



## Research Article

© 2024 Wisam Fakhry Hazimeh and Debbie Abuelghanam.  
This is an open access article licensed under the Creative Commons  
Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License  
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

Received: 2 May 2024 / Accepted: 30 June 2024 / Published: 5 July 2024

# The Fragmentation of Al Qaeda in the Levant

Wisam Fakhry Hazimeh<sup>1</sup>

Debbie Abuelghanam<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dr, Assistant Professor,  
Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II School of Political  
Science and International Studies,  
University of Jordan,  
Amman, Jordan

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2024-0136>

## Abstract

*In the Levant, the Islamic jihadist ideology has occupied international attention for decades. During the Syrian crisis, the country became an incubator for radical movements to invest in a power vacuum and flourish under chaotic circumstances. Rapidly, Syria began attracting jihadists from all over the world to join radical organisations while a new kind of jihad - global jihad - indulged in a world-wide ideological firesale. Firstly, between 2011-2013, we saw jihadist armies associated with ISIS and al-Qaeda acting freely without a central authority, but on April 9, 2013, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi shifted from localised jihadism to global jihadism, by declaring an Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, to attack the international coalition as well as the Syrian regime. As a response, six months later in October 2013, Hay'at Tahrir Al Sham was launched in refusal of al-Nusra's annexation to ISIS, and uniting all anti-ISIS militias on the ground against their common enemy. Since then, jihadism has become conflicted, especially when Hay'at Tahrir Al Sham cut its ties with al-Qaeda, and all three entered into conflict. This paper follows the breakdown of the al-Qaeda project, the setbacks of ISIS, and the crisis between al-Qaeda and its offshoot branch, al-Nusra, culminating in the creation of the "Guardian of Religion" or, Hurras al-Din. The methodology utilises an institutionalisation approach and primary resources of al-Qaeda's leadership and spokespersons in order to closely follow the confrontations it has had with other movements, and the steps it has taken in order to eventually fragment. The study seeks to answer what is happening on the terrorist scene today, and to evaluate the role of al-Qaeda in the Levant. The outcome is that there is a new group that has grabbed the baton from al-Qaeda and is continuing its work in the Levant, named Hurras Ad-Din.*

**Keywords:** Al-Qaeda; Al-Nusra; Ha'yat Tahrir Al Sham; Hurras Al-Din; Jihadism

## 1. Introduction

The methodology applied to this paper is the theory of institutionalisation. As explored by Scott Hefelstein, terrorist organisations may have the same bureaucratic and organisational procedures as "any other powerful organisation" (Hefelstein, p.717). This paper adopts this style of inquiry in order to affirm the complex bureaucracy of the Muslim Brotherhood which has been fostered among other groups and applied to expand radicalist ideologies globally.

Firstly, this paper explains that radicalised Islam was minimal until Abdallah Azzam appeared in the 1980s and applied the institutional anatomy of the Muslim Brotherhood with his own ambitions for radical change. This was in order to create a new platform for global jihadism in the face of neoliberalism, which had consumed the Middle East while jihadists were fighting abroad in Afghanistan. Upon returning victorious to the Middle East, they discovered what they had been fighting abroad had taken root in their home countries, causing disenfranchisement and confusion among the jihadists. Accordingly, the paper utilises the writings of Abdallah Azzam as a main reference during this stage.

The paper then continues into its second part, claiming that Afghanistan had a divergence of interests between radical Islamists and Arab regions, and therefore began to turn from the goal of erasing the 'near enemy' towards a globalised jihadism. In order to convey this information, the paper utilises an historical approach to track this divergence. It then proceeds to discuss the decentralisation of al-Qaeda [the base/foundation] in order to franchise itself around the world, creating branches globally that work with, or on behalf of, al-Qaeda. Here, the paper explores video recordings and the main statements made by al-Qaeda leadership in order to follow the steps of their decentralisation.

The third stage of this paper explains al-Qaeda's 'Ansar' strategy, when it aligned itself with groups of different ideologies in order to deal with the ongoing Arab Spring and changes within the Arab world. The word *ansar* translates to 'supporters of conquest', and their plan to decentralise from al-Qaeda was in order to localise jihad in certain countries, in order to deal with changes occurring in the Arab and Islamic world, primarily the Arab Spring. This decentralisation plan saw the creation of al-Nusra Front in the Levant as an informal face for al-Qaeda. This plan to establish a new face of al-Qaeda in the Levant came at the same time of another wave of jihadism built upon the desire to create a state or *khalifa*, which recruits abroad found more appealing. Soon after, we see the establishment and rapid growth of ISIS. These stages are documented using recordings of al-Qaeda leaders, and the main statements issued by al-Zawahiri.

Therefore, in the fourth part of this paper, the schizophrenic scene between the poles of jihadism are explained in detail, describing the branches franchised from al-Qaeda in the Levant, and the confusion created by ISIS which saw local and international jihadists enter into open conflict with one another. The mother movement, al-Qaeda, had to take a step back and recontextualise their own call for jihad amid this chaos. Eventually, they decided to disown their own branch in Syria - al-Nusra - in order to create a truce in the form of an official 'constitution for jihadism'. Voice recordings of al-Adnani, the ISIS speaker, and Abu Maria al-Qahtani, al-Nusra's speaker, are utilised as first hand references.

Rather than diminishing the fire, it created another level of confusion in which al-Nusra, which had been disowned by al-Qaeda, joined with other local groups to create Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (Assembly for Freeing the Levant). This led to many al-Nusra members leaving the group and joining the ISIS leftovers who created the last front for al-Qaeda in the Levant: Hurras al-Din, or, the Guardians of the Religion.

In addition to the primary sources of world leaders and spokespersons involved, news agencies such as Al-Jazeera and Arabi 21 were also used, ultimately distinguishing the roadmap of radicalisation in the Levant primarily by tracking the development of al-Qaeda and its steps towards, and through, its own fragmentation, which is mirrored in the fragmentation of the concept of jihad itself.

## 2. Limitations of the Study

The main focus of this paper is al-Qaeda, a group that operates globally. However, the bureaucracy that operates within countries varies widely, making it difficult to apply the institutionalisation approach to the movement as a whole. This methodology is useful in helping us determine how the headquarters of the movement works, but it is limited in determining the various activities al-Qaeda

undertakes as an institution.

Therefore, another strategy has to be utilised which speaks to the informal nature, changing ideologies, and networking of the smaller movements which are more fluid than the mother movement, as the institutional approach cannot account for the multitude of changing beliefs that can sprout from changes in leadership or regional events. Accordingly, the historical approach was utilised to help determine the extent to which specific groups are linked to al Qaeda, observing the changes in tactics, alliances, and manoeuvres in relation to the mother movement.

The primary sources of this paper are first hand accounts written by al-Qaeda or those who pledged to al-Qaeda. The usage of videos and recordings of leadership provide invaluable, authentic insight into the movement. They focus on specific events they were involved in and are typically for internal use rather than overt propaganda. Media, reports, and newspaper archives were also used to confirm the events.

Another constraint encountered was that these primary sources are difficult to obtain due to security measures. Most of the videos released during or after the Syrian revolution no longer exist, and the only resources available now are those that allied themselves to al-Qaeda which are banned in certain countries. Therefore, the study was forced to use on the primary website released by those movements. Similarly, some books are banned as they are used as manifestos for certain groups, and hardcopies had to be located rather than online pdfs. A final constraint with these primary sources in Arabic was the linguistic and cultural considerations, as well as time, that must go into being the first to translate a resource.

### 3. Radicalism Institutionalised in Al-Qaeda

Abdullah Azzam, and his arrival in Afghanistan in the 1980s was the revolutionary to jihadism, marking a significant shift in global jihadism. As an ex-leader of the Muslim Brotherhood and highly educated individual, Azzam established the Bureau of Jihadism in Afghanistan during the Soviet War in order to create a station for the Arab fighters to mobilise and receive basic arms training. In 1984, he created a link between the highly effective, albeit possibly passive, institutionalisation of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the drastic, immediate change its radical offshoots desired. Utilising his own charismatic personality, depth of Islamic knowledge, and technical abilities, he applied the Muslim Brotherhood structure in his new 'bureau' and poached groups of Brotherhood members to join (Roy, p.195).

The Muslim Brotherhood model is built upon distributing tasks across highly organised units. The first stage in command is the *usrah* (family) which recruits new members, which then form the *katibah* (troop) that consists of a group of *usrah* within one area of each region. Every *katibah* has a leader. Within these units, they choose their own candidates to enter their *shoura* (advisory) council, which is effectively the parliament of the movement. This council then elects their executive council who forms the government of the movement (Hazimeh, 2015).

This structure is intended to create a kind of democracy and effective bureaucratic processes, which encourages loyalty to its members and controls the tasks and objectives of the Brotherhood with ease. This model is built upon moderate understandings of Islam, which suggest that the intended change must happen gradually, beginning with the community before it can take effect at a country or regional level. To achieve this goal, the Brotherhood focuses on societal needs, education, and political participation, which is why many experts label them 'moderate'. On the other hand, there are the so-called 'radicals', who believe in direct and immediate action to bring about swift change. This method bypasses the community and heads straight for leadership, using violence to effect definitive change.

These two paths towards change had previously run parallel to one another, however Azzam and Osama Bin Laden managed to merge them, creating a grey area in between with the establishment of 'al-Qaeda of Jihad' which was internally moderate and applied the *shoura* system and democratic practices which gave voice to all members. The group was also more radicalised and

oriented around military violence. This third path utilised the institutionalisation and technical abilities of the moderates in order to create highly organised groups of radicals who embodied the mission for drastic change and were prepared to sacrifice themselves in the name of liberating Islamic land, rebuilding the Islamic state, and crushing the Soviet coloniser (Mohammad and Hassan).

Before the Afghanistan-Soviet war, the radicals had channelled their frustration into the Arab regimes, accusing them of failing Muslims in their military losses against Israel in 1948 and 1967. They also used the Arab regimes' adoption of western ideologies such as socialism and nationalism to advance their economies as a reason to reject these regimes. They declared them 'near enemies', which implied they were enemies 'from within', who resist the application of Islam on Islamic land, and work on behalf of enemies of Islam in order to degrade Islam. Upon the back of this call to mobilise, many radical cells were established in the 1970s and 1980s to fight the near enemies (Hamid and Farrall).

### 3.1 The Near and Far Enemies

When the momentum of the Afghanistan-Soviet war increased, it was within the Arab regimes' interests to facilitate the jihadists' path to that battle, encouraging them to volunteer for the Afghani cause, and shifting the focus of their internal radical jihad from the regime to the foreign, Soviet, invader. However, the momentum of the Afghan Arabs faltered when they defeated the Soviets and returned to their respective Arab states, countries that they believed to have sacrificed their youth for in the name of their faith, and their liberation from colonisation. However, that period in the Middle East's history is associated with drastic neoliberalisation. While the Afghan Arabs were fighting off the Soviet colonisers, little did they know that Western colonialist ideology had infiltrated the Middle East. Indeed, the region had begun slowly aligning itself with the West - mainly the US - and building ties with the Islamist's ultimate enemy - Israel (Burga 60).

Following an influx of Arabs joining al-Qaeda in 1988, many families began asking about the location of their loved ones who had disappeared in their jihad. In response, Osama Bin Laden began compiling information on every member of the movement, following their current locations, previous battles, and rankings to create a comprehensive archive of the fighters that had answered his call for global jihad (Hegghammer 538).

In the creation of this database, the al-Qaeda we know today was realised as a functioning, organised movement and the Bureau of Jihad became 'The Base of Jihad', which is known in Arabic as 'al-Qaeda'. Within the development of the Muslim Brotherhood's structure, the ideology crystalized and Osama Bin Laden became the official opposition to the 'far enemy'.

In an interview with Thomas Hegghammer, a Norwegian Political Scientist, in 1996, Bin Laden again mentioned the 'far' and 'near' jihad. He claimed that Saudi Arabia was responsible for the Islamic crisis, accusing the country of being an 'agent' for the West besides accusing them of 'deliberately' losing Palestine to them. He said that America is the sponsor of the Saudi Regime, and therefore fighting the 'near enemy' of Saudi Arabia is not enough. They would have to return to the source, the original reason of all the Islamic problems - America. Henceforth, the mission of al-Qaeda became the rejection of the far enemy. In turn, the group issued a *fatwa* (Islamic ruling) stating that killing Americans and their alliances, civilian or military, was an obligation upon every Muslim worldwide (Thomas 161).

The Western-led coalition to enter Islamic lands, strengthen bonds with America, make peace with Israel, changes in people's lifestyles and dress codes, as well as the introduction of western companies and brand names into the market was the next biggest shock for Islamists since the fall of the Ottoman Empire (Hazimeh 131-132). Recruited at a young age, the Afghan Arabs had been moulded for mobilisation and war, and returning from a 'holy' war, the Afghan Arabs found themselves isolated, with no rehabilitation or support, and thrown back into a flourishing modern society after ten years spent in an entirely different era. With no education, they were unequipped to enter the 1990s workplace and could not blend in with the society who shunned them as radical and

backwards. In this environment of hostility, they revived their mission to rebuild the Islamic state, creating different kinds of cells to fight not only the 'near enemy,' i.e. Arab regimes, but also the 'far enemy' which was the West at large, and the US specifically.

### 3.2 The Decentralisation of Al-Qaeda

Since 1984, the centralisation of global jihad and 'fighting the far enemy' has slowly morphed into a global recruitment movement, and therefore, in 1998 the International Islamic Front to Fight Jews and Crusade was created. This statement created the basis of the ideology of global jihadism, shifting al-Qaeda from an Afghani movement, to an international movement fighting the West (World Islamic Front p.3)

The movement solidified its presence and objectives against the far enemy with the historical 9/11 attack, which both unified jihadism and officiated al-Qaeda's presence. Their first stage was to centralise jihad and create a global recruitment agency, their major call for action being the 9/11 attack itself. Following the success of this, their next stage was to franchise globally, decentralising the leadership so that the various branches could assert autonomy over their localised jihad.

The second stage in the decision for decentralisation was to franchise across the world, with the franchises able to take their own decisions without direct involvement of the mother movement. This was following their successful attack on 9/11, when Islamic groups worldwide had pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda, primarily in the Middle East, Africa, and some parts of East Asia. Al-Qaeda was established in Iraq in 2004 as 'al-Qaeda of Mesopotamia', and following the merge of Yemen and Saudi Arabia's branches they were reformed in Yemen in 2007 as 'al-Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula'. Later, in 2007 they established the North African branch in Morocco and in Somalia the East African *al Shabab* [The Youth]. These branches consisted of *usrahs* and *katibahs* but also with an *emir* (prince/leader) placed at the top of each *katibah* of *muhajadin* [religious fighters].

The newly formed branches applied what they had learned from al-Qaeda on how to organise themselves internally, how to attack, and how to cause significant damage. With their limited technology, sleeper cells flourished as a direct reaction to the perceived westernisation of their societies.

One of these units was called *Bayat al-Imam* [the pledge of allegiance to the imam], led by Abu Mussad Zarqawi, a late recruit to the Bureau. He had witnessed the battles in Afghanistan, but had not experienced the legendary heroism of the older Arab Afghans and their victory over the Soviets. Zarqawi took advantage of the situation in Iraq, the lack of sovereignty and an instability similar to that of Afghanistan, and formed a new branch of al-Qaeda there called *Jamaat al-Tawhid* [Unity Movement], which became a new branch of al-Qaeda in Iraq.

Zarqawi's eagerness to create fast change and to build on the successes of his Jordanian predecessors such as Azzam, caused him to be even more drastic in his understandings of Islamic change and *takfir* [excommunicating another Muslim]. He created a more brutal movement that would use any available resources to achieve drastic change. Zarqawi represents the next step in the jihad phenomenon. He stripped the concept of jihad to its core, making it more territorial and concerned with the annexation of land as seen with the Islamists historically who practised '*fateh*' [opening of the land], and invaded others in order to expand Islamic land. Hence, Zarqawi began to distance himself from the mother movement in order to create a new chapter - the Islamic State of Iraq (al-Shishani).

While Azzam was fighting the Soviets - a specific enemy - and Bin Laden had made his cause centred around rejecting the Western 'far enemy', Zarqawi stripped jihad back to its essence by establishing a state and recreating the caliphate, which had previously been absent since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1922. However, the death of Zarqawi in 2006 minimised the activity of jihadism not only in the Levant, but globally.

### 3.3 The Establishment of al-Nusra

The Levant has always been a target for al-Qaeda. The group has dreamed of creating a Syrian branch there for decades, and began moving towards this in 2004 when al-Zarqawi ended *Jamaat al-Tawhid* and began the al-Qaeda of Jihad in Mesopotamia (Dawn). Consequently, al-Zarqawi sent Saleh al-Qarrawi to establish Abdullah Azzam's units in the Levant between 2004 and 2005 (*The Failed Leader of Azzam Unites: Meeting with Saleh Al Qarawi* 6-11). However, this was put on hold due to his arrest. When he returned in 2010, he immediately resumed his previous work in Syria ("Units of Abdullah Azzam"), which can be seen in the below table (Abu Ramman and Abu Haniah 58-61).

In 2005, there were three operations undertaken by Abdullah Azzam. In July 2005, tourist sites were attacked in Sharm El Sheikh and the south of the Sinai, killing 88 in total. The following month, three missiles were fired from Aqaba, Jordan, attacking a US navy ship in Eilat, Israel, killing one US soldier. Several months later, in December 2005, 10 missiles were fired into Northern Israel. Five years later, when al-Qarrawi returned, their work continued, and in August 2010 they sent five grad missiles into Eilat and Aqaba, leaving one Jordanian citizen dead (Ibid).

Later that year, al-Qarrawi was hit during an exchange of fire, losing one hand and a leg. He was unable to continue his jihad in the Levant and surrendered himself to the Saudi authorities. Al-Qaeda replaced al-Qarrawi with Mohammed Majid, naming him the new 'Emir of the Azzam Units' in 2010. Majid was very successful with his mission in 2013, and attacked the Iranian embassy leaving 23 dead. However, he died soon after in January 2014 due to kidney failure (France 24, 2014). It was said that the Levantine branch of al-Qaeda dissolved following his loss (Weiss).

### 3.4 The Al-Ansar Units

In 2011, there was a huge transformation in al-Qaeda's psychology while they questioned how they should pursue the Arab revolts. As a technique to demonstrate their support for the resistance, and harbouring the possibility that change could possibly be achieved via popular resistance or protest, they created units inside some Arab countries called *al-Ansar* [The Supporters of Victory]. Abu Musab Abdel Wadoud, the leader of al-Qaeda's Moroccan branch, influenced the movement with a letter in 2012 entitled 'The Islamic Project bi Asawad' [Islamic Project in Mali] from Mali, in which he shared concerns about the decline of al-Qaeda considering the pressure that Arabs and the Islamic world was experiencing with the Arab Spring. He suggested creating an artificial authority 'as an image' and to avoid using any radical techniques to implement *shariah*. He also recommended being more lenient with civilians. Following the death of Bin Laden, Egyptian-born Ayman al-Zawahiri was affected by this letter, and sought to revive the al-Qaeda project, making it more sustainable within the conditions of the Arab Revolt, and moving towards a 'popular paradigm' though the idea of *Ansar al-Shariah* that he suggested was firstly established in Yemen (A. M.).

On April 22, 2011, they launched a new *al-Ansar* in Yemen called *Ansar al-Shariah*. The group was practical in essence, and when al-Baghdadi, head of al-Qaeda's Iraqi branch, wanted to support the Syrian revolution in agreement with the mother movement, he sent five people, including al-Jolani, the current leader, to offer support for the Syrian revolution as *Ansar al-Shariah*. From there, '*al-Nusra*' [The Conquest for Victory] came into existence as the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda (Abu Hania 136-156).

While al-Qaeda's *al-Nusra* branch was being established in Syria, al-Baghdadi continued to run al-Qaeda in Iraq. In February 2012, al-Zawahiri made a recording in Afghanistan calling for the mobilisation of the 'lions of the Levant', referring to their linkage with *al-Nusra*. This change in affairs did not go unnoticed by the Americans, and soon after in 2012, despite all attempts to conceal the linkage between *al-Nusra* and al-Qaeda, the US classified *al-Nusra* as a branch of al-Qaeda and immediately placed them on the 2012 terror organisations list (Al-Zawahiri). However, *al-Nusra* made no public allegiance nor seemed to be an adaptation of al-Qaeda, and Mohammed Majid's group, with its limited role, remained the official representative of al-Qaeda in the Levant until his death in

2014. Even al Zawahiri confirmed that he did not favour officially allying *al-Nusra* and al Qaeda during this period, as he explained in a 2014 radio interview (Al-Zawahiri, 2014).

### 3.5 *ISIS vs al-Qaeda and al-Nusra Conflict*

Since its inception, there were clear differences between *al-Nusra* led by al-Jolani, and al-Qaeda led by al-Baghdadi. Primarily, *al-Nusra* was targeting Syrians as their first priority and it had less inclination towards global jihadism than that of ISIS in Iraq. *Al-Nusra* was clear that they would not be using any techniques against Syrians such as punishment or restrictions, and intended to create good relations with civilians and serve their needs as a priority, following the doctrine of *al-Ansar* that al-Qaeda had set. This created a clear differentiation point between al-Jolani and al-Baghdadi's tactics and goals.

Similarly, the differences between *al-Nusra*, al-Qaeda, and ISIS were clear from the beginning. *al-Nusra* did not share the other two's priority of eliminating a 'far enemy', but were more interested in making themselves popular among Syrians, and fighting the Syrian regime along with other parties as one military body. Therefore, *al-Nusra* was more appealing to the local Syrian fighters and was not associated with global jihadism as seen with the brutality of ISIS or the radicalism of al-Qaeda.

The differences were made even clearer, when on April 9, 2013, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi stated that he had disengaged himself from al-Qaeda and established his own Islamic Khalifah State of Iraq and Syria, consuming *al-Nusra* within it. In other words, he had annexed *al-Nusra* to the newly established Islamic state that he had declared himself Khalifa for (Abu Bakr).

This was unacceptable to *al-Nusra*, and the next day, April 10, 2013, al-Jolani delivered a speech stating that he was against joining ISIS, and that his allegiance was to al-Qaeda. He publicly confirmed his allegiance to al-Qaeda's leader al-Zawahiri. He also stated officially that *al-Nusra* was the only representative of al-Qaeda in the Syrian conflict, and that *al-Nusra* was the only branch of al-Qaeda for Jihad in the Levant that was still serving the al-Qaeda mother group in Afghanistan, and therefore declaring that the annexation of al-Jolani had been refused (BBC).

In his book, 'ISIS: Management of Savagery', Abu Bakr Naji spoke about the reaction of al-Zawahiri of Afghanistan's al-Qaeda towards the merging of *al-Nusra* and ISIS (Naji, 26). He states that in July 2013, al-Zawahiri had attempted to send a letter with a clear directive to the Iraqi and Syrian al-Qaeda branches. He wanted to localise the authority, making al Baghdadi located only in Iraq, and *al-Nusra* only in Syria, and did not approve of their merging. He stated that *al-Nusra* should be independent, follow al-Qaeda in Syria, and to stop the annexation. This upset al Baghdadi, leading him to declare his rejection of al-Qaeda and cancel ISIS's pledge to al-Qaeda, and thus creating a new paradigm of jihadism.

An open confrontation between ISIS and al-Qaeda began through the latter's representative, *al-Nusra*, which soon turned into skirmishes not only on the ground between jihadists, but also on an ideological front. Each side accused the other of having deviated from what they perceived to be the 'true path' of Islam. They invoked *takfir* on one another, a fierce accusation that al-Qaeda had previously rarely used. By invoking *takfir*, both sides had the right from a religious perspective to erase the other. However, in doing so, they were distracted from their previous enemies - the Syrian regime (al-Suri 896).

Meanwhile, in July 2014, *al-Nusra* declared that they were an Islamic Emirate following al-Qaeda they created their own internal Islamic courts in reference to the United Somali Courts Union. Currently the *al Shabab* movement is the Somalian branch of 'al-Qaeda of East Africa'. *Al-Nusra* created these courts in order to grasp better control over the people within the territories in order to launch attacks on the Syrian regime, following *al Shabab's* methodology. As a result, they launched many successful attacks on the Syrian Army, which, within a few months, made *al-Nusra* the most important power on the ground fighting Syria. The courts *al-Nusra* established were an important technical element to the franchising of groups aligned to al-Qaeda. The Islamic courts, like the *al Shabab* movement, operated within communities as the local, sole authority, which had direct

involvement in civilians daily lives, making *al-Nusra* reliable and supportive for the local people. This technique was created by a franchised group which was still aligned with al-Qaeda in order to instil rulings on Islam and have direct involvement in people's lives and their needs, which in turn made *al-Nusra* more relevant and necessary for the people (Abu Ramman and Abu Haniah).

### 3.6 *The Schizophrenia of Jihadism*

The scene during this stage is very chaotic. There were three major branches for jihadism at this point. Firstly, *al-Nusra's* objective was to deal with ongoing issues on the ground in Syria. It appealed to those against the 'near' enemy, i.e. the Syrian regime, which had carried out brutal attacks on civilians. Secondly, another branch of jihadism had successfully created a so-called 'Islamic state', which jihadists globally had been seeking since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. ISIS was very desirable due to its achievements in land expansion and its impact on the West. Islam finally had a state again, created by jihadists, and this was very appealing, especially to foreign non-Arab fighters. Finally, the third movement during this period was the mother organisation that had started everything - al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Their mission was to fight the Western far enemy, even if that meant distancing itself from ongoing events in the Arab world, and to continue to target America, which it considered the root cause of local conflict.

With these three different projects active at the same time, even the jihadists on the ground were confused about what they were trying to achieve - a state, popular revolt, or the bigger picture that al-Qaeda presented - the resistance of the far enemy. With so many different objectives and ideologies on the ground, a schizophrenia took hold of the jihadist movement (APA International Association for Experts). This was further compacted by *al-Nusra* and ISIS entering into open battle against one another. Jihadists found it hard to determine which path was correct, and which was the most Islamic path for them to take, opening the door to further fragmentation.

### 3.7 *The New Constitution of Jihadism*

At this point, the mother movement in Afghanistan had lost its charismatic appeal and ability to recruit. Jihadists were in a state of chaos in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere in the Arab world, so in order to maintain some level of order between al-Qaeda's branches, al-Zawahiri issued a 'guide for the jihadist', in September 2013, which was essentially al-Qaeda's first constitution (al-Zawahiri).

In al-Zawahiri's constitution for jihadism, he confirmed al-Qaeda's dedication to their tradition of fighting the 'far enemies', mainly Israel and America. He clarified that the movement did not recognise any 'near enemy' unless, firstly, there was an extreme necessity to fight someone who works with, or on behalf of, the Americans, such as the case of its branches in Somalia and in the Arabian peninsula.

Secondly, he confirms in this guide that if the respective regime does not approve of al-Qaeda jihadists working in their country, such as in Morocco, the Levant, and Iraq, then there is a special amendment that they can fight the regime in the form of the 'near enemy'. The third point detailed that fighting between sects is not permissible, be they Shia'a, Sufi, or Ismaili, unless that group was attacking Sunnis. The fourth directive was that it is never acceptable to fight any other Muslim using explosion, kidnapping, or damage to property, mosques, nor markets. These specific points constitute how al-Qaeda fighters, and those who pledge themselves to the group, should behave, what is acceptable or unacceptable and creates clear differentiation between al-Qaeda and other groups, making this guide a constitution for al-Qaeda.

In response to this, on May 11, 2014, the speaker of ISIS, Abu Mohammed al-Adnani recorded a strong message entitled 'Apologies, al-Qaeda Emir' (Al-Adnani), in which he justified why ISIS disowned al-Qaeda and branched out by themselves. Further he confirmed that the pledge was made by al-Zarqawi and ended with him, and was not to be associated with the new entities established in Iraq after his death. He stated that al-Qaeda had deviated from its principles and that al-Baghdadi



had never had an allegiance with al-Qaeda. He explained that al-Qaeda had been entering into relations with countries and sects that they reject, such as Iran and Shi'ism, and that by doing so, they betrayed their original cause.

Al-Adnani was declaring that jihadists had lost faith in al-Zawahiri's decisions and was holding him responsible for the situation the jihadists had found themselves in. In the recording, Adnani asked him to disown al Jolani and consider him a traitor because he did not accept the annexation of *al-Nusra* to ISIS, which would in turn reduce the clashes between the jihadists on the ground in Syria, Iraq, and at a global scale.

Two days later on May 13th, *al-Nusra* responded via Abu Maria al-Qahtani (Al-Qahtani), requesting that all jihadists in Syria reject ISIS and 'rip them from their roots'. *al-Nusra* called ISIS '*Khawarej al Asser*' or 'the rejected of the century', in reference to the 658CE Battle of Nahrawan, when Imam Ali fought those who had turned against Islam. ISIS responded by claiming al-Qaeda is '*al ridda*' [apostates] in reference to the Ridda Wars (Apostasy Wars) of 632 CE when Muslims left Islam following the death of the Prophet that year, and the first caliph, Abu Bakr, launched a series of military campaigns against the apostates.

So, on May 13th, 2014, they had both declared war against one another and al-Qaeda was proven powerless to stop or even manage conflict between their former branches.

### 3.8 Key Differences between ISIS and al-Qaeda and the 'Islamic State'

In its simplest form, in Islam it is forbidden for one Muslim to harm another Muslim. Therefore, the topic of Muslims fighting Muslims is very important when identifying differentiation between ISIS and al-Qaeda. The former claims that they do not ever fight their Muslim brothers, even if they are *kaffir* [disbelievers] or if they incite the same judgement against them, they still will not fight them as they are considered brothers in religion.

On the other hand, ISIS has no issue with fighting any regime - local, Arab, or Islamic, as they justify this violence by categorising those who stand in their way as *mortadeen* [apostates], which, by the Quran, they have the religious right to kill. ISIS has no problem waging war against other Muslims, those from Islamic states or those from the same state. Therefore, fighting Sufis, Shia'a or Isma'ilis, is permitted by ISIS's logic in order to control their state.

For al-Qaeda, forming an Islamic state is not a priority. They are driven by the ideology of fighting the far enemy. They have had no problem supporting revolutions like the Arab Spring, or local revolts. They also have no issue with aligning themselves with revolutionists on the ground who are not part of al-Qaeda, even those who do not support al-Qaeda, in order to help Muslims create change or revolution, so long as positive change occurs for Islam.

Al-Zawahiri, for example, declared his support for the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in one of his messages, and also declared that the Coptic Christians are partners in the Egyptian nation and rejected all aggression towards them, which is something that ISIS would never accept. ISIS dreams of the pre-Sykes-Picot borders of establishing an Ottoman style state that included all Arabs and Muslims (Abu Ramman and Abu Haniah, 108).

ISIS considers the creation of an Islamic state *farid* [religious obligation], and they saw al-Qaeda neglecting or even abandoning this *farid*. Therefore, there are very distinctive differences between the two groups found in how they viewed the formation of a state in Islam.

### 3.9 Al-Nusra's Rebirth as Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham

At this point, *al-Nusra* began to diversify its activities in alliances with other groups and by March 15, 2015, they made a front from this technique of alliances, called *Jaysh al-Fateh* [army of conquest], between them and *Ahrar al-Sham* [the free of the Levant] troops. Meanwhile, the other main power fighting the Syrian regime was *Jaysh al-Hor* [The Free Army], and it had developed division from within over its religiosity and relation with outsiders, creating confusion over whether it was an

Islamic jihadist group or a nationalistic militia.

However, *al-Nusra's* main problem was its association with al-Qaeda and being listed as a terrorist movement. This crippled them from creating any alliances or speaking freely with other countries' intelligence or getting the aid that they needed. Therefore, to overcome this obstacle, on July 28, 2016, al-Jolani appeared for the first time without a mask (Al-Jazeera). He declared the cancellation of *al-Nusra*, and the formation of *Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham* (The Assembly of Freeing the Levant).

In this appearance of al-Jolani, he declared the disengagement with al-Qaeda, defending the necessity of this move and denying that this decision is associated with any foreign actor. This disengagement was in order to deny the idea that they were *al-Ansar*, as explained earlier. To continue focusing on the near enemy, the Syrian regime, they had to abandon any association with fighting America and the West, which would remove their label of terrorist group, and therefore, enable them to begin receiving aid and support for their cause (al-Jolani).

However, prior to this appearance of al-Jolani, within a few hours, this was declared by al-Qaeda itself by the statement of the Vice Leader of al-Qaeda, Abu Khair al-Masri, who blessed the move that al-Jolani had not yet even made. As he said, the split was made to remove the obstructions that enemies placed in order to divide the *mujahidin* [religious fighters] from their focus on the Syrian ground (Arabi 21).

In his statement, he declared that jihad, when it is transferred from the revolutionaries into the *ummah* (the global Islamic community), does not change the mentality of the individual organisation. He went further by stating that the brotherhood of Islam is stronger than the brotherhood of al-Qaeda, indicating that the move of leaving al-Qaeda was arbitrary in order to give the West reasons to support *al-Nusra* and its transformation under the name of *Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham*. This was to permit the movement and expand its umbrella of alliances with other units on the ground, which were not Islamic, to engage in negotiations and to obtain funding from those who al-Qaeda rejects, mainly the US (Arabizi).

This new move was not appealing to all the jihadists within *al-Nusra* who supported al-Qaeda. Therefore, in 2017 we witnessed the emergency of a freelance jihadist, which was a mix between the *al-Nusra* jihadist that rejected the exit from al-Qaeda, the jihadists from the new assembly for jihad - *Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham*, and the ex-ISIS jihadist who had survived the international coalition against ISIS. This coalition had limited ISIS's territories in Iraq, and caused many to flee to Syria where they had the choice of joining *Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham* who they had previously been fighting, or, the third option - *Hurras al-Din*. Therefore, this new group of jihadists, or freelance jihadists, were a mix of leftovers from all the groups, united by their frustration with their work in the Free Army, or their struggle to locate themselves within the division of Islam, nationalism, and relations between other states and intelligence. Combined, these fragmented parts of Islamic jihad created *Hurras al-Din* [Guardians of the Religion].

### 3.10 *Hurras al-Din*

Between the divide of the near and far enemy, *Hurras al-Din* was established, and began to localise itself in various areas of Syria. While *al-Nusra*, in its new form of *Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham*, was considered a pragmatic version of jihad, for many it had abandoned the cause and made alliances with the enemy. ISIS, on the other hand, was declaring jihad on fellow Muslims. This made *Hurras al-Din*, from their perspective, the last line to save the Islamic jihad, therefore, indeed making them the 'guardians of religion'. This group is a revolt against the crisis jihadism is in today.

At this stage, *Hurras al-Din's* ideology is confused due to its mixed components of ideologies and experiences. They cannot be categorised as fighting the near or the far enemy. Their ideology will become clear with time, and in their maturing they will either become more associated with al-Qaeda or with ISIS. As it stands, the statements of *Hurras al-Din's* leadership mixes both ideologies. They have asserted their rejection of the west and the 'far enemy', but have also criticised *Hay'at Tahrir al-*

*Sham* due to its alliances with other rejected groups, marking a shift in the traditional jihadist ideologies which were being practised in Syria since the beginning of the revolution (Abu Ramman and Abu Haniah 195-208) (Abdul Ghani).

This group, which is small in size, is combining the modern technique of ISIS to recruit foreign fighters, with local experienced fighters who have been on the ground in Syria since 2012. When introducing the reasons for the creation of *Hurras al-Din*, its current leader Sami al-Aoraidi said:

From within the dangerous reality, the leaders of jihad should wake up and revise their projects, which are against the reality, and re-priorities their cards and their organisation, and prepare themselves for gang war [...] the truthful and the wise men are tired from advising them, but the high of emirate and the control on the ground fascinates many from the advice they receive until it reached some of them to say that we are controlling areas larger than current stable states like Qatar, or Bahrain, or Kuwait.

From this, it is clear that the establishment of *Hurras al-Din* was necessary to answer the jihadists' new concern over territory, land possession and land expansionism. The other movements were trying to establish Islam and jihad within the context of state and land. Al-Aoraidi wanted to return to al-Qaeda's tradition and maintain jihad as a resistance movement solely, free from the idea of an Islamic state.

The idea that this group has the potential to become powerful is given credence when considering its founder is Abu Jilbib, son-in-law of al Zarqawi, who founded al Qaeda in Iraq and sparked the ideological change of jihadism. His family ties and experience in the field since the US-led war on Iraq indicate that the group could be inclined to commit similar brutalities to those of al-Zarqawi (Abu Ramman and Abu Haniah 195-208).

As mentioned, *Hurras al-Din* presents a third path for jihad. Their main mission is to stop the schizophrenic situation of jihadism in Syria and Iraq. Abu Jilbib and al-Jolani's call was appealing, and 16 units have since joined the movement. Until the present day, *Hurras al-Din* claims to have made over 200 attacks on small towns and rural areas of Syria, including locations in Aleppo, Hamam, and Idlib, and even in regime-controlled areas such as Latakia.

In addition to attacks, *Hurras al-Din* has also enacted one hundred projects in 14 villages in Idlib, which fall under their territory. One such project is a centre called 'Preachers for Unity', which offers a summer school for children ages 5-10. They also provide free buses, uniforms, and education in Arabic, English, and Religion Studies. The group has also established *Hay'at al-Omar al-Marouf*, which is similar to the court system that *al-Nusra* used (Zelin).

#### 4. Conclusion

The main focus of this paper was to trace the shift in al-Qaeda's techniques and strategies in order for it to continue being the main representative for Islamic jihad. Through an institutional approach, the paper identified links between al-Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood, which allowed the former to create a model able to win in Afghanistan and present itself as a main body for jihadism.

Their 'fair enemy' approach and accompanying internal strategy was crystallised in their 9/11 attack. Since then, al-Qaeda has demonstrated a decline in its power and popularity, especially when the Arab Spring was able to effect more change through popular revolt. This paper explains the two strategies obtained. Firstly, by the decentralisation of the movement, making it a confederal body of jihadism where branches pledged to the mother movement have the freedom to act on their own, followed by the *al-Ansar* strategy which created units working formally and informally to serve al-Qaeda's purposes in the Levant. While most claim that after the international coalition against al-Qaeda and ISIS, and the death of both main leaders, Osama Bin Laden and Abu Bakr Baghdadi, al-Qaeda's influence has declined to the point of extinction. However, this paper demonstrates that slowly, and through its branches, new groups have begun to appear from this schizophrenic jihadist scene. These groups are poised to play a bigger role in Syria and the wider Levant in the near future, as seen with *al-Nusra* becoming *Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham*, and the emergence of *Hurras al-Din*. So far,

this group's role is still unclear, but their leadership and the nature of their formation indicates a new wave of jihadism in the Levant, and the confirmation that al-Qaeda still exists and has the potential to return in a new form.

Moreover, since the publication of this paper, it has been fifteen years since the beginning of the Syrian conflict and a whole generation has grown up in the chaos that ensued. This generation has been raised under the authority of these units that had fractured from ISIS and became part of the local society. They provide support, aid, and governance to civilians, and their nationalistic trends make them more appealing than ISIS, whose overall objective was greater than their specific regions.

As these groups have grown with the people, they are more immune to foreign actors in the region. The main group that represents these neglected communities is *Hurras al-Din*. The group combines localisation, territorialism, and a pledge to al-Qaeda, making *Hurras al-Din* a new phase of al-Qaeda, based upon their strategies. Thus far, they are not the most active and influential group in Idlib. *Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham* is still the most influential movement there. Therefore, the question going forward is - what is the future of this growing movement, and will it begin initiating attacks on foreign actors? Further, if the US led coalition were to attack the group's competition - *Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham* - would this empower *Hurras al-Din* to take more control and even begin to lead jihadism in Syria, beginning a new era of jihadism? The final, parting question asks if supporting, or attacking, *Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham* serves the USA best?

## 5. Further Implications

In regards to the implications of al-Qaeda fracturing, and the subsequent impact on the region and anti-terror efforts, the complexity of the threats the region faces has increased noticeably. The decentralisation of al-Qaeda has come in waves, firstly they were a central movement and then small branches allied to it. With the Arab Spring, we saw the rise of *al-Ansar*, and then finally with the failure of Iraq and Syria many new branches sprouted in the area. With these new local branches, each have their own agenda and own operational priorities. They typically look to exploit conflicts on the ground, playing the role of a resistance movement. These movements take advantage of, or create, instabilities in certain areas of Syria and Iraq to establish themselves, localise jihad, and control the services of that area. From there, they slowly try to return to globalised jihad. This shift in their foundational makeup makes it increasingly difficult to create a plan to navigate them on the ground. To respond, we need to understand the actors, and to try to forecast what they want to do according to their linkages to other movements, not only al-Qaeda. Therefore, counterterror efforts can no longer address al-Qaeda as a unified or centralised movement. The operational planning they undertake and the shifts in their ideological stances make it imperative that counterterrorism apply a more rational and academic approach before considering security or military strategies.

Finally, despite the West claiming defeat of al-Qaeda, complete fragmentation or at least a significant setback, there is still a strong foundation from which al-Qaeda may rise again, and there is still cooperation between these movements despite occasionally fighting one another. The atmosphere in the region provides more reasons to unite than to further fragment.

Therefore, events in the West Bank or Gaza, or a new global coalition against a core idea like Palestine, may create changes in the shape and tactics of this movement towards a truce or organised efforts, even with enemies like Hezbollah, in order to claim unity. There are long-term possibilities for managing their differences and creating new ideas. This movement showed us the flexibility and adaptability to achieve their goals, even adapting with the Western coalition for some branches. Therefore, there is also a possibility to unite as a front (especially regarding Sunni groups that are currently, or used to be, related to al-Qaeda) against the same coalitions again if there was an idea at stake bigger than their current objectives. This would be wider regional violence compared to more localised violence in which frustrations with the inability to act in Palestine, a core issue in their ideologies and a source of legitimacy for jihadism, may result in them taking to the ground against one another in acts of authority and territorial expansionism, which historically is more brutal.

## References

- Abdul Ghani, M. (2020, September 10). *The Guardians of Religion Organization: Formation and disintegration [Report]*. Eipss. Retrieved February 22, 2024, from <https://eipss-eg.org/%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%8A%D9%85-%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A5%D8%B4%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%A3%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%81%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%83/%86%D9%8A%D9%86.mp3>
- Abu Bakr, B. (2017). *And Preach to the Believers* [Audio Speech]. Archive. [https://archive.org/details/Kalimat\\_Alkhalfah/002+-+%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%B4%D8%B1+%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A4%D9%85%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%86.mp3](https://archive.org/details/Kalimat_Alkhalfah/002+-+%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%B4%D8%B1+%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A4%D9%85%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%86.mp3)
- Abu Hania, H. (2018). *Arab Jihadism*. Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies.
- Abu Ramman, M., & Abu Haniah, H. (2021). *The Organisation of Hurras Al Adin: The Rise and Fall of Al Qaeda*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
- Al-Adnani, A. M. (2014). *Sorry, Amir of al-Qaeda* [Audio Speech]. archive. Retrieved 02 22, 2024, from [https://archive.org/details/kalimah\\_201405](https://archive.org/details/kalimah_201405)
- Al-Jazeera. (2015, July 27). *Abu Muhammad al-Julani: The strategy for the establishment of the Army of Conquest and the mission of the Al-Nusra Front in Syria (1)*. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hwQT43vFZA>
- al-Jolani, A. M. (2016, July 29). *War in Syria: Al-Nusra front announces split from Al Qaeda*. France 24. Retrieved February 22, 2024, from <https://www.france24.com/en/video/20160729-wae-syria-al-nusra-front-announces-split-al-qaeda>
- Al-Qahtani, A. M. (2014). *O, You Hesitant One* [Transcription of Audio Speech]. Ketab Online. Retrieved 02 22, 2024, from <https://ketabonline.com/ar/books/95681/read?part=1&page=10&index=1769850>
- Al-Shishani, M. B. (2005). Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and the Third Generation of Salafi-Jihadists. *Terrorism Monitor*, 3(16). <https://jamestown.org/program/abu-musab-al-suri-and-the-third-generation-of-salafi-jihadists/>
- al-Suri, A. M. (2004). *Call to Global Islamic Resistance*. Noor-Book. <https://www.noor-book.com/cau81b>
- Al-Zawahiri, A. (2013). *General Guidelines for the Work of Jihad*. Tawakkal. Retrieved 02 22, 2024, from <https://archive.org/details/tawakkalo-oo/ar/mode/2up>
- Al-Zawahiri, A. (2014). *Reality Between Pain and Hope* [Transcribed Audio Interview]. Archive. Retrieved 02 22, 2024, from <https://archive.org/details/as-sshab>
- Al-Zawahiri, A. (2016). *Onward, Oh Lions of Syria*. Al Nokhba for Media. Retrieved 02 22, 2014, from [https://archive.org/details/al\\_nokbah9\\_outlook\\_20160203\\_2054/%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%85%20%D9%8A%D8%A7%20%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%AF%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%A7%D9%85/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/al_nokbah9_outlook_20160203_2054/%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%85%20%D9%8A%D8%A7%20%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%AF%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%A7%D9%85/mode/2up)
- A. M., A.-Q. (2012). *Azward Document* [Letter]. Ketab Online. <https://ketabonline.com/ar/books/67041/read?part=1&page=2&index=1742800#p-67041-2-6>
- Arabi 21. (2016, July 28). *Al-Qaeda implicitly agrees to Al-Nusra's separation from it (video)*. Arabi 21. Retrieved February 16, 2024, from <https://arabi21.com/story/931530/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%82-%D8%B6%D9%85%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%81%D8%B5%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D9%86%D9%87%D8%A7->
- Arabi21. (2017, December 1). *Tahrir al-Sham responds to al-Zawahiri and explodes surprises*. Arabi21. Retrieved February 22, 2024, from <https://arabi21.com/story/1053082/%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B8%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D9%88%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%AC%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%A2%D8%AA>
- BBC. (2013). *The leader of the al-Nusra Front pledges allegiance to the chief of al-Qaeda* [Audio]. Youtube. Retrieved 02 22, 2024, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZXEdZiC86N4>
- Burga, F. (2006). *Political Islam in the Time of Al-Qaeda, translated by Sahar Saeed* (1st ed.). Cadmus Publishing and Distribution Company.
- Burgat, F. (2008). *Islamism in the Shadow of Al-Qaeda* (P. Hutchinson, Trans.). University of Texas Press.
- Dawn. (2004, 10 18). *Zarqawi Pledges Allegiance to Osama*. Dawn. Retrieved 2 22, 2024, from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071229020549/http://www.dawn.com/2004/10/18/top7.htm>
- The Failed Leader of Azzam Unites: Meeting with Saleh Al Qarawi*. (2010). Al Fajer Centre for Media. [https://archive.org/details/leqq\\_2010](https://archive.org/details/leqq_2010)

- France 24. (2014, January 4). *Majed Al Majed dies on his detention bed in the Military Army Hospital in Beirut*. France 24. Retrieved February 22, 2024, from <https://www.france24.com/ar/20140104-%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%AF-%D9%88%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B4%D9%81%D9%89-%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%87>
- Guardians Of Religion Organization: Problems Of Origination And Dismantling*. (2020, September 14). APA International Association of Experts. Retrieved February 16, 2024, from <https://apa-inter.com/post.php?id=383>
- Hamid, M., & Farrall, L. (2015). *The Arabs at War in Afghanistan*. Hurst.
- Hazimeh, W. (2015). *The Political Survival of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan: From Participation to Boycott* [PhD Thesis]. University of East Anglia.
- Hazimeh, W. (2020). *Zarqa City's Impact on Jihadism: Inspecting Salafism's Role*. Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences.
- Hegghammer, T. (2010). *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hegghammer, T. (2020). *The Caravan: Abdallah Azzam and the Rise of Global Jihad*. Cambridge University Press.
- Helfstein, S. (n.d.). Governance of Terror: New Institutionalism and the Evolution of Terrorist Organizations. *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 69(4). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i27697900>
- Lister, C. (2016, July 28). *The Nusra Front Is Dead and Stronger Than Ever Before*. Foreign Policy. Retrieved February 16, 2024, from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/07/28/the-nusra-front-is-dead-and-stronger-than-ever-before/>
- Majed Al Majed dies on his detention bed in the military hospital in Beirut. (2014, January 4). *France 24*. Retrieved February 16, 2024, from <https://www.france24.com/ar/20140104-%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%AF-%D9%88%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B4%D9%81%D9%89-%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%87>
- Mohammad, A. R., & Hassan, A. H. (2009). *The Jihadi Salafist Movement in Jordan after Zarqawi: Identity, Leadership Crisis and Obscured Vision*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
- Naji, A. B. (2016). *Isis: Management of Savagery*. Dorrance Publishing Co.
- Roy, O. (n.d.). *Globalized Islam*. Columbia University Press. Retrieved February 22, 2024, from <https://cup.columbia.edu/book/globalized-islam/978023134996>
- Thomas, H. (2010). *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism Since 1979*. Cambridge University Press.
- Units of Abdullah Azzam*. (2014, January 24). Al Jazeera. Retrieved February 22, 2024, from <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2014/1/24/%D9%83%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%A8-%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87-%D8%B9%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%85-2>
- Weiss, C. (2019, November 22). *Abdullah Azzam Brigades dissolves itself in Syria*. *FDD's Long War Journal*. Retrieved February 16, 2024, from <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2019/11/abdullah-azzam-brigades-dissolves-itself-in-syria.php>
- Weiss, C. (2019, November 22). *Abdullah Azzam Brigades dissolves itself in Syria*. *FDD's Long War Journal*. Retrieved February 22, 2024, from <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2019/11/abdullah-azzam-brigades-dissolves-itself-in-syria.php>
- World Islamic Front. (1998). *World Islamic Front Statement Urging Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders*. Al-Quds al-Arabi. Retrieved February 22, 2024, from <https://irp.fas.org/world/para/docs/980223-fatwa-orig.htm>
- Zelin, A. Y. (2019, September 24). *Huras al-Din: The Overlooked al-Qaeda Group in Syria*. The Washington Institute. Retrieved February 22, 2024, from <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/huras-al-din-overlooked-al-qaeda-group-syria>