Issue *Brief*

There and Back

Trajectories of North African Foreign Fighters in Syria

Introduction

The conflict in Syria, pitting rebel groups from across the political and religious spectrum against the regime of Bashar al Assad, has become a rallying point for people from around the world. Scholars estimate that over 20,000 'foreign fighters' are fighting or have fought in Syria, including over 4,000 from western countries (Neumann, 2015).[1] While these fighters can join various rebel groups in the country, most have been recruited by and travel to Syria to join jihadist groups,[2] including Jubhat al-Nusra (JAN) and the non-state armed group known as Islamic State (IS).[3] It is these two groups, especially IS, that attract most of the foreign volunteers to their ranks.

The current incarnation of IS originated in the aftermath of the US invasion of Iraq. Since 2006, IS has seized the opportunities presented by weakened governments in Baghdad and Damascus to greatly increase the territory and resources under its control. In so doing, it has become, in many senses, a rival to al-Qaeda for allegiance of foreign fighters worldwide. It has also become a territorial power in its own right. Unlike al-Qaeda, IS plays down its role as an endogenous struggle, emphasizing instead its universal dynamic: from its inception, it has publicly declared the goal of establishing and enlarging the 'caliphate'.[4]

The nations of North Africa, including Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia, provide a large share of the foreign fighters currently active in Syria.[5] Indeed, Tunisia is believed to be the home country of more foreign fighters—over 3,000—than any other.[6] Morocco and Libya are estimated to be the country

of origin for some 3,000 fighters, many of them in leadership roles within IS. It is striking that, of the three nations, the two more politically stable provide more fighters to the Syrian conflict than revolutionary Libya.

This Issue Brief sheds light on the mobilization of foreign fighters to Syria between 2011 and 2015, focusing on the last two years. It seeks to answer the following questions: Who are the fighters? Why do they travel to Syria? How do they get there and what groups do they join when they arrive? Perhaps most importantly, the Issue Brief explores what the fighters intend to do in Syria or in their home country if they return. The key findings include:

- Recruitment of foreign fighters from North Africa is still largely done face to face. News broadcasts and online media (including social media) may influence recruits but

most North African fighters are recruited directly, by people they (already) know.
- The most effective recruiting networks are the most established groups. Ansar al-Sharia, the Libyan militant group, was established during the Libyan revolution. It has played a key role in recruiting and training both Libyan and Tunisian fighters, even more so than its Tunisian offshoot (Ansar al-Sharia-Tunisia).
- North African fighters are more likely to travel to Syria from countries that have stable, even authoritarian, governments. Such governments provide fewer opportunities for local expression, forcing prospective volunteers to look to Syria to engage meaningfully with their jihadist beliefs.
- Most North African fighters go to Syria with the intention of staying there. Whether it is with the aim

Jubhat Al Nusra fighters outside of Aleppo, Syria. Source: Medyan Dairieh/ZUMA Press/Corbis

of building the 'new caliphate' (declared by IS on 29 June 2014; Al Jazeera, 2014), to escape difficult economic or social situations in their own country, or for other reasons, most fighters intend either to stay in Syria after the conflict ends or to be martyred there.

- In Syria, reputation and experience count. Libyans and Moroccans are reputed to be effective fighters with tactical ability and experience. They often serve in senior IS positions. Tunisians, on the other hand, have less experience as fighters and are generally forced to prove themselves to their fellow foreign fighters, serving in more junior roles.

- When fighters return home, it is currently more likely to be because of disillusionment with reality on the ground in Syria (Moroccans and Tunisians) or the deterioration of the situation in their home country (mostly Libyans) than it is to take up arms against their own governments.

The Issue Brief draws on a combination of literature and media reviews on foreign fighters and the conflict in Syria, complemented by fieldwork in Turkey, including interviews with Syrian journalists, activists, and former residents and prisoners under IS control. It follows up on the research and findings of SANA Dispatch no. 4, published in March 2014.[7]
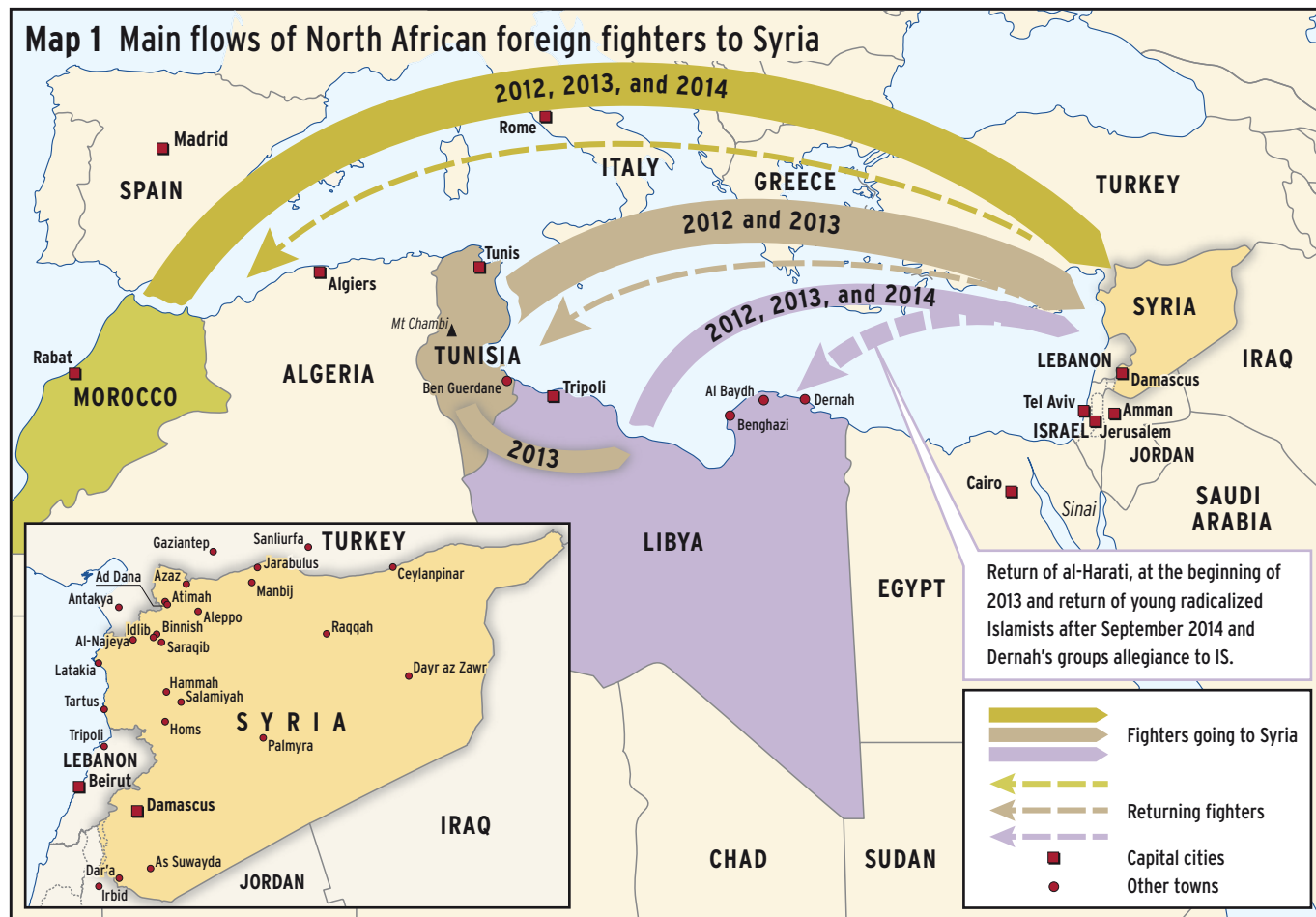
Quantifying foreign fighters in Syria

It is difficult to establish the number of foreign fighters in Syria with any accuracy. Although estimates vary, experts believe that there have certainly been more than 12,000 over the course of the conflict (Barrett, 2014) and perhaps over 20,000 (Neumann, 2015). Importantly, this means that more foreign fighters have now fought in the Syrian conflict than fought in Afghanistan with the Taliban (and in the violence following the fall of its government). Fighters of North African origin are well repre-

sented among the various groups fighting in Syria.

The Moroccan government estimates that up to 2,000 citizens of Morocco or persons of Moroccan origin resident in other countries have fought in the Syrian and Iraqi conflicts. The Moroccan Minister of the Interior, Mohamed Hassad, stated that 1,122 Moroccan citizens had gone to fight in Syria and Iraq (Hassad, 2014). Of that number, the government believes that 200 died in the fighting and admitted to investigating 128 of them on their return to Morocco. Hicham Baali, National Security Representative, also noted, however, that the government believes that since only 18 per cent of the fighters under investigation have a criminal record, it is difficult to track all of their movements or whereabouts at a given time (Baali, 2014).

Making this issue perhaps more troubling for the Moroccan government is the reputation of Moroccan fighters in Syria. Many nationals are known to hold important roles in Syrian rebel groups, especially IS.

Map 1 Main flows of North African foreign fighters to Syria

Return of al-Harati, at the beginning of 2013 and return of young radicalized Islamists after September 2014 and Dernah's groups allegiance to IS.

Fighters going to Syria
Returning fighters
Capital cities
Other towns

The government has acknowledged that its citizens are among the senior military ranks of IS (military 'emirs' or battle commanders) as well in senior logistical (Emir of the financial commission) and political ranks (Emir of the Turkmen Mountains, Emir of North of Aleppo, and Emir of Land Borders, for example) (Hassad, 2014; Ghioua, 2014).[8] The reputation of Moroccan fighters among their fellows is fearsome; they are reputed to be more willing to commit suicide attacks than other nationals (Hassad, 2014).[9]

The government believes that many of the Moroccans fighting in Syria are motivated not only to fight there but also to obtain military training in order to commit attacks in Morocco. The country's Minister of the Interior has publicly stated the government's concern that Moroccan fighters have received both training and practical experience in combat, in making and deploying explosives, and in the use of heavy arms. Already, some Moroccan fighters have sought to project their capabilities beyond Syria's borders, making direct threats to Morocco's interests in general (Hassad, 2014; Ghioua, 2014) and specific threats to Moroccan public figures. In August 2014, for example, the Moroccan Minister for Justice and Liberty, Mustapha Ramid, was labelled a *kafir* (unbeliever) and received death threats from a group affiliated with IS (Al-Soussi, 2014; Khbarna.net, 2014).

The situation is similar in Tunisia. There are an estimated 1,800 to 3,000 fighters of Tunisian origin participating (or having participated) in the Syrian conflict (Barrett, 2014; Neumann, 2015). Indeed, it is widely believed that Tunisians make up the largest group of foreign fighters among non-Syrian rebels.

It is almost impossible to establish a reliable number of Libyans who have fought in Syria. Libyan volunteers were certainly among the earliest foreign recruits of IS and its predecessors.[10] The desire of Libyans to travel and fight in Syria was given fresh impetus by the fall of the Qaddafi regime in 2011. The revolutionary government established contact with Syrian rebels

Box 1 Female fighters

It is difficult to establish how many women travel to Syria as fighters or activists. This may be partly cultural since North African societies tend to be reluctant to report the phenomenon. Although a Tunisian government minister estimated that over 1,000 Tunisian women had gone to Syria, there is little reliable data to support that or any other estimate (Al-Amin, 2014).

Despite the uncertain numbers, it is clear that there are two distinct groups of women travelling to Syria: young, single women going alone to fight or support the cause by marrying a fighter, and married women (often with their children) who join their husbands on the battle field. There is ample evidence to confirm the existence of the former travelling to Syria for social reasons.[11] Recent evidence suggests that women are also taking part in IS administration. A brigade made up exclusively of women (the 'al-Khansaa Brigade') is active in Raqqa.[12] The brigade is apparently charged with keeping social order and enforcing sharia rules (as defined by IS leadership) in the town (Winter, 2015b, p. 7). It is difficult to determine whether the women of the 'al-Khansaa Brigade' are from Syria, Iraq, or other countries. While the presence of so many foreigners in IS leadership positions presents the possibility that some members of the brigade are foreign fighters, it is more likely to be made up of Syrian and Iraqi nationals.[13]

Equally, there is evidence of women travelling with their husbands and families to join IS. Such women have their own 'role models' to encourage participation. Among the most influential female Salafist activists is the Moroccan Fatiha Hassani, also known as Oum Adam Al Mejjati or 'the black widow of al-Qaeda'. Hassani was married to the well-known Moroccan fighter Karim Mejjati, who was killed in Saudi Arabia in 2004 during a clash between al-Qaeda and Saudi government forces. Mejjati lived with her husband in Afghanistan in 2001 under Osama bin Laden before moving first to Pakistan (probably in early 2002) and then to Saudi Arabia. Despite imprisonment and (after her release) close monitoring by security forces, Hassani made her way to Iraq. There are rumours that Hassani is engaged to or has married Al Baghdadi's deputy, the second in command in IS (Benhada, 2014d).

Female fighters of the 'al-Khansaa Brigade', near Raqaa, Syria. Source: Ahmad al-Bahri/SyriaDeeply.org

in the autumn of that year. Subsequently, Libya sent money and weapons to anti-Assad forces, even considering sending 'military' trainers. Contemporary sources describe 'hundreds' of Libyans going or intending to go to Syria, although there were never any reliable figures.[14]

Currently, most estimates place the number of Libyans fighting in Syria at anywhere from a few hundred to a thousand. There is definite evidence of their continued presence: news of the deaths of Libyan 'martyrs' or the departure of fresh recruits continues to be reported (Libya Herald, 2014; Ali, 2014).[15] These news reports and social media posts provide a rough recruitment map, showing that fighters going to Syria are largely drawn from the Islamist-dominated towns of Dernah, Tripoli, and Benghazi (Zelin, 2013b).

Foreign fighters: who they are

It is unwise to make generalizations about the motivations of fighters of North African origin. Religion, economic opportunity, and even a government's own actions or inactions may influence an individual's choice to travel to Syria and become involved in that conflict. There are, however, features common to many fighters that may lend themselves to a better understanding of who the North African fighters are, how they got to Syria, and what groups they have joined.

Motivating factors

Morocco

I (feel) bad when I see and hear of the [suffering] of the Syrian people . . . [we learned] day and night . . . how people were killed and displaced in their own country . . . I decided to go to Syria to help (Saadouni, 2013).[16]

Libyan fighters: Mehdi al-Harati (former mayor of Tripoli), Syria, 2012. Source: Liwa al-Umma

Morocco is considered one of the most stable countries in the North African region. Despite this, Moroccan citizens have frequently participated in the conflicts that shaped modern 'jihadist' thought and doctrine: Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, and Indonesia (Rogelio and Rey, 2007).[17] Moroccan fighters ascribe their presence to noble aims: to fight against the oppressive Assad regime, to restore justice (specifically Sharia law), and to promote jihad in Syria (ONERDH, 2014). Research suggests, however, that socio-political and economic reasons may be among the factors that ultimately drive Moroccan participation in the Syrian conflict.

Perhaps most important of the three broad factors behind Moroccan motivation is the religious element. Though Syria, as the seat of the Ummyad Caliphate, is an important location in the history of Arab nationalism, it is primarily understood now as the 'cause célèbre of jihadism' (Mohamedou, 2014). Like other contemporary Muslims, Moroccans recognize Syria's important status in Islam as the location for the 'final battle' to take place in Dabiq at the 'end of time' between Muslims and non-believers, and the establishment of a new Islamic caliphate (Masbah, 2014a).

If such broad reasoning is the foundation of the religious element of Moroccan desires to fight in Syria, the specific impetus can be traced to the active encouragement of religious leaders and the government's laissez-faire attitude. Pervasive media coverage of both the devastation wrought by the Syrian conflict on the civilian population and the many religious fatwas (directives) issued by religious leaders, encouraged potential fighters.[18] At the same time, conservative religious leaders were subject to strict government control, including imprisonment. After several high-profile and Salafist-inspired attacks against the government and the tourist infrastructure in the first decade of the 21st century, the Moroccan government cracked down heavily on Salafists, religious leaders, and sheiks.[19] Prominent among those arrested was Mohamed Fizazi, sentenced to 30 years following the 2003 Casablanca attack. Fizazi is believed to have influenced many Moroccan foreign fighters (Barrada, 2014). Indeed, prisoners often became further radicalized while they were serving their sentence, declaring their 'loyalty' to IS (Benhada, 2014c; Chamal Post, 2014). Fizazi and 91 others were released in 2011 as part of a royal pardon.

After their release, an estimated 30 per cent of the Salafist former detainees went to Syria (Masbah, 2013a). It has been suggested that this was the result of the tacit encouragement of the Moroccan government. In 2012, the government hosted a 'Friends of Syria' meeting, an act that many (especially former prisoners) interpreted as official encouragement to go to fight in Syria (Benhada, 2014b; Crétois and Boudarham, 2014).[20] Some suggest that the government was aware of this and believed that this was one way to mitigate the 'problem' of the Salafists (Benotmane, 2014).[21] As one commentator noted: 'Exporting Moroccan jihadists (and tacitly allowing them to leave) is indeed a far less costly and contentious remedy to the issue of Salafi-jihadi radicalization' (Masbah, 2014a). The case of Fatiha Mejjati, widow of known al-Qaeda member Karim Mejjati, illustrates the Moroccan government's apparent 'out of sight, out of mind' policy. After having been imprisoned for nine months, she was released but remained under close government surveillance. Despite this, she was able to write a letter declaring her allegiance to Abou Bakr al-Baghdadi and IS and to make her way to Iraq through Turkey and Syria (Benhada, 2014c; 2014d).

In addition to 'purely' religious reasons, there are economic and social factors. Many released prisoners suffered harsh prison conditions. Moreover, a large percentage of former prisoners were from areas marginalized from the Moroccan 'mainstream' with high unemployment and limited prospects. Thus, with little sense of belonging to their home country and less to return to following their release, going to Syria to undertake jihad carried a practical appeal as well as a religious one (Masbah, 2013a; Hakiki, 2015). Some commentators have described the Moroccan government's failure to 'solve' the issue of Salafist detainees and the roots of extremism as a factor encouraging former prisoners to travel to Syria (Masbah, 2014b).

Economic motivations may also be important. It is well known among the jihadist groups in Syria that IS pays its fighters a substantial wage (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2014; Hakiki, 2015).[22] 'Conflict tourism'—the 'search for adventure, self-establishment, glory, and victory'—was cited in a recent study undertaken by the Observatory of Human Rights (ONERDH, 2014). Finally, some Moroccan fighters may be travelling to Syria in order to gain combat experience with a view to returning to Morocco and starting their own 'Islamic' revolution (Sakthivel, 2013; see also below).

Tunisia

For Tunisian fighters, religion is the main motivation for going to Syria. Tunisia was under the dictatorial rule of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali for over 20 years, during which period politics and political expression were closely controlled. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Tunisian strain of 'political Islam' developed mainly outside the country and for a long time involved only a few militants. The first recognized militant Islamic leader was Seifallah ben Hassine, also known as Abu Ayadh. Hassine was a close companion of Osama Bin Laden, notably taking part in the assassination of Ahmed Shah Massoud in Afghanistan on 9 September 2001. Abu Ayadh was also the first emir of the Tunisian Fighting Group (TFG; the group was Tunisian in character but was founded and operated outside the country) and played a central role in establishing recruiting networks for Tunisian fighters to travel to both Afghanistan and Iraq in the first decade of the 21st century (Bergen et al., 2008). Though these militants had returned to Tunisia

from their time abroad, it was not until April 2006 that militant Islam made its first domestic attack, as an armed jihadist group clashed with Tunisian Security Forces in the vicinity of Mount Châmbi.

Political Islam emerged in Tunisia with the fall of the Ben Ali government in January 2011. Islamist groups benefited from the interim government's 20 January amnesty for political prisoners detained under the Ben Ali government's 2003 anti-terror laws. The most potent force to emerge was Ennahda Movement, an Islamist political party that was finally legalized in March 2011. Ansar al-Sharia-Tunisia (AS-T), founded in April 2011, represented the Salafi-jihadist strain of political Islam. AS-T followers rapidly 'took over' more than 100 mosques in Tunisia.[23] The mosques allowed AS-T openly to recruit volunteers for the burgeoning Syrian conflict.

The fall of the Ben Ali regime also led to a period of economic uncertainty in Tunisia. That, combined with political instability, contributed to increasing the pool of potential recruits for the Syrian conflict. At the same time (like many tapped into Arabic-language media), Tunisians were relentlessly exposed to images and descriptions of the abuses and deprivations of ordinary Syrians. Online jihadist propaganda was another important recruiting tool. All of these factors played a role in the large number of Tunisians from various social and economic backgrounds who ended up fighting in Syria (Ghribi, 2014).

Beyond the social and economic factors, however, history and geography also played a role. The fall of the Ben Ali regime did nothing to heal the cultural and economic rift between the borderlands and more prosperous coast, which includes the capital Tunis. The former regions account for a significantly larger percentage of the Tunisian fighters in Syria. In particular, Ben Guerdane—a city on the Libyan border whose traditional economy was based on smuggling—is believed to play a key role in recruiting fighters (International Crisis Group, 2013). The town has a long history of independence from the central government. It is also well known for sending fighters on 'jihad': from the 1947–49 Arab–Israeli war to Afghanistan, Iraq, and now Syria,

Tunisians from Ben Guerdane enrolled as foreign fighters (Fordham, 2012). The collapse of the Ben Ali government (with whom the smugglers of the town had developed a lucrative understanding) and the Qaddafi regime (whose country provided a ready market for smuggled goods) merely added an economic reason for citizens of both countries to go to Syria (International Crisis Group, 2013; Kartas, 2013).

Libya

Libyans have participated in the Syrian conflict since 2012 (Fitzerald, 2012). This is perhaps unsurprising given the 'success' of Libya's own rebellion against authoritarian rule and the role of external assistance in Qaddafi's overthrow. Nevertheless, there seems to have been a progression in the motivations of the Libyans fighting in Syria from 'revolutionary' minded to purely religious inspiration.

The first group of Libyans who went to Syria did so to assist in its 'revolution'. The example of the former mayor of Tripoli, Mehdi al-Harati, is instructive. In 2012, al-Harati went to Syria with a large group of fighters. The group stayed in Syria for only nine months, however, returning because they were disillusioned by the factional disputes that characterized (and continue to characterize) the Syrian opposition.[24]

The second group of Libyan fighters were motivated primarily by religious concerns.[25] They included Libyans who were resident in Libya and Libyan foreign fighters with international credentials, who had gained experience and in some cases notoriety for their participation in other conflicts, especially in Iraq. Among the latter group was Abu Abdallah al-Libi (also known as Usama al-Obeid).[26] The first 'waves' of these religiously motivated fighters went without necessarily receiving formal training or being affiliated with an established Syrian rebel group.

The third and final group of fighters were those sent by Libyan jihadist groups. Prominent among these groups is Ansar al-Sharia, which attracted a new generation of Libyan fighters, younger and less experienced than those who had initially travelled to Syria. They were trained in camps around Dernah and in the Benghazi

suburbs before going to Syria.[27] Most of this wave of fighters also came from the Dernah area, a traditional jihadist hub and one well known for providing volunteers for Iraqi groups opposed to the US occupation.[28]

While the nature of the conflict in Syria remained largely unchanged from the perspective of the religiously minded foreign fighters, the flow of men from Libya to Syria had mostly ended by May 2014.[29] The unstable situation in Libya appears to have convinced Ansar al-Sharia and others that Libyan fighters were best used to further their religious aims— perceived to be under threat—in their own country. This trend was probably influenced by the 'split' in Libya's government between more secular and more religious factions and by actions such as 'Operation Dignity' (al-Karamah), the effort by former Libyan Army General Khalifa Haftar and units loyal to him to 'cleanse Libya of terrorism and extremism' (Tawil, 2014).

Summarizing affiliations to armed groups

Morocco

Moroccan fighters have joined three main groups over the course of the Syrian conflict:

- **Jubhat al-Nusra (JAN):** The first group that Moroccan fighters in Syria joined was Jubhat al-Nusra (also known as the 'al-Nusra Front'). The group has boasted several well-known Moroccan foreign fighters, including Ibrahim Benchekroun (an ex-Guantanamo prisoner). JAN is the 'official affiliate' of al-Qaeda in Syria, although its stated aims are local rather than global. While JAN is considered to be one of the most effective and experienced of the Syria-based jihadist groups, many of the Moroccans who originally joined the group 'defected' to other groups, including IS and Harakat Sham Al-Islam, which was founded by Benchekroun (see overleaf).

    Moroccans fighting for JAN were known for their suicide attacks on behalf of the group. Abu Mus'ab

Ibrahim Benchekroun, a well-known Moroccan jihadist and founder of Harakat Sham Al-Islam eulogizing the group's co-founder, Muhammad al 'Alami Slimani. Source: The Army of Mohammed Abou Obeida Al Mohajir/YouTube

Ash-Shamali was the first to commit such a suicide bombing in August 2012, attacking a building of army officers in Neirab (between Aleppo and Idlib). A second prominent suicide attack was undertaken by Abu-Ayman, a Moroccan from Casablanca. He exploded a bomb at an army checkpoint in Qusayr in March 2013 (Caillet, 2014).

- **Islamic State (IS):** IS was founded in 2013 by its leader, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi.[30] The group was successful in attracting mostly foreign fighters, including many Moroccans. This 'second wave' of Moroccans included Abdelaziz Al Mahdali (also known as Abou Oussama al Maghrebi, a former merchant from Fnideq). Originally, Al Mahdali joined JAN but later left for IS, where he became a commander in the group and a leader in operations against JAN in the Aleppo area. JAN members killed him in Aleppo, in March 2014 (Azaali and Yussuf, 2014).[31]

As with JAN, Moroccan fighters for IS are known for their willingness to commit suicide attacks. Among them was Abu Sohaib al-Maghrebi, who attacked a Syrian military checkpoint at Deir Al-Zour, killing 25 soldiers and injuring scores more (*Hespress*, 2014a).

- **Harakat Sham Al-Islam (HSAI):** Harakat Sham Al-Islam was founded in mid-August 2013 and was the

first 'Moroccan' group to be created in Syria. It was founded in the Latakia countryside by former Guantanamo detainees: Ibrahim Benchekroun (also known as Ahmed al-Maghrebi or Abou Ahmed Al-Muhajir), and Muhammad al 'Alami Slimani, (also known as Abou-Hamza al-Maghrebi). Benchekroun had extensive experience of jihad. Originally from Casablanca, he shaped his jihadist views in Mauritania in 1990. Subsequently, he lived in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where he was captured fighting for the Taliban and sent to the US prison at Guantanamo in Cuba. He was repatriated to Morocco, where he was imprisoned from 2005 to 2011. Released under the royal amnesty, Benchekroun immediately fled to Syria, where he joined JAN before founding HSAI. Like Benchekroun, 'Alami Slimani first gained experience as a fighter with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan in 2001. He too was captured and sent to Guantanamo, repatriated, and imprisoned in Morocco before being released, probably as part of the royal amnesty. Slimani was the first leader of the group. Following his death, he was succeeded by Benchekroun, who changed the name from 'Ahrar Al-Sham' to 'Sham Al-Islam.'

When Benchekroun was killed, Mohammed Mazouz (also known

as Abou al Izz-Al Muhajir) took the lead of HSAI. Like the founders, Mazouz fought in Afghanistan and was imprisoned at Guantanamo and once back in Morocco was convicted of recruiting for al-Qaeda in Iraq. Mazouz fled Morocco for Syria after his release, where he eventually joined HSAI (Azaali and Yussuf, 2014; Thomson and Nasr, 2014; Mawassi, 2014).[32]

The group has 500–700 Moroccan fighters, who comprise most of its armed strength (Masbah, 2014a). HSAI is not exclusively Moroccan, however: its spiritual leader (mufti) is the Saudi, Abu Hafs al-Jazrawi, and its military commander is Egyptian (Ahmed Muzin) (Azaali and Yussuf, 2014). Ideologically, HSAI espouses the 'Takfirist' ideology of al-Qaeda, including the application of Sharia law in all territory under its control. There are suggestions that HSAI is training fighters for their eventual return to Morocco and actions against the monarchy, although the group has not publicly stated this aim (Al Tamimi, 2013; Mawassi, 2013).

Tunisia

Although they may have joined other groups (including JAN) in the early days of the Syrian conflict, Tunisians now mainly join IS. In IS, Tunisian fighters have a reputation for zeal and brutality. A possible reason for this is that Tunisia does not have a strong gun culture and has had limited experience of political Islam. Consequently, Tunisian fighters lack the experience of Algerian Islamists or Libyan fighters (after the revolution in 2011) and many believe that they strive to prove their courage and commitment to the cause.[33]

Despite the large number of Tunisians in the IS ranks, few rise to leadership. Among the military ranks, leaders from North Africa are generally chosen from the more experienced Libyan or Algerian fighters, with Tunisians limited to local operational command of IS military elements.[34] In the civil aspect of IS, Tunisians are more likely to be media handlers or judges, though in the latter capacity

their advancement is limited to positions such as being a judge in a small village.[35]

When asked about the role of Tunisians in IS, interviewees commonly referred to their viciousness, notably in the treatment of prisoners.[36] This characterization is a widely held belief, and was confirmed by Syrian activists and journalists who had been imprisoned by IS in Aleppo.[37] Perhaps as a result, Tunisian fighters are favoured for sensitive, potentially unpopular missions such as the assassination of Sunni Muslims from organizations rivalling IS, or even from within its own ranks.[38]

Libya

As noted above, Libyans were among the first foreign fighters in Syria. Originally, they tended to join al-Qaeda-related groups, including JAN and IS.[39] Abu Abdallah al-Libi, one of the main Libyan commanders in Syria, paid allegiance to IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and was appointed as the IS emir in al-Dana (Idlib region) (Roggio, 2013). While the uncertain relationship between JAN and IS was being clarified, Libyans stayed 'outside' the fray, remaining in their own units and not integrating into other IS hierarchies or command structures.[40] In Latakia for instance, Libyans kept their own separate battalion (*The Daily Star*, 2013). As the split between JAN and IS deepened, Libyans chose IS but remained apart, forming the Katibat al-Battar al-Libiya (KBL) (The Libyan al-Battar Brigade), under the auspices of IS.

Since its formation, the KBL has been active in eastern Syria, notably in Al Hasakah and Deir az-Zor. The battalion maintained links with Ansar al-Sharia in Libya, an early and prominent supporter of IS. Ansar al-Sharia proved to be an excellent recruiting tool and played a role in the arrival of many Libyans in Syria prior to 2014. Most of these fighters were young men who were more religious than revolutionary. As the conflict in Libya intensified, Libyan recruits became more rare, younger, less educated and were ultimately less 'successful' in advancing within IS command structures.[41] They were foot soldiers and 'cannon fodder' not battlefield commanders.

Methods of recruitment

Morocco

Two waves of Moroccan fighters have gone to Syria. The first wave lasted from December 2011 to April 2013.[42] The second wave—younger, less experienced but often more radicalized—arrived after the formation of IS in April 2013. After the establishment of IS, Moroccans almost exclusively joined that group until the founding of HSAI in August 2013 (Masbah, 2014a).[43]

The recruitment of fighters from Morocco has varied from 'traditional' to modern methods.[44] The former are largely built on personal connections: families, friends, or personal acquaintances who have gone to Syria or know someone who has been, encouraging others to join them in 'the struggle'. For example, Rachid Lemlihi, a young Moroccan, began his journey to Syria after contacting a friend who had gone before, using social media. The friend encouraged him and helped Lemlihi plan his trip to Syria, via Turkey. Following the friend's advice, Lemlihi told Moroccan authorities his final destination was Turkey. Once there, however, he met his friend and together they went to the Syrian border (Saadouni, 2014). This journey is typical of traditionally recruited fighters, relying on personal connections to make their way to Syria. Many of these fighters remain active on social media networks after their arrival, maintaining contact with friends in Morocco and perpetuating recruiting 'networks' (Masbah, 2014a).

'Modern' recruitment involves creating a relationship with potential fighters based on their interest in the conflict, and then cultivating that interest. Social media—including Facebook, Skype, Twitter, and a vast number of blogs—are used to recruit future fighters and to raise money for their trips. A good example of a site dedicated to recruiting future fighters is the blog of 'Ansar al-Tawhid', which provides information on why fighters go to Syria and how they get there (Amaya, 2014). Given the inherent

uncertainty of online connections, fighters recruited by modern methods may face heavier scrutiny than those traditionally recruited. For example, a new fighter may require the endorsement of either a trusted source or a current fighter vouching for the recruit's adherence to the ideology of the overall movement, and in particular the group the recruit will join. Such an endorsement may be obtained by email or through social networks.

As recruitment has moved towards modern methods, the methods and manner of travel are also changing. New recruits are encouraged to avoid direct flights from Morocco, travelling instead through third countries. Recruits are also encouraged to establish a modern identity, dressing in western clothing, even having a passport issued with a photo showing them so dressed. Fighters are discouraged from discussing their intentions with family. They are even advised to save money in order to marry in Syria—provided they pass all loyalty tests and are accepted by their new comrades (Benhada, 2014a).

Tunisia

Tunisian fighters are still largely recruited traditionally via personal contacts. Recruitment often begins at mosques, many of which were 'colonized' by more radical strains of Islam after the fall of the Ben Ali government in 2011 (Gall, 2014). Once recruited, many Tunisian volunteers travel to Syria via Libya (see 'Reaching the destination'). Most, but not all, fighters from Tunisia are young men from poorer backgrounds. The key to successful recruitment appears to be establishing a personal relationship and exploiting the potential recruit's sympathy for the oppression of Syrians, as well as the potential religious 'benefits' of undertaking jihad in Syria (Al-Amin, 2014).

The Tunisian government has not had an effective programme to either monitor or prevent such recruitment. Some accused the government, under the religious Ennahda Movement (which took power after elections in 2011), of deliberately turning a blind eye to the radicalization of mosques

and the recruitment of fighters. The current government has made attempts to curtail both trends but both are well established and not easily dislodged (Ghribi, 2014).

Libya

It is hard to find reliable data on recruitment of fighters in Libya. Certainly, there are celebrated examples of Libyans who fought in Syria.[45] Beyond those popular examples, however, it is difficult to make an accurate description of the recruitment process. There is evidence that Ansar al-Sharia, the Islamist militia founded in Benghazi, has played an active and important role. The group is believed to have set up training camps for recruits on territory it controls in eastern Libya. The camps provide training not only for Libyan recruits, but also for other North Africans, notably Tunisians and Syrians (Carlino, 2014; Zelin, 2013b). 'Graduates' of these camps are believed to have travelled on to Syria, via traditional routes through Turkey. It is important to note that this information is widely circulated but essentially unverified (Zelin, 2013c). And even assuming the presence of the camps and the importance of Ansar al-Sharia in recruiting Libyan fighters, the apparent diversity of Libyans who have fought and died in Syria suggests that informal connections may play as important a role in recruiting them.

Reaching the destination

Morocco

The 'traditional' route for a fighter seeking to join IS or other jihadist groups in Syria was to fly to the Turkish border region and then drive to the crossing for a rendezvous with contacts already in Syria. This route is still widely used, albeit with variations in itinerary in order to conceal the prospective fighter's true destination from the authorities. However they arrive at the border between Turkey and Syria, the majority of Moroccan fighters still cross this frontier and the same is likely to be true of Tunisian and Libyan fighters.

The traditional route is well known, both to those seeking to join IS (and other groups) in Syria and to the governments of Tunisia and Morocco. It is easy for citizens of those two countries to travel to Turkey since no visas or other entry permits are required (Lefébure, 2014).[46] The traditional route is widely discussed online, where activists supporting IS give detailed advice on logistics and proposed itineraries. As a result, it was easy for Moroccan or Turkish authorities to intercept prospective fighters and prevent them from completing their journey.

To counter this, the traditional route has been varied and prospective fighters are taught to conceal their intentions. This 'modern' route uses social media and online resources, including blogs, to disseminate up-to-date information and advice. A good example of the type was the aforementioned Ansar al-Tawhid blog, written and run by Mustafa Maya Amaya (Amaya, 2014).[47] This blog, like others of its kind, describes the trips as 'tourist trips to Turkey', although it offers advice on how to avoid undue scrutiny by security services. For example, potential fighters are encouraged to book return tickets for flights to major cities away from the border area; it is acceptable to book a ticket to Istanbul, Ankara, or Eskisehin but not to Gaziantep, near the border. There they are told to buy a local mobile phone or SIM card and act like tourists, travelling from place to place by taxi, domestic airline, or other public transport, and spending a day or two at each stop. Prospective fighters are advised to follow this pattern towards the border, saving enough cash to purchase a weapon once they have crossed.

When they arrive in the border area, they are to coordinate with their contacts in Syria, using their prospective comrades' routes and logistics to effect the crossing.[48]

Returning from Syria to Morocco appears to be more difficult and there is less of a set route. Online sources suggest flying to Libya and travelling overland through Algeria to its mountainous northern border with Morocco. Once there, returning fighters are advised to sneak across the border, along the same paths used by sub-Saharan migrants trying to get to Europe (Rubin, 2013).

The trip to Syria is estimated to cost almost USD 1,000 (about 8,000 dirhams) (Crétois and Boudarham, 2014). Online sources encourage those who do not plan to travel to Syria themselves to make contributions to allow prospective fighters to make the journey (Amaya, 2014). Local groups also provide funding. For example, a criminal network in Fes was broken up after it was found to be dealing in contraband goods. Members of the network included ex-prisoners and prospective fighters, using the profits from their illicit trade to finance the journey to Syria (Hibazoom, 2014).

Tunisia

There are strong indications that, despite the large number of Tunisian fighters in Syria, few travelled directly to join IS. Rather, Tunisians travel via Libya, often being trained there before going on to Syria, usually via Turkey. Transport to Turkey may be by sea,

---

Box 2 Sourcing weapons

While there are ample small arms in circulation in North Africa, prospective fighters are advised to leave them at home (Kartas, 2013). Fighters travelling to Syria are informed that weapons are plentiful, and that a few hundred US dollars will be sufficient to purchase a simple Kalashnikov-pattern rifle in areas outside government control.[50] In places where the government retains control–in Damascus, for example–prices are twice as much or more.[51]

The source of the weapons circulating in Syria is a matter of debate. The UN continues to document instances of weapons coming into Syria from Libyan stocks (UNSC, 2014 and UNSC, 2015 provide examples). Libyan weapons arrived by boat or by plane in Jordan or Turkey before overland transport to Syrian conflict zones. Both routes are likely to require the cooperation of government officials in Jordan and Turkey (Donati, Shennib, and Bosalum, 2013; Chivers, Schmitt, and Mazzetti, 2014), as well as help from third parties, for example, the Qatari government (UNSC, 2015). The renewed conflict in Libya may have stemmed this tide of weapons and even reversed the flow (Good Morning Libya, 2014). If so, it is a worrying development, given the sophistication of some of the heavy weapons in circulation in Syria, such as MANPADS.[52]

Interestingly, despite the rudimentary training given to most foreign recruits, there are indications that they are less than skilled in handling their weapons (Al Arabiya, 2015).

for example from the port at Brega (Hamedi, 2013).[49] Transit through Libya also pre-empts the need for younger prospective fighters to obtain parental 'permission', a requirement put in place by the Tunisian government in an effort to stem the flow of volunteers to Syria. Such permission is not required for travel to Libya.

Political objectives

On the ground

Morocco

Most Moroccan fighters in Syria have no intention of returning home. They prefer to stay in Syria and either die a martyr's death or achieve victory and thereby establish a new caliphate. A minority, however, dismayed by the internecine squabbling between JAN and IS, are willing to return home (Masbah, 2014c; Larbi, 2014; Saadouni, 2013).

Tunisia

Like Moroccan fighters, Tunisians in Syria have a reputation for intending to stay in the country, settling in what they hope will become the re-established caliphate.[53] Tunisians do not view Syria as a stop in their careers as foreign fighters, nor do they see it as a training ground for later action in their home country. That is to say, these fighters do not view IS as merely an armed group fighting for a cause but as the cause itself.

The reputation of Tunisian fighters in this regard appears to be widespread. They are perceived (positively, according to the Syrian interviewees) to be willing to marry and settle in Syria, or to bring their families over from Tunisia, raising their children in the land of the caliphate.[54] Tunisian fighters are not uniform in their desire to stay in Syria, however: according to the Tunisian Ministry of the Interior, at least 400 fighters had already returned from Syria by August 2014 (Gall, 2014; Ghribi, 2014). The evolving context in Iraq and in North Africa, change in the shape or success of the battles in Syria, and especially the place of IS in the country, may quickly change the intentions of larger numbers of Tunisian fighters.

Libya

Libyan fighters' long presence in Syria is undoubtedly linked to Libya's history of providing fighters for foreign 'jihad' and to the feeling of political kinship that many Libyans feel with the people of Syria under the Assad regime. Indeed, the Libyan Transitional National Council was among the first 'governments' to formally recognize the Syrian opposition as the 'legitimate (governmental) authority' in Syria (Chulov and Weaver, 2011). As a result, the first wave of foreign fighters included many Libyans, joining groups across the religious and political spectrum (Karadsheh, 2012). In that sense, the presence and motivations of these early Libyan fighters can be distinguished from other fighters of North African origin in that theirs was largely inspired by revolutionary interests rather than being tied to domestic socio-economic hardship or in response to the graphic displays of the suffering of Sunni Muslims that gained such currency across the region (Al-Amin, 2014).

If the first wave of Libyan volunteers was motivated largely by revolutionary fervour, subsequent volunteers were more focused on ameliorating the suffering of their fellow Sunni Muslims or establishing a new caliphate. As noted above, many Libyan volunteers arrived in Syria after being recruited, 'trained', and transported by Libyan Islamist militias, notably Ansar al-Sharia. Indeed, KBL, the largest Libyan-affiliated Syrian opposition group, both is affiliated with IS and maintains close ties to Ansar al-Sharia.[55] Thus, despite the departure of many Libyans, those volunteering for IS in Syria are fighting for many of the same reasons as other fighters from the North African region.[56]

Returned fighters

Morocco

As noted above, the primary political objective for most Moroccan fighters travelling to Syria remains rooted in the conflict there and in the establishment of a new caliphate. Recently, however, some Moroccan fighters or their sympathizers are alleged to have explicitly announced their intention to wage 'jihad' in Morocco, against the monarchy. In this potential jihad, HSAI, the Moroccan-dominated militant group in Syria, is said to be acting as a training regime (Sakthivel, 2013). This development could have serious ramifications for the security of Morocco and its government.

Tunisia

When the Ben Ali regime collapsed and the freedom of speech was established, Islamists re-emerged as political players. As noted above, the collapse of the Ben Ali regime brought a re-emergence of Islamists who used their new found freedoms to 'take over' many mosques. The post-revolutionary government's general amnesty for jihadists held under Ben Ali's 2003 anti-terror law also swelled their ranks. This ascendency was checked by the country's reaction to the assassination of prominent anti-Islamist politicians Chokri Belaid and Mohamed Brahmi (on 6 February and 25 July 2013, respectively) and the initial anti-government attacks near the Algerian border (see below). The new Tunisian government has taken a harder line on political Islam (Zelin, 2013a).

While there are few overt signs of fighters returning from Syria and taking up arms against the Tunisian government, the country is nevertheless uneasy. Given the large number of Tunisians with experience of fighting in Syria, there is (and will likely continue to be) a significant proportion that returns. Ansar al-Sharia-Tunisia (AS-T) famously pledged to confine its activities to outside Tunisia's borders and not seek to destabilize its internal security. In an interview, its leader, Abu Ayadh, declared: 'Tunisia is for now a land for peaceful preaching, where we should be rooted. Tunisia is not a land of Jihad.' He also stated that: '(AS-T) supports Jihadists against dictators still in power within the Muslim world', implying that Tunisia was not such a place (Merone and Béchir Ayari, 2014). Ayadh's pledge has done little to mitigate the government's fears, however: AS-T continues to recruit fighters and there are persistent indications that the group ultimately intends to develop an Islamist-focused parallel state (Gartenstein-Ross, 2013).

At the same time, the new Tunisian

government struggles to provide basic security, especially on the Libyan border. The smuggling cartels of Ben Guerdane, traditionally sympathetic to Islamist or jihadist causes and a source of many recruits for the Syrian conflict, continue to trouble the government (Kartas, 2013). New actors in the illicit trade markets, as well as jihadists operating on the lawless border regions, are also making it difficult for the government to re-establish its authority in the region. On the Algerian border, the Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade (OINB) is increasingly besetting the Djebel Châmbi region (Kasserine governate). Indeed, the region has become virtually a fiefdom of the group and the past two years have seen a steady stream of attacks.[57]

Libya

Since the fall of Muammar Qaddafi, Libya has spiralled into instability. In the absence of functioning and neutral institutions, multiple groups are battling for political leverage, territory, and resources. By late 2014, these groups had broadly coalesced into two rival camps, each with its own claims to legitimacy and its own foreign allies or sponsors. At its simplest, the two sides can be described as 'Islamist' and 'anti-Islamist': the Islamists include the Tripoli faction and Misratan militias, and hold sway in the capital. The anti-Islamists include the Tobruk faction, supported by Zintani militias, and are the 'secular' coalition.

Despite the symmetry of this political division, the actual situation is probably better described as two 'loose coalition(s) of disparate interests' (Cristani, 2015). Libyan communities have a long-standing reputation for strong local identities. For reasons both cultural and geographical (given the distances between many communities, different local environments, and relative isolation), local loyalties continue to play a large role in Libyan politics and their related conflicts. When faced with a common threat—the Ottomans, the Italians, or, more recently, the Qaddafi regime—communities may join together in resistance. In the absence of any external threat, however, they tend to retreat into their narrow and localized worldview. Thus, two commu-

nities that may have fought together to oust the Qaddafi regime may now be in violent conflict as each seeks to promote its local interests at the expense of the other (Cristani, 2015).

Libya is not neatly divided between the two camps. Indeed, among the most radical supporters of the Tripoli faction are militias based in the eastern city of Dernah, close to Tobruk. Dernah is and has long been a jihadist stronghold. It has been controlled by Islamist militias for several years and has contributed numerous fighters to the

conflict in Syria (see above). Indeed, the current militia purporting to control Dernah is called the Islamic State (IS-L). The group, formerly known as the Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam (the Islamic Youth Shura Council; MSSI), took the name in April 2014, after pledging allegiance to IS in Syria (Zelin, 2014b). Since declaring itself the legitimate governing authority in around October 2014, IS-L has attempted to implement its version of Islamic law, copying the methods used by IS in Syria in areas under its control (Zelin, 2014b; Wehrey

and Alrababa'h, 2015).

Today, IS-L and its affiliates have about 2,000 fighters in the country. In many senses, the emergence of IS-L has changed the conflict in Libya from a two-sided to a tripartite affair. As in Iraq, former members of the deposed regime lead some of the IS-L affiliates (mainly in the centre of the country). Thus, these groups may be considered affiliates of both sides of the conflict, with neither having a natural opposition to them. IS-L's emergence has also exposed the facile nature of the Islamist versus anti-Islamist dichotomy, revealing that conflict between those once associated in any way with the Qaddafi regime are opposed by those who, ostensibly, were not (Wehrey, 2014).

Largely as a result of these conflicts, the number of Libyan fighters in Syria has diminished. As there are only a few 'local' power centres and no functioning 'central government' to destabilize, these returning fighters have immediately engaged in the low-level 'civil war' taking place in Libya. This civil war is the reason that, beginning in the second half of 2014 and continuing to the present, many (if not most) fighters returned to Libya. The returned fighters pick a side, a choice that seems uniformly to be in favour of the Tripoli faction or sympathetic groups. Indeed, most fighters coming back from Syria appear to be motivated to fight against former Libyan Army General Khalifa Haftar. Haftar's 'Operation Dignity' forces are fighting Islamist militias (including Ansar al-Sharia) for control of the Benghazi region (Wehrey, 2014).

If the Libyan returnees are fighting on one side of a civil war, there are also fighters from other nations in Libya. Reports suggest that IS fighters from Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen joined their Libyan comrades when the latter returned, offering training and logistical support in the Libyan conflict (Taha, 2014; Wehrey and Alrababa'h, 2015). This development may eventually lead to increased instability for Libya's neighbours.

Conclusion

Foreign fighters in Syria may at some point become a problem on the scale of that posed by veterans of the anti-Soviet–Afghan campaign, but that day has not yet arrived. At present, most of the foreign fighters who have travelled to Syria have remained there to live, fight, or die. Of those who have returned to their home country, most seem content to try to reintegrate into society if given the chance, disillusioned by the internecine violence they saw in Syria.

Despite its rhetoric, IS is not a homogenous and unified structure. It is better understood as an umbrella organization, largely dominated by local concerns in Iraq and Syria. While pledges of allegiance from Boko Haram in Nigeria, the Islamic Youth Shura Council in Dernah, Libya, or other similar regional jihadist groups may increase its profile, there is little other connection. Under current conditions, even if it wanted to do so, IS could not exercise direct control over its newly declared affiliates, let alone provide them with additional money, manpower, or weaponry to expand territories under their control.

At present, Morocco and Tunisia can still be considered success stories in having weathered the upheavals of the Arab Spring and avoided major internal conflicts. The recent attacks in Tunisia highlight the need for the government to remain alert to the continuing threat posed by instability in Libya. Recent criticism of the Moroccan government's harsh treatment of returning fighters has highlighted fears that this could lead to a re-emergence of militant Islamist groups in the country. Both governments will need to remain vigilant and work to reintegrate any fighters returning from Syria in order to ensure continued stability.

The future may bring changes to the status quo. Foreign fighters may abandon Syria and return home, especially if IS continues to lose territory and resources or (as is the case in Libya) the political situation in their home country significantly deteriorates. Indeed, as noted above, some foreign fighters in Syria have already said they will go home and wage jihad against their own governments. That is to say that, despite their professed intention to stay and build the caliphate, 'home' still has a powerful draw. Libyan fighters, even those whose commitment to the conflict in Syria was more religious than revolutionary, have largely already abandoned the conflict for this very reason. They could soon be followed by fighters from the North Caucasus, Yemen or even Tunisia. Should a significant number of combatants leave Syria, the balance of the conflict in that country could change significantly. Furthermore, the influx of dedicated and experienced foreign fighters to jihadist groups 'back home' would have serious consequences for regional security in North Africa and beyond. Such dispersal would surely see both the rekindling of the Islamist attacks that plagued Morocco in the first decade of the 21st century and the intensification of Tunisia's current conflicts. ∎

Notes

1   This Issue Brief uses the broad term 'foreign fighters' in its discussion of non-Syrians fighting in the ongoing conflict in Syria. We have adopted the following definition of foreign fighter: non-nationals who are involved in armed violence outside their habitual country of residence . . .' (Geneva Academy, 2014, p. 3). For a detailed discussion of foreign fighters under International Humanitarian Law, see Geneva Academy, 2014.

2   This Issue Brief uses the term 'jihadist' to denote 'Islamist' or Muslim 'fundamentalist' affiliated or inspired non-state armed groups and the beliefs associated with their members or supporters. We note that this term is controversial but widely understood and used in discussions of security issues. We adopt this term for two reasons. First, many if not most foreign fighters involved in the Syrian conflict identify themselves as 'jihadists', regardless of their religious motivation (or lack thereof). Some scholars and analysts argue that the term 'jihad' encompasses more than religious conquest to include the processes of building and maintaining the state (or caliphate) (Zelin 2015; Merone and Béchir Ayari, 2013). This idea is often traced to the well-known work 'Stances on the Fruit of Jihad' (*Waqafat ma' Thamrat al-Jihad*) by the influential Salafist preacher, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (Vinatier, 2014). Second, the term 'jihadist' emphasizes the transnational dynamics inherent in groups comprising foreign fighters active in the Syrian conflict. For a fuller discussion of the term jihadist as it applies to foreign fighters in Syria, see Mohamedou, 2014 and Vinatier, 2014.

3   Formerly the Islamic State of Al-Sham, or ISIS. See Vinatier, 2014.

4   Caliphate is an important political and religious concept in the Arab world and is derived from the Arabic *Khilafa* which

means institution led by a *Khalifa*, or successor to the prophet Mohammed and his four companions (or caliphs), who established the first Caliphate. The term also refers to the golden age of Islam, when the religion (and its political control) spread throughout the Middle East and parts of North Africa. There is a strong current of contemporary belief in the Muslim world that the Khilafa should be revived.

5   While there are also fighters from Algeria and Egypt, this Issue Brief concentrates on those from Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia.

6   This estimate is partly based on the June 2014 statement made by the Tunisian Minister of the Interior, Lotfi Ben Jeddou, that 2,400 Tunisians had travelled to Syria to fight (Al Arabiya, 2014). Scholarly estimates are of 3,000 Tunisian fighters (Barrett, 2014).

7   See Vinatier, 2014.

8   Morocco's Interior Minister, Mohamed Hassad, said as much in his statement before parliament in July 2014 (AFP, 2014; Ali, 2014).

9   Twenty Moroccans are believed to have committed suicide attacks since the beginning of the Syrian conflict (Hassad, 2014).

10 In October 2007, US forces captured a collection of documents kept by an al-Qaeda cell in Sinjar, an Iraqi town close to the Syrian border. The Sinjar records contained biographical data on 595 foreign fighters recruited from August 2006 to August 2007. The data included information on Libyan fighters involved with the (then) Iraqi insurgency (Bergen, Felter, et al., 2008).

11 Phone interview with a Tunisian analyst, November 2014.

12 On the difficulty of knowing how many Libyan fighters are in Syria see, for example, Barrett, 2014.

13 Indeed, social media accounts associated with IS indicated that Libyans made up an important contingent of that group's foreign fighters as late as 2013.

14 On girls or unmarried women travelling to Syria to support the anti-Assad rebels in a non-military capacity, see, for example, BBC, 2015.

15 As with many armed groups in Syria, the 'al-Khansaa Brigade' had a reason for its chosen name. The name is a reference to the poet al-Khansaa from the early Islamic era (c. 7th century), known both for her verse and for her bravery (see Alim.org and Husn, 2002).

16 Quote from Rachid Lemlihi, a returnee imprisoned in Morocco after his return from Syria.

17 The notion of 'jihadist thought' is controversial, subject to much academic and theological debate. For a good overview, see Cook, 2005.

18 For example, one well-known Egyptian religious leader, Mohamed Hassan, called for jihad in a statement in 2013, made from Cairo, as a necessity for 'victory in Syria . . . jihad with mind, money and weapons, all forms of jihad' (Middle East Online, 2013).

19 The high-profile attacks included two in Casablanca (2003 and 2007) and one in Marrakech, in 2011 (Zelin, 2014a).

20 Mohamed Darif, a political scientist and expert on the 'Islamist Movement', stated that when Salafists were released they did not believe in their future, and that rather than being reintegrated they remained under state surveillance, which lends credence to these arguments. Many have been pushed to the fringes of society and a large number of them went to Syria (Crétois and Boudarham, 2014).

21 One Moroccan fighter in Syria claimed that, on a flight from Morocco to Syria, there were 30 jihadists on board. Another source stated that, during passport control at the Moroccan airport, jihadists were told that they could go to Syria but could not return (Benotmane, 2014).

22 According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, IS pays a monthly salary of USD 400 to its fighters. Married fighters receive an additional USD 100 for a spouse and USD 50 for every child. Fighters also benefit from housing and fuel allowances (IS controls oil fields in Syria). Foreign fighters receive USD 400 per month on top of their 'regular' salary, paid as a 'migration' stipend.

23 Phone interview with Romain Caillet, Beirut-based researcher and consultant on jihadist issues, September 2014.

24 Phone interview with the journalist Mary Fitzerald and Claudia Gazzini, a Libya-based researcher, in December 2014.

25 This second group was contemporary with the first, non-religious, group. Subsequently, those with religious motivations became the overwhelming majority of Libyan fighters in Syria.

26 Abu Abdallah al-Libi was killed in Syria in September 2013, fighting 'under' the banner of al-Qaeda.

27 Phone interview with Claudia Gazzini, December 2014.

28 Phone interview with Mary Fitzerald, December 2014.

29 Phone interview with Mary Fitzerald, December 2014.

30 See Mohamedou, 2014.

31 Al Mahdali was known to be an aide to Omar Al-Shishani, an IS leader. Al Mahdali was believed to have strong 'tactical' skills and was known for personally carrying out the death penalties handed down by IS against its enemies and its own fighters.

32 'Alami Slimani travelled to Syria with his family (Thomson and Nasr, 2014). He was killed in August 2014 (Mawassi, 2014).

33 Phone interview with a Syrian activist in Gaziantep, September 2014.

34 Phone interview with Romain Caillet, Beirut-based researcher and consultant on jihadist issues, September 2014.

35 Saudi nationals hold most of the top judicial positions, according to interviews with Syrian activists and journalists from Raqqah and Deir Ezzor, Gaziantep, September 2014.

36 This reputation could be considered, in some senses, a self-fulfilling prophecy. Because Tunisian fighters often lack the experience or training of their North African counterparts, they are frequently assigned roles that require less experience or professionalism, e.g. forming the lead elements of an attack ('cannon fodder') or working as prison guards. As such, Tunisian fighters may seek to increase their 'value' to commanders, whether by displays of reckless 'bravery' or through particular (and often brutal) devotion to their duties. It is this devotion that appears to be the basis of their spreading reputation.

37 Interviews with Syrian activists and journalists from Aleppo, Gaziantep, September 2014.

38 Interview with a Syrian activist, Gaziantep, September 2014.

39 As noted above, the 'first wave' of Libyan volunteers joined a variety of opposition groups across the political spectrum. The majority of fighters probably joined al-Qaeda-related groups.

40 Interview with an international expert, Geneva, October 2013 and Syrian journalist, Antakya, September 2013.

41 Phone interview Mary Fitzerald, December 2014.

42 Most evidence suggests that fighters did not start arriving until 2012, when Moroccan fighters who may have been part of al-Qaeda in Iraq were among the first wave that joined JAN—after arriving in Syria (Masbah, 2014a; Caillet, 2014).

43 Prior to the establishment of IS, most Moroccan fighters joined JAN.

44 One study suggests that 40 per cent of fighters were 'traditionally' recruited while the remaining 60 per cent were recruited via social networks (Northern Observatory for Human Rights, 2014).

45 As noted above, Mehdi al-Harati, Tripoli's former mayor, took a large group of Libyan fighters to Syria in 2012, returning after becoming disillusioned with the in-fighting of the Syrian rebel or opposition groups.

46 According to Romain Caillet, very few foreign fighters travel to Syria via Jordan or Lebanon as both countries have highly militarized borders and stricter entry requirements for Moroccan citizens than does Turkey (Lefébure, 2014).

47 Amaya, a Belgian citizen resident in the Spanish enclave of Melilla, was arrested in 2014 after a joint Moroccan and Spanish police operation. The blog remains online

48 Some blogs or other sources claim that lower-level Turkish authorities will, for a USD 40 'bribe', 'wave (prospective fighters) across the border into Syria' (Rubin, 2013).

49 Most experts believe that relatively few, if any, foreign fighters who join IS do so by travelling through Lebanon or Jordan (Caillet, 2014). Some news reports, however, suggest that fighters seeking to fight in the Damascus region enter via Lebanon (Hamedi, 2013).

50 Phone interview, Tunisian journalist, November 2014.

51 A Kalashnikov-pattern rifle can go for as much as USD 800 in Damascus. Phone interview, Tunisian journalist, November 2014.

52 See, for example, Schroeder, 2015.

53 Phone interview with Romain Caillet, September 2014.

54 Interviews with Syrian activists and citizens from Azzaz, Raqqah, Deir Ezzor–Gaziantep, Kilis, September 2014. Reports indicate that Australian, English, and French fighters have also publicly declared their intention to stay in Syria, even burning their passports (Wood, 2015).

55 Interview with an international expert, Geneva, October 2013 and Syrian journalist, Antakya, September 2013.

56 On returning fighters, see below. See also Al-Amin, 2014; Hatita, 2014; Cruickshank et al., 2015.

57 OINB has fighters from Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia. The group's attacks have been deadly—an attack in July 2014 claimed the lives of 14 soldiers, for example—but do not represent a fundamental threat to the Tunisian government. Rather, like the instability on the Libyan border, it is a distraction from the government's efforts to consolidate its territorial power and meet its security responsibilities, as well as stretching the capacity of the security forces (Reuters, 2014; Garoui, 2014; see also Gartenstein-Ross, 2014).

58 The law criminalizes going to a conflict zone in order to join or actually to join a terrorist organization, individually or in groups, or to recruit or train with terrorist groups inside or outside Morocco. It also allows the government to prosecute any Moroccan for committing a terrorist attack, whether the attack took place inside or outside the country.

59 One returnee died in prison after suffering severe asthma (Jaabouk, 2014).

60 For example, the Ennahda government granted political asylum to Abu Qitadah, a prominent Jordanian Salafist, known for encouraging violent jihad.

Bibliography

AFP (Agence France Press). 2014. 'Morocco ramps up security faced with "serious terror threat".' AFP via YahooNews, 10 July. <http://news.yahoo.com/morocco-ramps-security-faced-serious-terror-threat-205058564.html>

Ahmed, Haytham. 2014. 'Security fears in Morocco after an increase in the number of Moroccan jihadists in Syria' (in Arabic). *Al Taqreer*, 27 May. <http://altagreer.com>

Al-Amin, Hazem. 2014. 'Who is the "typical" Tunisian jihadist?.' Alhayat.com, translated and linked via Al-Monitor.com, 3 November. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2014/11/tunisian-jihadis-profile-fighting-syria.html#>

Al Arabiya. 2014. 'Ministry: Around 2,400 Tunisians Fighting in Syria.' 21 April. <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/2014/06/24/Ministry-around-2-400-Tunisians-fighting-in-Syria.html>

Al Arabiya. 2015. 'See the weakness of Darish fighters in the use of weapons.' 9 February. <http://www.alarabiya.net>

Alarosni, Latifa. 2014. 'The Moroccan government ratifies the law criminalizing enrolment with Darish' (in Arabic). Asharq Al-Awswat. 18 September. <http://aawsat.com/home/article/184171>

Alhurra.com. 2014. 'Morocco: 18 Terrorist Cells Dismantled Between 2011 and 2013' (in Arabic). 11 June. <http://www.alhurra.com>

Ali, Moutaz. 2014. 'Young Libyans head to join ISIS in Syria and Iraq.' *The Libya Herald*, online edition, 8 September. <http://www.libyaherald.com/2014/09/08/young-libyans-head-to-join-isis-in-syria-and-iraq/#axzz3FYEmZ4ds>

Alim.org. n.d. 'Khalifa Umar bin al-Khattab - Expansion of Islam and Military Campaigns: Al-Khansa.' <http://www.alim.org/library/biography/khalifa/content/KUM/18/pdf/18>

Al Jazeera. 2014. 'Sunni rebels declare new "Islamic caliphate".' Al Jazeera online edition, 30 June. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/06/isil-declares-new-islamic-caliphate-201462917326669749.html>

Al-Khazari, Saleh. 2014. 'Pledging Darish leads to the arrest in the suburb of Al Jadidda' (in Arabic). Hespress.com, 31 October. <http://www.hespress.com/permalink/245076.html>

Al-Soussi, Musab. 2014. 'Moroccan group close to Darish threatens Minister of Justice.' Al Quds, 8 August. <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=204217>

Al Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. 2013. 'The Syrian rebel groups pulling in foreign fighters.' BBC News, 24 December. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25460397>

Amaya, Mustafa Maya. 2014. *Ansar al-tawhid blog - djihadiste medias d'elite*. Accessed June 2015. Ansar al–tawhid. <http://ansartawhid2.blogspot.com>

Arbaoui, Larbi. 2014. 'Morocco Builds 40-Kilometers Fence with Electronic Sensors on Borders with Algeria.' Morocco World News, 22 July. <http://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2014/07/135078/morocco-builds-40-kilometers-fence-with-electronic-sensors-on-borders-with-algeria/>

Asharq Al-Awsat. 2014. 'Darish Salaries: 400 USD for fighters and 100 USD for every wife.' 30 August. <http://aawsat.com/home/article/170616>

Azaali, Abdul-Samad and Moncef Yussuf. 2014. 'Moroccan Jihadi Princess' (in Arabic). Elhourriya. 15 June. <http://www.elhourriya.net/index.php/file/65086-maroc.html >.

Baali, Hicham. 2014. '*Moubacharatan Maâkoum*: Wednesday 14 May 2014 - Moroccan and foreign fighters in Syria.' Enissay TV, 12 May. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2NujwQsg5Rs>

Barrada, Hamid. 2014. 'Maroc: Mohamed Fizazi, le salafiste de Sa Majeste.' Jeune Afrique, 11 April. <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/JA2778p050.xml0/>

Barrett, Richard. 2014. 'Foreign fighters in Syria.' The Soufan Group, June. <https://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/TSG-Foreign-Fighters-in-Syria.pdf>

BBC News. 2015. 'Three UK schoolgirls "travelling to Syria".' BBC News online edition, 20 February. <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-31554844>

Belga News Agency. 2014. 'Belgique, France, Maroc et Espagne réunis autour des djihadistes combattant en Syrie.' Belga, via DH.be, 15 October. <http://www.dhnet.be/dernieres-depeches/belga/belgique-france-maroc-et-espagne-reunis-autour-des-djihadistes-combattant-en-syrie-543ea5863570102e508f8ff0>

Benhada, Tariq. 2014a. 'Darish issue orders to their followers to carry cigarettes instead of the Koran' (in Arabic). *Hespress*, 11 November. <http://www.hespress.com/international/245838.html>

Benhada, Tariq. 2014b. 'Moroccan returning Jihadists declare repentance and seek amnesty' (in Arabic). *Hespress*, 22 May. <http://www.hespress.com/societe/214861.html>

Benhada, Tariq. 2014c. 'Activists and detainees gave allegiance to ISIS' (in Arabic). *Hespress*, 15 February. <http://www.hespress.com/societe/134961.html>

Benhada, Tariq. 2014d. '"Baghdadi State" celebrates the migration of al Mejjati to Iraq'. *Hespress*, 14 July. <http://www.hespress.com/orbites/235746.html>

Benotmane, Rida. 2014. 'Maroc-Djihadistes marocains en Syrie et en Irak: le Makhzen fait coup double! le retour des années de plomb.' *The Maghreb & Orient Courier*, online edition, August. <http://lecourrierdumaghrebetdelorient.info/morocco/maroc-djihadistes-marocains-en-syrie-et-

en-irak-le-makhzen-fait-coup-double-le-retour-des-annees-de-plomb/>

Bergen, Felter, et al. 2008. 'Bombers, Bank Accounts & Bleedout – Al-Qa'ida's Road In and Out of Iraq.' Harmony Project, Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point. <http://www.princeton.edu/~jns/publications/Sinjar_2_July_23.pdf>

Bouturawat, Meriam. 2014. 'Dozens of Moroccan fighters waiting for the green light to return to the Kingdom' (in Arabic). Choroknews, 26 May. <http://www.choroknews24.com/news2284.html#sthash.w3OdUqVN.dpuf>

Caillet, Romain. 2014. 'L'influence de la Guerre en Syrie sur le courant Jihadiste Marocain.' Religioscope, Etude et Analyses, N33 April.

Carlino, Ludovico. 2014. 'Ansar al-Shari'a: Transforming Libya into a Land of Jihad.' *The Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 12, Issue No. 1. 9 January. <http://www.jamestown.org/regions/africa/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=41802&tx_ttnews[backPid]=55&cHash=5cfffbd81ea3e05ff417365bc7aa4ffd#.VPTePRebkZ1>

Chamal Post. 2014. 'Salafists give allegiance to ISIS from prison.' 23 July. <http://chamalpost.net>

Chivers, C.J., Eric Schmitt, and Mark Mazzetti. 2013. 'In Turnabout, Syria Rebels Get Libyan Weapons.' *The New York Times*, online edition. 21 June. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/22/world/africa/in-a-turnabout-syria-rebels-get-libyan-weapons.html?_r=0>

Chotia, Farouk. 2015. 'Islamic State gains Libya foothold.' BBC News, online edition, 24 February. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31518698>

Chulov, Martin and Matthew Weaver. 2011. 'Libya leads world in recognising Syrian opposition's right to rule.' *The Guardian*, online edition, 19 October. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/oct/19/libya-recognises-syrian-opposition-right-rule>

Cook, David. 2005. *Understanding Jihad*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Crétois, Jules and Mohammed Boudarham. 2014. 'Jihadists returning from Syria pose threat to Morocco.' Al Monitor, 29 May. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/security/2014/05/morocco-jihadists-fighting-syria-risks-return.html>

Cristani, Dario. 2015. 'The Ongoing Unrest in Libya and the Hyped Threat posed by the Islamic State.' *Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 13, Issue 6. 20 March. <http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=43682&cHash=84a59dda2a8c6359d7ee7f5a273c040f#.VUeJ1xOUfpA>

Cruickshank, Paul, et al. 2015. 'ISIS comes to Libya.' CNN, online edition. 16 February. <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/11/18/world/isis-libya/index.html>

The Daily Star. 2013. 'Advancing army kills jihadist émir in Syria's Latakia: Activists.' Agence France Presse/*The Daily Star*. 18 August. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Aug-18/227736-advancing-army-kills-jihadist-emir-in-syrias-latakia-activists.ashx#axzz3FXb1b8zc>

Darif, Mohamed. 2004. 'The Moroccan Combatant Group.' Real Instituto Elcano, 30 March. <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org>

Donati, Jessica, Ghaith Shennib, and Firas Bosalum. 2013. 'The adventures of a Libyan weapons dealer in Syria.' Reuters, online edition. 18 June. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/06/18/us-libya-syria-idUSBRE95H0WC20130618>

The Economist. 2015. 'The pushback.' *Briefing Islamic State*, 21 March. <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21646752-sustaining-caliphate-turns-out-be-much-harder-declaring-one-islamic-state-not>

Euro-Jihad. 2014. 'Maroc: 1.000 Jihadistes.' 11 May. <http://euro-jihad.com/blog/?p=14082>

Fitzgerald, Mary. 2012. 'The Syrian Rebels' Libyan Weapon.' *Foreign Policy*, 9 August.

Fordham, Alice. 2012. 'Syria, Jihad and The Boys From Tunisia's Ben Guerdane.' *The National,* online edition. 4 July. <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/syria-jihad-and-the-boys-from-tunisias-ben-guerdane>

Gall, Carlotta. 2014. 'Tunisia Fears Attacks by Citizens Flocking to Jihad.' *The New York Times*, 5 August. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/06/world/africa/tunisia-in-political-transition-fears-attacks-by-citizens-radicalized-abroad.html?_r=0>

Garoui, Mohamed. 2014. 'Deux jeunes femmes décédées à Kasserine suite à des tirs des forces de l'ordre.' BusinessNews.com.tn, 8 August. <http://www.businessnews.com.tn>

Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed. 2013. 'Ansar al-Sharia Tunisia's Long Game: Dawa, Hisba, and Jihad.' International Centre for Counter Terrorism (ICCT). May. <http://www.icct.nl/download/file/Gartenstein-Ross-Ansar-al-Sharia-Tunisia%27s-Long-Game-May-2013.pdf>

Geneva Academy (Geneva Academy for International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights). 2014. *Foreign Fighters under International Law*. Academy Briefing no. 7. Geneva: the Geneva Academy for International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights.

Ghioua, Ikram. 2014. 'Le Maroc exporte ses djihadistes'. L'Expression, Le Quotidien. 17 July. <http://www.lexpressiondz.com/internationale/198666-le-maroc-exporte-ses-djihadistes.html>

Ghribi, Asma. 2014. 'Tunisia Struggles to Cope With Returnees From Syrian Jihad.' *Foreign Policy*, 12 September. <http://transitions.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2014/09/12/tunisia_struggles_to_cope_with_returnees_from_syrian_jihad>

Good Morning Libya. 2014. Twitter post, @Morning LY, 28 September. <https://twitter.com/morning_ly/status/516243324496535552>

Hakiki, Mohammed. 2015. 'An Interview on Moroccan Salafi-Jihadis.' Sada, 17 February. <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2015/02/17/interview-on-moroccan-salafi-jihadis/i2h8>

Hamedi, Nesrine. 2013. 'Tunisian Jihadists Fighting in Syria.' Assafir.com, translated and linked via Al-Monitor.com, 24 March. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/03/tunisian-jihadists-syria.html#>

Hassad, Mohamed (Interior Minister of Morocco). 2014. 'Statement regarding the ISIS and Moroccan fighters and threat.' http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hgn4GKmBp58 (Youtube, 2014), 15 July.

Hatita, Abdul Sattar. 2014. 'Libyan jihadists in Syria and Iraq returning home to fight Haftar: security sources.' Asharq Al-Awsat online, 16 July. <http://www.aawsat.net/2014/07/article55334325/libyan-jihadists-in-syria-and-iraq-returning-home-to-fight-haftar-security-sources>

Hespress. 2014a. 'A Moroccan fighter with Darish commit a suicide attack against Syrian Soldiers' (in Arabic). 31 October. <http://www.hespress.com/international/245057.html>

Hespress. 2014b. 'Spanish judiciary imprisoned members of the dismantled "terrorist cell"' (in Arabic). 17 March. <http://www.hespress.com/faits-divers/159261.html>

Hespress. 2014c. 'This is how two French and Moroccan Darish stole Money' (in Arabic). 30 October. <http://www.hespress.com/faits-divers/245019.html>

Hibazoom. 2014. 'This is the number of Moroccan fighters in Syria and the number of deaths' (in Arabic). 25 June. <http://hibazoom.com/cest-le-nombre-de-moudjahidin-marocains-en-syrie-le-nombre-de-morts-dentre-eu.html>

Howe, Marvine. 2005. *Morocco: The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Husn, Ma'n Abdul. 2002. 'Women of Distinction: Al Khansa, the Great Poetess of Eulogy.' Al Shindagah, January/February. <http://www.alshindagah.com/janfeb2002/Woman.html>

International Crisis Group. 2013. 'Tunisia's Borders: Jihadism and Contraband.' International Crisis Group, Middle East/North Africa Report, no. 148. 28 November. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/North%20Africa/Tunisia/148-tunisias-borders-jihadism-and-contraband-english.pdf>

Jaabouk, Mohammed. 2014. 'Maroc: Un ex-combattant en Syrie décède à la prison de Salé II.' Yabiladi.com, 7 August. <http://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/28386/maroc-ex-combattant-syrie-decede-

prison.html>

Karadsheh, Jomana. 2012. 'Libya rebels move onto Syrian battlefield.' CNN, online edition, 28 July. <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/07/28/world/meast/syria-libya-fighters/>

Kartas, Moncef. 2013. *On the Edge? Trafficking and Insecurity at the Tunisian-Libyan Border.* Working Paper no. 17. Geneva: Small Arms Survey. <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/F-Working-papers/SAS-WP17-Tunisia-On-the-Edge.pdf>

Khbarna.net. 2014. 'Darish threatens Mustapha Ramid, Minister of Justice' (in Arabic). 9 August. <http://www.khbarna.net/front/26185.html/>

Larbi, Amine. 2014. 'Syrie: les jihadistes marocains rentreraient en nombre au Maroc selon Abou Hamza al Maghrebi.' Lemag, 10 May. <http://www.lemag.ma/Syrie-Les-jihadistes-marocains-rentreraient-en-nombre-au-Maroc-selon-Abou-Hamza-Al-Maghribi_a83042.html>

L'Economiste. 2014. 'Alerte Melillia: Arrestation de 2 jeunes filles sur la "route de jihad".' L'Economiste, Maghress online, 4 August. <http://www.maghress.com/fr/leconomiste/1957387>

Lefébure, Anaïs. 2014. 'Moroccan Jihadists in Syria: a trip without return.' Jolpress. <http://www.jolpress.com/syrie-maroc-jihadistes-djihadistes-marocains-article-825865.html>

Libya Herald. 2014a. 'More Libyans Killed In Syria Fighting For IS.' *The Libya Herald,* online edition, 7 October. <http://www.libyaherald.com/2014/10/07/more-libyans-killed-in-syria-fighting-for-is/#axzz3FYEmZ4ds>

L'Orient Le Jour. 2014. 'Démission d'un ministre koweïtien accusé d'avoir financé al-Nosra.' L'Orient Le Jour, online edition, 5 April. <http://www.lorientlejour.com/article/861900/demission-dun-ministre-koweitien-accuse-davoir-finance-al-nosra.html>

Maghraoui, Abdeslam. 2014. 'Behind the Moroccan Terrorist Connection: State Politics and Saudi Wahhabism.' (ARI) *Area: Mediterranean and Arab World*, N 60. <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/a96ffa004aaadb8db-275b73a649df36b/ARI60-2004_Maghraoui_Moroccan_Terrorist_Connection_Saudi_Wahhabism.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=a96ffa004aaadb8db275b73a649df36b>

Masbah, Mohammed. 2013a. 'Is Qaida really threatening the stability of Morocco?' *Sada,* 17 October. <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2013/10/17/is-al-qaeda-threat-to-moroccan-stability/gqjy>

Masbah, Mohammed. 2014a. 'Moroccan Fighters in Syria' (in Arabic). *Sada,* 10 April. <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/index.cfm?fa=show&article=55313&solr_hilite=Syria+fighters+Moroccan>

Masbah, Mohammed. 2014b. 'Why Moroccan Salafist fight in Syria.' *The Daily Star,*

15 April. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Opinion/Commentary/2014/Apr-15/253324-why-moroccan-salafists-fight-in-syria.ashx>

Masbah, Mohammed. 2014c. 'Taking Advantage of Morocco's Security Threat.' *Sada,* 10 October. <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2014/10/10/taking-advantage-of-morocco-s-security-threat/hrlt>

Mawassi, Lahcen. 2013. 'A Moroccan launches a Jihadi group in Syria' (in Arabic). *Magharebia*, 6 September. <http://magharebia.com/ar/articles/awi/reportage/2013/09/06/reportage-01>

Merone, Fabio and Mickaël Béchir Ayari. 2014. 'Ansar al-Charia Tunisie: une institutionalisation à la croisée des chemins.' In Michel Camau and Frédéric Vairel, eds. *Soulèvements et recompositions politiques dans le monde arabe*. Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal. <http://iremam.cnrs.fr/IMG/pdf/Soulevements_et_recompositions_politiques.pdf>

Middle East Online. 2013. 'Sunni clerics issue fatwa calling for all forms of Jihad in Syria.' 13 June. <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=59461>

Mohamedou, Mohammad-Mahmud Ould. 2014. *ISIS and the Deceptive Rebooting of al Qaeda*. Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Policy Paper, 8 September. <http://www.gcsp.ch/Sidebar/News/New-GCSP-Policy-Paper-ISIS-and-the-Deceptive-Rebooting-of-Al-Qaeda-by-Dr-Mohammad-Mahmoud-Ould-Mohamedou>

Nance Malcolm. 2014. *The Terrorists of Iraq: Inside the Strategy and Tactics of the Iraq Insurgency 2003–2014*. London: CRC Press.

Neumann, Peter R. 2015. 'Foreign fighter total in Syria/Iraq now exceeds 20,000; surpasses Afghanistan conflict in the 1980s.' International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, Insight Blog, 26 January. <http://icsr.info/2015/01/foreign-fighter-total-syriairaq-now-exceeds-20000-surpasses-afghanistan-conflict-1980s/>

ONERDH (Northern Observatory for Human Rights). 2014. 'Les caractéristiques socio-démographiques des jeunes combattants marocains en Syrie et en Irak, originaires du Nord du Maroc' (in Arabic). 23 November. Tangier: ONERDH.

Reuter, Christopher. 2015. 'The Terror Strategist: Secret Files Reveal The Structure Of Islamic State.' Spiegel Online, 18 April. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-files-show-structure-of-islamist-terror-group-a-1029274.html>

Reuters. 2014. 'Tunisian forces and militants clash near border, two killed.' 17 September. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/17/us-tunisia-security-idUSKBN0HC0W720140917?irpc=932>

Rogelio, Alonso and Marcos García Rey. 2007. 'The Evolution of Jihadist Terrorism in Morocco.' *Terrorism and Political Violence,*

Vol. 19, No. 4, pp. 571–592.

Roggio, Bill. 2013. 'ISIS praises slain commander who fought in Iraq, Libya and Syria.' *The Long War Journal*. 27 November. <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/11/isis_praised_slain_c.php>

Rubin, Michael. 2013. 'When the Syrian Rebels Return.' Commentary, 20 December, <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/2013/12/20/when-the-syrian-rebels-return/>

Saadouni, Mohamed. 2013. 'La réalité du jihad en Syrie racontée par un jeune qui en est revenu.' *Magharebia*, 20 June. <http://magharebia.com/fr/articles/awi/reportage/2014/06/20/reportage-01>

Sakthivel, Vish. 2013. 'Weathering Morocco's Syria Returnees.' The Washington Institute, 25 September. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/weathering-moroccos-syria-returnees>

Schroeder, Matt. 2015. *Missing Missiles: The Proliferation of Man-portable Air Defence Systems in North Africa*. Security Assessment North Africa Project, Issue Brief No. 2. Geneva: Small Arms Survey.

Sciutto, Jim, Jamie Crawford, and Chelsea J. Carter. 2014. 'ISIS can "muster" between 20,000 and 31,500 fighters, CIA says.' CNN, online edition, 21 September. <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/11/world/meast/isis-syria-iraq>

Stern, Jessica and J.M. Berger. 2015. *ISIS: The State of Terror*. New York: Ecco Press.

Stevenson, Tom. 2014. 'Tunisia's costly battle against its militants.' Al-Monitor online, 27 October. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/10/tunisia-costly-battle-militancy.html#>

Taha, Hebattala. 2014. 'The ISIS Effect.' International Institute of Strategic Studies (Bahrain), *Manama Voices* blog, 10 December. <https://www.iiss.org/en/manama%20voices/blogsections/2014-b2cd/the-isis-effect-6c04>

Tawil, Camile. 2014. 'Operation Dignity: General Haftar's Latest Battle May Decide Libya's Future.' *The Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 12, Issue No. 11. 30 May. <http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=42443&cHash=24a38c40982c66819e7196d24603335b#.VPTdGBebkZo>

Thomson, David and Wassim Nasr. 2014. 'Exclusivité RFI: les jihadistes marocains en Syrie.' Radio France International, 10 May. <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20140509-combattants-marocains-jihad-syrie-harakat-sham-al-islam/>

UNGA-HRC (United Nations General Assembly – Human Rights Council). 2012. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, Martin Scheinin – Addendum: Mission to Tunisia.* A/HRC/20/14/Add.1 of 14 March 2012. <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/

HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/
Session20/A-HRC-20-14-Add1_en.pdf>

UNSC (United Nations Security Council). 2014. *Final Report of the Panel of Experts Pursuant to Resolution 1973 (2011) Concerning Libya*. S/2014/106 of 15 February 2014. <http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/106>

UNSC. 2015. *Final Report of the Panel of Experts Pursuant to Resolution 1973 (2011) Concerning Libya*. S/2015/128 of 23 February 2015. <http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2015/128>

Vinatier, Laurent. 2014. *Foreign Jihadism in Syria: The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham*. Security Assessment North Africa, Dispatch no. 4. Geneva: Small Arms Survey. <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/R-SANA/SANA-Dispatch4-Syrian-Jihadism.pdf>

Washington Post. 2014. 'Foreign Fighters Flow to Syria.' *Washington Post,* online edition, 17 October. <http://www.washington-post.com/world/foreign-fighters-flow-to-syria/2014/10/11/3d2549fa-5195-11e4-8c24-487e92bc997b_graphic.html>

Wehrey, Frederic. 2014. 'Mosul on the Mediterranean? The Islamic State in Libya and US Counterterrorism Dilemmas.' Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 17 December. <http://carnegie endowment.org/2014/12/17/islamic-state-in-libya-and-u.s.-counterterrorism-dilemmas/hwqs>

Wehrey, Frederic and Ala' Alraba'h. 2015. 'Rising Out of Chaos: The Islamic State in Libya.' Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 'Syria in Crisis' blog, 5 March. <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriain crisis/?fa=59268>

Weiss, Michael and Hassan Hassan. 2015. *Inside the Army of Terror*. New York: Regan Arts.

Winter, Charlie. 2015a. 'Libya: The Strategic Gateway for the Islamic State.' The Quilliam Foundation. February. <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/libya-the-strategic-gateway-for-the-is.pdf>

Winter, Charlie. 2015b. 'Women of the Islamic State: a Manifesto on Women by the al-Khanssaa Brigade.' The Quilliam Foundation, February. <http://www.quilliam-foundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/women-of-the-islamic-state3.pdf>

Wood, Graeme. 2015. 'What Isis Really Wants.' *The Atlantic*, March. <http://www.the atlantic.com/features/archive/2015/02/what-isis-really-wants/384980/?fb_ref=Default>

Zelin, Aaron Y. 2013a. 'Standoff between the Tunisian Government and Ansar al-Sharia.' The Washington Institute – Policy Watch, no. 2077, 14 May. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/standoff-between-the-tunisian-government-and-ansar-al-sharia>

Zelin, Aaron Y. 2013b. 'Foreign Jihadists in Syria: Tracking Recruitment Networks.' The Washington Institute – Policy Watch, no. 2186, 19 December. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/foreign-jihadists-in-syria-tracking-recruitment-networks>

Zelin, Aaron Y. 2013c. 'Evidence on Ansar al-Sharia in Libya Training Camps.' Al Wasat, 8 August. <https://thewasat.wordpress.com/2013/08/08/new-evidence-on-ansar-al-sharia-in-libya-training-camps/>

Zelin, Aaron Y. 2014a. 'The Clear Banner: The Death of Moroccan Exceptionalism: A Brief History of Moroccan Salafi Jihadism and Current Jihadist Trends.' Jihadology, 5 September. <http://jihadology.net/2014/09/05/the-clear-banner-the-death-of-moroccan-exceptionalism-a-brief-history-of-moroccan-salafi-jihadism-and-current-jihadist-trends/#sdfootnote19sym>

Zelin, Aaron Y. 2014b. 'The Islamic State's First Colony in Libya.' The Washington Institute – Policy Watch, no. 2325, 10 October. <http://www.washington institute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-islamic-states-first-colony-in-libya>

Zelin, Aaron Y. 2015. 'The Rise and Decline of Ansar al-Sharia in Libya.' Hudson Institute, 6 April. <http://www.hudson.org/research/11197-the-rise-and-decline-of-ansar-al-sharia-in-libya>

About the Security Assessment in North Africa

The Security Assessment in North Africa is a multi-year project of the Small Arms Survey that supports actors engaged in building a more secure environment in North Africa and the Sahel–Sahara region. It produces timely, evidence-based research and analysis on the availability and circulation of small arms, the dynamics of emerging armed groups, and related insecurity. The project places special emphasis on the local and transnational effects of the region's recent uprisings and armed conflicts on community safety.

For more information, please visit:

http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sana

Credits

Contact details

Small Arms Survey
Maison de la Paix
Chemin Eugène-Rigot 2E
CP 136 – 1211 Geneva
Switzerland

t +41 22 908 5777

f +41 22 732 2738