horn. The problem of jihadist ideology and enterprises will therefore continue to trouble the African continent.

## 10. Conclusion

Following the resurgence of jihadist groups globally in the 1990s, Africans and African Christians have suffered immeasurably at the hands of these groups who have conducted some of the deadliest attacks on the continent. On 7 August 1998, coordinated attacks on the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam claimed the lives of more than 200 people. The 11 September 2001 attacks in the USA - and the US response through the so-called "war on terror" - exacerbated the situation. The USA launched counterterrorism offensives that included the invasion of Iraq and the decision to topple the Taliban in Afghanistan. The heavy civilian casualties and the fact that Islamic militants clearly viewed this "war on terror" as a religious war, caused various radical Islamic groups to emerge across Africa, the Middle East and Asia. This also led to a rise in radical Islam in society in general, so that recruitment became easy for militant groups.

Weak governments, rampant corruption and the presence of armed conflict have also contributed in worsening the situation. Such factors create a fertile ground and safe haven for jihadist groups to become established. In Somalia, the Sahel region and in DRC, continuous conflicts and weak governments have become serious barriers to rooting out jihadists from those countries.

The rise in international influence of Middle Eastern countries has also played a role in shaping religious teaching in Africa. With the support of Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Wahhabism is sweeping through African mosques and madrassas. Many African students are given scholarships to study in the Middle East and return to their home countries with Wahhabist views.

Considering the challenges that are prevalent in Africa, it does not seem that the situation can be changed in any way in the near future. The continent is still home to a variety of devastating conflicts and corruption is still very common. A significant number of states are still very fragile and rule of law is lacking. Without addressing these political challenges, it can be concluded that Islamic militants in Africa will remain active in the future and continue to be a threat to the rule of law, stability and the freedom of Christians for many years to come.